

# The Long Term Politics of Pro-Poor Policies

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## I Introduction

1. The 2000/1 World Development Report presents a challenge to those who work on the politics of development.<sup>2</sup> Instead of criticising, they are invited to specify how they can add value. But “adding-on” a political analysis may involve more than just minor adjustments to the pre-existing World Bank intellectual stock in trade. This paper is a preliminary attempt to respond to the challenge. It offers a long-term political approach to the analysis of development policies, which we distinguish from a short-term technocratic approach, and illustrates the implications of alternative perspectives by use of a case study. It aims to broaden the discussion of how to think comparatively about the success or failure of “pro-poor” development strategies. The discussion can be usefully broadened by directing attention to the long-term process by which the poor can be constituted as more effective and participatory collective actors engaged in promoting their own interests. There may be some tension between this and the more conventional and parsimonious approaches, but there may also be creative tension. Neither needs displace the other.

2. The academic literature on development policies, and the policy-oriented work produced by the international financial institutions, contains much discussion of “successful” development policies, including successes in promoting “pro-poor” patterns

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared for the “World Development Report 2000/1: The Responsiveness of Political Systems to Poverty Reduction”, Donnington Castle, 16-17 August, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> See World Bank (1999). Also, Wolfensohn (1999a and b) and Stiglitz (1998a and b).

of development. From a comparative politics standpoint, however, there are considerable difficulties in establishing such claims.. First, there is likely to be political disagreement and competition over the criteria for rating any policy a “success”, especially if it is a complex policy with multiple objectives, instruments, and authors, each vying with the others for priority and resources. Second, “success” is likely to be a relative rather than an absolute, outcome, and appraising success is likely to involve some degree of counterfactual judgement (“successful considering the constraints”, “successful compared to the average” etc.). Third, assuming that objective observers can agree that in a particular case success has been achieved, there is still the problem of determining how much of it was attributable to the identified policy innovations and how much was to be expected for other reasons. Fourth, there is a difficulty about isolating “pro-poor” patterns of development and attributing them to intentional policies. Where the poor benefit in the course of development it may well be as a component (or perhaps even a side effect) of policies promoted for other reasons. In nearly all cases a broadly “pro-poor” outcome will benefit some poor at the expense of others, and will benefit some non-poor as well. So isolating a pure pro-poor outcome is likely to be artificial, and attributing it to a pro-poor policy initiative may well involve distortion or special pleading.

3. Setting aside these reservations for a moment, let us consider a standard development policy paradigm. Successful pro-poor policies require a sound macro-economic framework; the rational and transparent administration of scarce resources; the accurate monitoring results so that unintended consequences can be taken into account and failures can be analysed and corrected; and they need to secure the confidence and if possible the active participation of the poor themselves. This is a substantial list of requirements, especially since they will need to be mutually co-ordinated, and it is tempting to emphasise the elements of central control that will be needed by funders, planners, and policy-makers if success along these lines is to be achievable. It is tempting, in other words, to design and implement pro-poor policies in a “non-political” or technocratic manner.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there has recently been increasing recognition in

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<sup>3</sup> From a technocratic perspective, the design and implementation of “pro-poor” policies will seem no different in principle from the design and implementation of any other type of policy –stabilization policy, for example or “pro-environment” policy. All that is needed in each case is to identify the

the development policy community and the international financial institutions that “politics matters” in this field.<sup>4</sup> Indeed it has become not uncommon to encounter analyses which argue that since all the basic technocratic requirements for success had been fulfilled, and yet the policy results were not as expected, the missing explanatory variable must be a somewhat undertheorised residual category of “political” causes. Economists and planners are not trained to analyse such apparently unpredictable and perhaps even irrational contingencies as civil conflict, electoral populism, or collectively orchestrated strategies of non-co-operation in pursuit of purely sectoral advantage. Yet “political” processes of this kind commonly disturb the orderly progress of even the best designed of pro-poor policies, and in at least some cases it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the technocratic approach may itself have contributed to stimulating a counterproductive backlash by disregarding the broader political ramifications of a narrowly correct policy design.

4. So it has become commonplace to accept that “politics matters” for the successful pursuit of pro-poor policies. But what kind of political analysis is needed to fill out the gaps in understanding? Although some aspects of political reality may be analysed in a relatively parsimonious manner, (e.g., the consequences of electoral rules, the effects of legislative procedure on legislative outcomes), the “residual” political categories noted above, are not so easily subjected to formal analysis and may contain a great deal of complex causation, contingency and even arbitrariness. How can such subjective political variables be integrated into an interpretative framework that is essentially rationalistic and universalistic? Put more bluntly, is there not a danger that by embracing a political interpretation of the processes at work, the logic and objectivity of the technocratic perspective may be sacrificed for no adequate return, as regards improved breadth or coverage or analytical accuracy? As noted, the 2000/1 World Development Report

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privileged object of policy and then select and test the appropriate policy instruments (paying attention, of course, to possible constraints and trade-offs between one policy desideratum and another). But the burgeoning academic literature on the politics of social policy has yet to yield a large stock of pro-poor policies analyzed in this way.

