

POPULAR MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

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This is a book that, beginning with its title and through the regional collaborations of its researchers, suggests the appearance of new social subjects with their own characteristics, different from those involved in the struggles of traditional trade union or peasant movements.

Seen as social sectors which undergo domination and exploitation, popular movements can be those of the poor inhabitants of cities who demand housing and services, movements at the municipal level, black rebellions in the subjected countries of the Caribbean, student struggles, or the feminist movement.

Los movimientos populares en América Latina, a joint edition by the United Nations University and the publishing house Siglo XXI, brings together 15 essays by Latin American social scientists who have experienced the useless and constantly mechanical application of European or U.S. theoretical models to the study of such complex and diverse realities as the Latin American ones. This is why the book attempts to find the way -and succeeds- to transcend the superficiality of research oriented along positivistic lines.

This work is part of a large research project: Perspectives on Latin America, started by the United Nations University and supported in our country by the National University of Mexico and the Latin America School of Social Science (FLACSO), as well as by other regional study centers, such as the Latin American Council on Social Sciences and the Latin American Sociology Association. This is a group of researchers of high academic level committed to the democratic and critical perspectives expressed by Latin American popular movements.

This commitment -which puts the researchers on the side of the people, in confrontation with the

social forces that dominate and exploit them- places them outside the supposed neutrality of positivism. On the other hand, it does not hinder the necessary rigor and objectivity in the study of the origin and development of popular movements. "In this sense -one of the book's coordinators states- this book is strictly objective and at the same time deeply committed to the task of recovering the collective memory of popular movements, and, consequently, of contributing to its development and strength."

The 15 essays gathered in this work represent an original contribution to the theoretical discussion, and a detailed analysis of relations between popular movements and the State. Popular movements, emerging from the discontent of civil society, have put forth economic and political reivindications vis à vis governments that have abandoned their paternalistic and populist at-

titudes, and have adopted authoritarian stances. With special conditions in each country, and in each process of national unity, popular movements have crystallized into a movement that has an alternative political project, when it is not in power, or an official one, when it comes to power.

The book studies -always from regional or national perspectives- the dynamics of popular movements, their social composition, their own ways to build democracy, their relations with political parties, their conceptions of the national question, their participation in the peace processes that have taken place in Central America, and other current issues.

Los movimientos populares en América Latina was coordinated by Daniel Camacho and Rafael Menjivar. Siglo XXI Editores and United Nations University. Biblioteca América Latina: actualidad y perspectivas. México, 1989.

Biblioteca América Latina: actualidad y perspectivas