<sup>4</sup> The July 1999 World Bank draft on “Rethinking’ Poverty Reduction”, takes a 20 year time horizon, views poverty in multi-dimensional terms and tries to take community-level considerations into account. All this clearly requires going beyond a technocratic paradigm, although after consulting with “stakeholders”, the onus switches back to the “policymakers” to somehow “manage” all three variables (see World Bank 1999).

presents a challenge to those who work on the politics of development. Instead of criticising, political scientists are invited to specify how they can add value. But it can be seen from the arguments presented above, that “adding on” a political analysis may involve more than just minor adjustments to the pre-existing stock of knowledge. In any case, there is no single well-honed and professionally consensual agreement among those who study the politics of development concerning what has been missing so far, let alone how it can now be incorporated.

5. So this paper can not pretend to provide a comprehensive to the question “how can political analysis be brought into the evaluation of pro-poor policies”. It offers one particular perspective, one intended to complement other approaches, not substitute for them. It directs attention to the very long-term dynamics of a large-scale cumulative pro-poor policy orientation at the national level. This approach involves tackling similar issues to those considered from the technocratic perspectives, but using a very different time frame and therefore focusing on very broad long-term consequences, as opposed to short-term immediate programme effects. In this sense, it can be seen as complementary to the standard approach, without directly challenging it. At the theoretical level it can be linked to broader debates about the nature of “development” as a not merely economic but also a social process of transformation (involving long-term changes in “mentality” as well as in material endowments); and about development as it affects large scale communities (whole nations, regions, ethnic groups etc.) and remoulds collective identities, rather than development as only a matter of individual reorientation and empowerment. The political nature of the long-term analysis pursued here arises from its concern with the self-governance of these larger collectivities. Obviously, this is not the only possible way of adding politics on to economics and administration when analysing pro-poor policies. Our claims are only that it can be a productive way of doing so; that it can be conducted at an adequate level of objectivity and analytical accuracy given the large scale and long-term nature of the processes under review; and that it can uncover significant findings, both of an analytical and potentially even of a policy-relevant kind, that would tend to be overlooked or underestimated using a more short-term and technical perspective only. Since “successful” pro-poor policies necessarily take a very long time to produce their full effects, we consider this perspective appropriate, and indeed a necessary complement to more standard forms of evaluation,

even if these affects are also inherently not only slow to emerge but difficult to isolate conclusively.

6. Our analysis concerns national politics in poor countries with reasonably stable boundaries, and relatively coherent systems of public policy-making and implementation. These are not the conditions under which many of the world's poorest people are currently living (least of all in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also not in much of Central Asia or parts of South and South East Asia). But they do apply to the great bulk of Latin America and to a substantial range of significant poor countries in other continents – South Africa, for example, most of India, and to the Philippines. Overall, one could identify at least thirty “developing” countries with at least a quarter of the world’s “very poor” population, that more or less fit this description. To some extent, the argument may still apply beyond this privileged subset of countries. The key idea is that we can only speak of coherent, sustained and potentially cumulative “pro-poor” policies in countries where some minimum standards of national integration and policymaking capacity have been institutionalized. Moreover, the poor as (protagonists) of public policy need to be constituted as collectivities through interactions with the relevant public authorities, and this can only happen at the national or sub-national level (there are no major supra-national level examples, at least not yet).<sup>5</sup> From a long-term political capabilities perspective, we are primarily interested in those cumulative and sustained interactions that socialize the poor into potentially constructive relationships with their social partners and with central or local agencies of the policymaking state. We use the word “interaction” advisedly on the assumption that long-term political success will require feedback with the beneficiaries of public policy, shaping it as well as receiving it. Thus we are focusing on the politics of what may loosely be described as “democratic” regimes. This means we screen out many of the most overwhelming impediments to pro-poor policy-making. We are not considering “failed states”; or states threatened by secession, armed intervention, or civil war. Nor are we starting from a baseline of kleptocracy or despotic rule. Our subset includes many new democracies in Latin

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<sup>5</sup> From a comparative politics perspective, the poor of one country are not interchangeable with the poor of another, since they will have been constituted and socialized differently. For example a poor Argentine who has experienced Peronism must be differentiated from a poor Peruvian with a different experience. A poor Costa Rican would not even be considered poor in Nicaragua.

America and Eastern Europe, as well as selected countries in Asia and Africa that roughly meet these specifications. They are countries with sufficient political and administrative vitality and autonomy to adopt coherent and sustained pro-poor policies, but they are also societies which must expect to contend with widespread and serious poverty for the indefinite future. Bolivia is a fairly representative example of this broader category.

## II A Political Capabilities Approach

[W]hen we looked into the life experiences of the people principally involved, we found that most of them had previously participated in other, more “radical” experiences of collective action, that had generally not achieved their objective. It is as though the protagonist’s earlier aspiration for social change, their bent for collective action, had not really left them, even though the movements in which they had participated may have aborted or petered out. Later on, this “social energy” becomes active again, but is likely to take some very different form.<sup>6</sup>

7. We adopt the view that pro-poor policies should be about enhancing personal capabilities, self-confidence, capacity for community organization, and recognition of dignity, as well as about the distribution of material resources.<sup>7</sup> We focus specifically on ***political capabilities*** defined broadly to include the institutional and organizational resources as well as collective ideas available for effective political action. Opportunities for political empowerment, we argue, arise through the iterative construction and diffusion of political capabilities during, and long after, the implementation of pro-poor policies.

### *Building Political Capabilities*

8. A vast new institutional literature has focused on instances of collective action at the community and sub-community level, usually involving the provision or management of

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Hirschman (1984: 42-43).

<sup>7</sup> See Sen (1985, 1997), Dasgupta (1995) and Stewart (1987).

public and common resources.<sup>8</sup> A complementary, and more historically grounded approach has highlighted the importance of collective ideas, memories and identity in shaping the prospects for future collective action.<sup>9</sup> We draw loosely from both traditions, to address the iterative construction and diffusion of political capabilities at the grassroots level.<sup>10</sup> We suggest that the step between *identifying* resources for collective action and *explaining* successful collective action is often a political step, shaped by locally defined rules of the game.<sup>11</sup> While successful collective outcomes can often be assessed by focusing on the structure of institutional incentives, preferences and resources, the analysis of political capabilities requires a closer examination of the rules of political engagement as actually played, including the transformation or manipulation of rules over time. Critically, political capabilities involve the ability to create new rules, transform social preferences, as well as secure new resources as they become available. In the political realm, the process of bargaining and negotiating itself often sets the standard by which pro-poor policy outcomes are judged by the poor. The resilience of political capabilities, we suggest, may depend less on the survival of any particular organizational form --likely to change as much as the object and rules of collective action do-- than on the appropriation of skills and ideas attached to “successful” action in the past. As observed by Albert Hirschman, long-term memories of effective opposition, contestation or participation provide a continuous resource for collective mobilization in the future.

### *Bridging Political Capabilities*

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<sup>8</sup> Recent new institutional approaches have been described by Ostrom (1998), Nugent (1998) and Clague (1997).

<sup>9</sup> The historical or comparative institutionalist perspective has been advanced by Tarrow (1994), Thelen and Steinmo (1992). Political comparisons of both perspectives are found in Hall and Taylor (1996), and Grindle (1999).

<sup>10</sup> Fox (1996) and Tandler (1997) have forwarded convergent approaches, focusing on the political construction of social capital, participation and accountability.

<sup>11</sup> Woolcock (1998) and Portes (1998) suggest that that much of the emerging social capital literature is in danger of “saying too much with too little”, by stretching the applications of a relatively pliant sociological concept. Gray-Molina (1999) describes some of the trade-offs faced by researchers invoking social capital at different levels of generality.

9. The construction of political capabilities is likely to be highly context-specific as political structures, actors and discourses vary from one region to the next, and change in response to changes in prevailing norms and institutions. The diffusion of capabilities, however, may be less context-bound. When political entrepreneurs and political capitalists “exit” a community, a new set of actors reconstruct political networks and recast political balances. Community organizations, in fact, seldom stop developing political capabilities, despite long periods of demobilization or dispersion. For those “exiting”, experiences of collective action are likely to be fungible and travel far, despite originating in locally bounded political networks. Urban migrants are forever reconstituting new political networks on the remnants of old networks and past experiences. Political capabilities, as described above, need not be empowering. In relatively closed and non-competitive political arenas, capabilities are likely to be highly excludable by virtue of pre-existing rules of political participation. Participation in a clientele network rewards reciprocity within, but sanctions defection without. The process of poverty exit can be seen as a gradual but continuous process of political reconstruction and bridging from past to future networks and resources.

### **III A Bolivian Case Study (1953-1999)**

10. Bolivia provides a rich and interesting case for the assessment of pro-poor policies both for its history of popular mobilization as well as its long record in pro-poor policymaking. Recent World Bank accounts of Bolivian reforms in the 1990s have presented the Bolivian experience as a model for poverty alleviation strategies in general.<sup>12</sup> The thrust of this section is to stress that these positive results can best be understood by reference to extensive and pre-existing processes of political learning and capacity-building; and that for the future a long-term perspective will be needed to confirm their durability. The period that runs between the Agrarian Reform in 1953 and the recent Popular Participation Reform in 1994, provides a four-decade stretch by which to evaluate the long-term politics of rural policy reform (see stylized chronology

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<sup>12</sup> See Wolfensohn (1999a and b).

on page 10).<sup>13</sup> This section centres on the construction and diffusion of grassroots political capabilities that bridge both periods. The political focus is meant to address the organizational and ideological shifts that sustained the development of popular grassroots movements during and after reform. While the historical record provides a rich source of contextual materials on which to draw upon, the ‘stylized facts’ presented in this section aim only to provide the bases for an analytic narrative on the long-term politics of pro-poor policies. Three themes emerge throughout this account. First, the Bolivian experience suggests that while the adoption of pro-poor policies has allowed for the development of grassroots political capabilities, the *avoidance* of anti-poor policies is at least of equal (if not of greater) importance in hindering capabilities. Periods of dictatorship, civil strife and hyperinflation have had disruptive effects, overcome only by new cycles of sustainable political engagement. Second, genuinely pro-poor policies have created political spaces and resources that provide unintentional sources of mobilization and activism. The development of political capabilities is not containable to narrowly defined objects of policy reform. Third, while the survival of political capabilities is significant, their “success” depends on continuous cycles of reconstruction and relegitimation. The task of building and diffusing capabilities does not end, despite changes in political actors and the content of political justification. The politics of poverty exit are an important locus of such change, as they determine who exits from past cycles and who renews future cycles of political collective action.

*From Agrarian Reform to Popular Participation*

11. Universal suffrage, agrarian reform, nationalization of mines and education reform are among the hallmarks of the Bolivian National Revolution.<sup>14</sup> The agrarian reform, **A Stylized Chronology (1952-1999)**

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<sup>13</sup> See Medina (1997), Molina and Arias (1997) and Blanes and Ayo (1998) for historical analyses that link both reforms.

<sup>14</sup> Early assessments of the National Revolution were made by Montenegro (1953); Alexander (1958); Peñaloza (1963); Almaraz (1969), Zondag (1966); Malloy (1970). More recent assessments include Zavaleta (1986); Dunkerley (1984); Malloy and Gamarra (1988); Klein (1992) and Whitehead (1984).

		Political Capabilities	
	Collective/Popular Actions	Collective Ideas/Identities	Bridging Capabilities
<b>1952-1964</b> 1952-56	Territorial claims over land. Massive creation of sindicatos agrarios.	Transformative action (National Revolution, Agrarian Reform)	Creation of umbrella organizations linked to the MNR
1956-64	Corporate and clientelistic claims over public infrastructure, services and goods.		Corporate/clientelistic relations with MNR.
<b>1964-1985</b> 1964-69	Rural and urban migration.	Power Sharing (Military-Campesino Pact)	Corporate pact with Military.
1969-79	Territorial claims in the eastern lowlands. Rural and urban migration	Radicalization (Corporate Breakup)	Ethnic (Katarista), Marxist (UCAPO) and Independent (Bloque) Campesino movements
1979-85	Clientelistic claims over development projects, NGOs. Drought. Urban migration.	Mass Mobilization (Popular Mobilization, Democratic Transition, Market reforms)	Creation of umbrella organization (CSUTCB), Ethnic leadership.
<b>1985-1999</b> 1985-1999	Territorial and functional claims over participatory planning. Public goods provision (education, health water works). Community oversight of local government.	Crisis and Regeneration (State reforms, Popular Participation reform. Reform of Agrarian Reform)	CIDOB Indigenous Peoples March. Cocalero movement. Political participation in local and national elections.

initiated in 1953, has been regarded as one of the most comprehensive land redistribution initiatives carried out in the region.<sup>15</sup> The expropriation of hacienda lands

<sup>15</sup> Assessments of the agrarian reform include Heath (1959); Heath (1963); Carter (1965) Antezana and Romero (1968); Heath, Erasmus and Buechler (1969); Dandler (1969); Dandler and Torrico (1986);

and redistribution to tenant farmers (*pegalujeros*), smallholders (*piqueros*) and campesino communities (*comunidades originarias*) was marked by popular mobilization and political activism, followed by successive periods of demobilization, political negotiation and remobilization. A sharp demographic shift, led by rapid population growth and urban migration would also affect the development of the reform over three generations.

#### *1952-1964*

12. The agrarian reform of 1953 comprised three different sets of land redistribution schemes. The first, and most prominent, centered on the break-up of the hacienda land tenure system in the Andean highlands and valleys. Between 1953 and 1993, the land reform distributed close to 20 million hectares of land, benefiting some 550,000 families in the highlands and valleys.<sup>16</sup> The second scheme, largely initiated in the early 1960s, promoted settlement or colonization programs in the eastern lowlands, through planned and spontaneous resettlement. Between 1967 and 1993 some 3 to 5 million hectares were distributed to approximately 800, 000 families. The third initiative, also developed in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on the redistribution of non-hacienda land in the lowlands. Between 1967 to 1993, some 25 to 30 million hectares of fiscal non-hacienda land were granted to a reduced number of landholders, today regarded as large and medium sized commercial landholders.<sup>17</sup>

13. The months immediately preceding the passage of the Agrarian Reform Law were characterized both by bottom-up popular mobilization as well as top-down political activism. A key aspect of the early land reform period (1952-1953) was the convergence of smallholder and tenant farmer claims on the one hand, and the spread of the MNR party activism, on the other. The creation of thousands of new sindicatos agrarios promoted and supported by the ascendant MNR, would set the grounds for a decades long period of corporate-building and political clientelism. During the early reform years,

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Albo and Barnadas (1990); Albó (1985); Rivera (1984); Calderón and Dandler (1986); Urioste (1987); Cárdenas (1987); Ticona, Rojas and Albó (1995); Muñoz (1995); Muñoz and Lavadenz (1997).

<sup>16</sup> Land titles maintained a three tiered tenure system, which recognized “individual”, “communal” and “pro indiviso” (individual access communal land) tenure rights.

<sup>17</sup> Figures from Muñoz and Lavadenz (1997).

sindicatos agrarios emerged to claim hacienda land and oppose political and policy reversals. While community-level mobilization had emerged at the grassroots in the Cochabamba high valleys, the massive political creation of sindicatos and milicias would be attributed to the active engagement of the ruling MNR.<sup>18</sup> Sindicato creation was by no means homogenous. While radicalized sindicatos emerged from the bottom up to aggregate dispersed landless workers and tenant farmers in Ucareña, they were formed by MNR rural party bosses in Sipe Sipe, and merged with existing community organizations in the northern La Paz communities of Achacachi and Jesús de Machaca. By 1956-60, the object of collective action had shifted from land reclamation to political negotiation with a highly dispersed network of state patronage. Public works and food subsidization schemes managed through line ministries and departmental prefectures were channeled through networks of party sympathizers and militants, inducing atomization within the national campesino movement. By the early 1960s the zeal of the initial period of revolution and reform had abated and given way to a more pragmatic realignment with the emerging developmental state.

#### *1964-1985*

14. By 1964, after twelve years in power, the MNR secured a second electoral victory at the polls. A coup d'etat led by Paz Estenssoro's popular and charismatic vice-president, General Rene Barrientos, would initiate a fifteen year period of military rule, marked by interim periods of civilian government.<sup>19</sup> The diminished political power of MNR patrons and the political containment strategy of the military vis-à-vis radicalized miner and worker movements, led to the 1964 establishment of a Military Campesino Pact, which endured throughout the 1960s. The Pact, thus substituted the MNR-union clientelistic ties, secured the continuity of land reform gains and set the foundations of a new corporate-style clientelistic political relation.

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<sup>18</sup> Although sindicatos campesinos had emerged throughout the 1930s (Dandler 1969) and had organized a national congress by 1947 (Dandler and Torrico 1986), the massive mobilization of sindicatos campesinos would only emerge in the wake of the Ayopaya massacre and the 1952 national revolution.

<sup>19</sup> See Malloy and Gamarra (1988) and Dunkerley (1984) for political and historical accounts of this period.

15. The demobilization of the campesino union movement was to last only a few years. By 1968, calls for an independent and unaligned union leadership emerged after the Barrientos administration floated a new policy proposal aimed at consolidating a single rural land tax.<sup>20</sup> Three different splinter movements emerged within the union system. An Independent Campesino Block (BIC) mobilized in the highlands and valleys, supported by the workers' COB. An alternative, leftist Unión de Campesinos Pobres (UCAPO) also arose in the colonization areas of the eastern lowlands. Finally, an Aymara-led katarista movement emerged in the highland province of Aroma, eventually rising to the leadership of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos (CNTCB) in 1971.<sup>21</sup> The Banzer coup d'état of 1971, contained the splintered campesino movement and restored the Military Campesino Pact until the mid-1970s. The devaluation of 1972 and price hikes decreed in 1974, however, fueled a bloody confrontation between military troops and campesino protesters in Tolata, re-igniting a more radical mobilization period aimed at opposing the authoritarian regime and pushing toward a popular and democratic transition. The creation of a unified and katarista-led Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) would mark the organizing zenith of the campesino movement in 1979, leading a three year stretch of active popular mobilization through the democratic transition in 1982.

16. The corporate-style political negotiation and ideological pragmatism of the first ten years of the Military Campesino Pact (1964-1974) led to a second and more conflictual period (1974-1982) marked by mass mobilization and social protest. At the grassroots level, the campesino movement presented a less-unified front. State-led clientelistic networks, access to settlement lands, technology transfer and other inputs, were sustained by pragmatic and heterogeneous political alliances. The emergence of ethnic and regional political claims, would further atomize local level collective action, but set the grounds for pivotal popular mobilizations, road blocks, marches and strikes

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<sup>20</sup> The "Proyecto del Impuesto Unico" had been considered by the MNR leadership in 1963, but discarded for the potential political effects (Lavaud 1986:283-284). According to Lavaud, the proposal was revived through USAID technical assistance by the Inter-American Committee on Development and the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center.

<sup>21</sup> See Albó and Barnadas (1990) and Rivera (1984) on the breakdown of the Military Campesino Pact. Also, Lavaud (1986).

throughout the democratic transition period. During this period (1982-1985), the collapse of the developmental state and the ravages of hyperinflation, allowed little or no policy room for pro-poor policymaking. This had important and lasting effect over both local and national level grassroots movements. The disruption of stable political channels of interaction and intermediation would result in an prolonged period of crisis within the peasant and workers grassroots movement for close to a decade.

### *1985-1999*

17. By 1985, and with the implementation of an orthodox “new economic policy”, the pendulum of mass mobilization had moved away from the radical confrontation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to a period of political restructuring within the worker (COB) and campesino (CSUTCB) union hierarchy.<sup>22</sup> At the grassroots level, the emergence of a vast network of non-governmental organizations and government sponsored social development funds, provided a new flurry of local developmental activism. Two new movements emerged from outside the established national union system, to challenge the leadership of the declining CSUTCB. The first, led by coca-leaf growers in the Chapare lowlands pointed toward a new period of political mobilization in the late 1980s, this time against government attempts to outlaw and substitute coca crops.<sup>23</sup> The second, brought to public attention in 1990, with a month-long march of lowlands indigenous communities to the city of La Paz, marked the rediscovery of indigenous territorial and political claims in the eastern lowlands, Chaco and Amazonia.<sup>24</sup> Both movements challenged the corporate politics that had characterized the campesino leadership for decades, and suggested a reappraisal of the highland and katarista hegemony within the CSUTCB. The acute drought and rural migration of 1982-1985 also challenged the “rural” bias of the campesino movement, which increasingly became urban throughout the 1980s.

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<sup>22</sup> See Lazarte (1985), Medina (1985) on the ideological and organizational decline of the COB, and Calla, Pinelo and Urioste (1989) on the CSUTCB 1989 congress debate.

<sup>23</sup> See Sanabria (1993) on the emergence of the coca campesino movement.

<sup>24</sup> See Van Cott (1994) and Yashar (1998) for a chronology and comparative analysis of the lowland indigenous movement.

18. From a policy perspective, two ambitious and contrasting approaches to pro-poor policymaking characterized this period. The first, initiated by the Social Emergency Fund in 1986, aimed at providing a short-term safety net for displaced state workers and jump-starting public works.<sup>25</sup> The safety net approach was to take on a number of incarnations – through the Social Investment Fund (FIS), Regional Development Fund (FNDR), Peasant Development Fund (FDC) and Alternative Development Fund (FONADAL), all sharing a demand-driven and targeted policy approach, largely insulated from political pressures and directly accountable to the President. Poverty targeting, long-term social investments in education and health and stable macroeconomic policies were at the core of the new approach, and would be constitute a dominant paradigm between 1985 and 1993. The second, and more intense institution-building period, started in 1994 with the implementation of ambitious and innovative reforms focusing on decentralization, privatization, pension and education reform. Designed in top-down fashion, the Popular Participation reform is perhaps the most salient of the recent reforms for its political and institutional effects. Initially rejected by the campesino and indigenous leadership during the latter part of 1994, the reform was to gain momentum with the municipal elections of 1995, which for the first time included open and direct rural municipal elections.<sup>26</sup> Close to one fourth of municipal councilors in 311 municipalities were self-identified campesino or indigenous candidates.<sup>27</sup> More important for the grassroots movement, however, was the institutionalization of participatory planning procedures involving some 14,000 campesino and indigenous and neighborhood organizations.<sup>28</sup> While the development of the Popular Participation is widely regarded as being marked by an equal measure of “success” and “failure”, the emphasis on territorially based grassroots organizations, has redrawn the rules of the game for political intermediation and policymaking in rural areas. State patronage and political clientelism which had relied on

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<sup>25</sup> For analyses of safety net policies during this period see Graham (1994), Jorgensen, Grosh and Schacter (1992), and Wiesgraft (1993).

<sup>26</sup> See Molina (1997) for an account of the policymaking process behind the Popular Participation reform. Also, Gray-Molina, Perez and Yañez (1999), Graham (1998) and Grindle (forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> See Albó (1997), Ayo (1997) on the emergence of indigenous candidacies, and Calla and Calla (1996), Rojas and Zuazo (1996) on the municipal elections of 1995.

<sup>28</sup> On participatory planning, budgeting and oversight, see Medina (1997), and Gray-Molina (1997).

national-to-local networks of redistribution and reciprocity, today compete with newly established local networks – some building upon the political capabilities of a previous era – and some newly adapted to the new rules of political engagement.

### *Building Capabilities*

19. The construction of political capabilities initiated during the agrarian reform can be regarded as a highly iterative process of grassroots organizational and ideological change. The broad-based and hierarchical *sindicato* system of community *sindicatos*, provincial *centrales* and departmental federations has survived and been transformed over long periods of demobilization, co-option and assimilation to larger mass movements. The organizational capabilities of the *sindicato* system changed from playing a largely redistributive role during the agrarian reform, to a political bargaining role during the developmental state period, and a contestative role in local politics at present. Political capabilities forged in one arena of collective action have drifted to others, often at the expense of community organizations themselves, as suggested by the proliferation of single interest and functional organizations (credit groups, producer associations, education boards) in recent years. The collective identity embodied in the *sindicato* movement has also changed. The revolutionary zeal of the 1950s diminished in the following decade leading to long-term and stable clientelistic relations with a hegemonic party and military leadership. The survival of a patrimonial political culture today, has increasingly melded to more diverse sources of political identity filtering ethnic, class and regional identities in the public arena. The politicization of the *cocalero* movement, the participation of lowland indigenous movements in national elections, and the proliferation of regionally circumscribed “populisms” in local politics (CONDEPA, UCS, NFR), have each reconstructed new political capabilities from past collective action sources. The grassroots and territorially-based hierarchies of the *sindicato* system are the profitable targets of present-day political party reforms such as those initiated by the MIR and MNR. Even the anti-party movements emerging for the municipal elections of 1999 aim to capitalize on existing political networks and clienteles on behalf of “civic renewal” (Movimiento Bolivariano and the Movimiento sin Miedo). If the present period of political reinvention is any indication, the organizational and ideological capabilities

inherited and transformed since the agrarian reform, will continue to provide a source of political construction at the community level in the future.

### *Bridging Capabilities*

20. The political capabilities built through the Bolivian sindicato system bridged local and national political networks through periods of reform and counter-reform. The long cycles of campesino engagement and disengagement with the state undergirded shorter periods of activism, mobilization and collective action.. The corporate state that made a unified campesino sector “functional” to social integration and political balance from 1952-1982, also hastened factional disintegration with the its neoliberal demise. Since 1985, the leadership struggles at the top of the CSUTCB have more often mirrored the “usual politics” of the pragmatic and political party sharing arrangements than the “radical politics” usually attributed to the COB. The proliferation of local campesino movements, parties and factions within traditional political parties has added to the diffusion of political bridges between the union system and outside political actors. Today, no single instance within the campesino movement articulates a single voice for “campesino” interests, but multiple and heterogeneous sub-sectors are still effective political brokers at the local and regional level. Besides bridging constituencies divided by geographic or political barriers, political capabilities have also been a source of historical memory linking past collective experiences to present. The Popular Participation reform has, in particular, fed upon the latent resources of past mobilization and contestation bestowed by territorial grassroots organizations. The initial opposition to the reform was decried early on as an attempt to “MNRize the reform”, as had occurred forty years earlier.<sup>29</sup> Subsequent adoption and appropriation of new rules of the game, and the mobilization of grassroots organizations also remind of the activism that emerged with the land titling process of the 1950s. Memories of mobilization and political activism, are not limited to the grassroots movement, but also extend to a younger generation of political entrepreneurs eager to recreate and control new sources of local political power,

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<sup>29</sup> See Ticona and Albó (1997) and Ticona, Rojas and Albó (1995) for a grassroots analysis of the adoption of the popular participation reform in the northern highlands.

as occurred two generations ago.<sup>30</sup> Capabilities for collective action and collective memories of past action continue to play a critical role bridging past and present.

*Politics of Poverty Exit*

21. The Bolivian experience with pro-poor reforms brings to bear a recurring paradox relating to collective action and individual decision-making. The resources and opportunities marshaled by mobilized collective action habitually benefit participants unequally. Families with dependent children, for example, may benefit more from collectively built schools and health posts, than families whose children have grown and left the community. Likewise, local political brokers are likelier to benefit more from negotiated instances of collective action than non-brokers. However, the incentives for collective action and recursive political engagement are not greatly diminished by such asymmetries. Communities organize and engage in new power relations continuously, despite “exit” by political entrepreneurs. New local brokers emerge, leadership rules are recast and collective action cycles are re-activated. Unlike human or physical capital which may be lost with relocation, political capabilities are being continuously developed. The heterogeneous development of the Bolivian Popular Participation reform suggests that even the best designed participatory of reforms will be subject to opportunistic capture, if only because the rules of clientelistic competition are excludable. Ironically, the sources of long-term accountability (both in terms of answerability and sanctioning) are likely to emerge from within these very networks. Local grassroots leaders are challenged and kept accountable by aspiring leaders and disparate community voices, in the normal process of political bargaining that comes from community organizing, rather than through the oversight mechanisms formally designed to sanction them. Such endogenous sources of accountability, may then rely on outside checks and balances -- Comptroller’s Office, Ombudsmen-- for outside legitimation or conflict resolution. In this respect, the comparisons between highland Bolivian and Peruvian communities are illustrative.<sup>31</sup> Although Aymara community organizations exhibit similar patterns of collective resource management, and shared ritual, ethnic and social sources of

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<sup>30</sup> See Molina (1997) and Archondo (1997).

organization, the political capabilities developed on either side of the altiplano are very distinct. The long-term construction of political capabilities initiated with the contested merger of the Bolivian *sindicato/ayllu* system in the 1950s has created a local arena for political learning and mobilizing that allows a substantial degree of autonomy in bridging, contesting or opposing favorable or unfavorable national political cycles. In contrast, the discontinuous and at times violent experience of Peruvian community organizing has been less conducive to the long-term political learning and capability-building that could be massively mobilized for pro-poor policymaking at present. In both cases, the development (or disruption) of political capabilities draws on long-term historical experiences, constructed through local collective action, and diffused through outward political bridging.

#### **IV Discussion**

22. At this point it may be useful to consider what should be counted as a “pro-poor policy”, and how one might assess its success. On the first question it may be instructive to review the past half-century of Bolivian history, to identify in very summary form the successive priorities of social policy and consider which if any of these could be labeled “pro-poor” policies. Before the Second World War, social policy was largely regressive and exclusionary. Apart from rather hesitant and highly selective policies targeted on the small minority of the workforce engaged in permanent wage labour (and therefore eligible for social security benefits and union organisation) there was little that could be considered a “pro-poor” policy. After 1952, radical asset redistribution – most notably but not exclusively through land reform – opened the way for enhanced self-organisation by the poor, and conferred them with short-term benefits at the direct expense of the “rich” (mostly landowners and mineowners). This was followed by the enactment of universal suffrage and a variety of legislative measures that at least on paper conferred more or less universal benefits to the population as a whole (from primary education to basic health care). This extremely precarious and largely theoretical welfare state can be regarded as the highlight of pro-poor intentions, though there is more scope to debate its

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<sup>31</sup> See Stern (1987) for a long-term account of Bolivian/Peruvian community organizing.

effects. It was followed in much of the 1960s and 1970s by what might be called state-led growth policies, which aimed to help the poor indirectly (if at all) by strengthening the national economy as a whole. The hyper-inflationary collapse of the early 1980s was followed by extremely severe stabilization policies, slightly softened by the adoption of targeted emergency social programs to assist those in the most extreme --and prevent transitional-- distress. The longer-term policy became one of stabilizing property rights, consolidating and downsizing taxation, and providing relative currency stability on the basis that the unorganized majority would benefit more from that than from any activist pro-poor policy. Finally, during the 1990s, more innovative pro-poor policies have been attempted within broadly neoliberal constraints. This paper has focused on the development of political capabilities developed during the Agrarian Reform and rekindled during the Popular Participation experience, but other measures are also worth discussing, including the provision of micro-credit and the implementation of primary education and health reform during the late 1990s. Thus, over fifty years we have identified several contrasting policy orientations concerning the central issue of poverty. Only targeting could be viewed as an essentially “pro-poor” policy. All the others exhibit a mixture of objectives. Some were pro-poor policies in intention, others had a mixture of other objectives as well. They were far from being consistent (asset redistribution, for example, was the opposite of strengthening property rights). In practice, it is not straightforward to identify what counts as a “pro-poor” policy, and different policies may have had that effect in different sequences. Given the difficulties in establishing direct causal linkages between “pro-poor policies” and “pro-poor outcomes”, the null hypothesis must merit serious consideration. That is to say, viewing public policy from a long-term perspective, whatever other factors that may contribute to pro-poor outcomes, it cannot be assumed that pro-poor policies play any part. This paper does not make any such assumption, but it does provide two types of arguments (one negative, one positive – both summarized at the conclusion) supported by some case study evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis.

23. The emphasis here is on the very long term. The World Bank aims to halve the number of poor by 2015, which is a specific ambitious and long-term goal. But children and teenagers currently suffering from malnutrition or missing basic education will be less than half way through their working lives in sixteen years time, and many of these

problems will be passed on as disabilities to their children. The eventual success of pro-poor policies must therefore be considered not just over a single generation, but over several. By “very long term” we mean something like half a century or even a full human lifetime. This is not the only way to evaluate pro-poor policies but it is one necessary and possible way. It is particularly relevant when considering the broader political dimensions of an anti-poverty strategy. Short-term emergency measures may produce a substantial impact on certain manifestations of poverty (improved nutrition, better market access or credit availability) But for these gains to become cumulative and self-sustaining the beneficiaries will require self-organisation, influence over policymaking and the experience and confidence to use these advantages effectively. In other words, they will require an extended process of political learning, deliberation, and self-expression. A key theme of this paper, supported by the case study, is that when they are large scale, such processes need to be evaluated in a very long term horizon. For example, the asset redistribution component of a land reform cannot be fully assessed in isolation from its effects on the second and third generations of beneficiaries, nor can the consequences of a literacy campaign be evaluated solely in terms of the first round effects.

24. The second question – how to assess success – is obviously related to the first. It can be tackled from two contrasting perspectives – from one that is short-term and technocratic, on the one hand, versus one that is long-term and political. This paper has sought to demonstrate the importance of contrasting both perspectives and not reducing the analysis either to one or the other, Instead, we compare the two for the purpose of clarifying how well they complement each other, how much they overlap, and where they may differ. First, then, let us consider what would count as a successful pro-poor policy, from a short-term technocratic perspective. The central case would presumably be an initiative designed and implemented by a specific government agency, on the basis of a diagnosis of some pre-identified aspect of poverty (lack of food security, for example, or absence of micro-credits) that could be isolated as a critical variable, and that could be rectified within a fixed period by targeted government action. The “success” of such a policy would presumably depend upon whether the initial diagnosis was well-founded, whether the resulting initiative was correctly designed and implemented and whether the target for corrective action was met on schedule and at acceptable cost. No doubt, in

practice, even short-term technocratic pro-poor policies may be difficult to isolate and assess as neatly as this, but the principle seems fairly clear. On the ground there are more likely to be competing government agencies each with its own take on priorities and procedures. The pre-identified poverty target is likely to interact in other issues, both poverty related and extraneous (e.g. improved food security or micro-credit availability may sharpen issues of gender imbalance or other types of inequity in access to government resources; either of these advances may threaten the livelihood of intermediaries such as truckers or merchants whose brokerage is required at election times, etc.). If the initiative generates political capital for a powerful minister then it may be rated a success and extended beyond its initial time frame despite failing to hit its original targets, and vice versa. However “successful” on a narrow front there can be no guarantee that this particular initiative is contributing to a cumulative stream of effective and appropriate pro-poor policies that will prove durable and transformative over the longer run. On the contrary, an isolated “showcase” success all too often eases the pressure for other pro-poor policies, and entrenches bureaucratic interests committed to keeping the poverty alleviation budget under their own control, even if that means limiting the overall scale of poverty alleviation initiatives. This is especially likely when the poor are passive recipients rather than active and autonomous participants in the shaping of pro-poor policies. Yet from a short-term technocratic perspective the more the beneficiaries of a specific initiative intervene in its provision the greater the risk of obstruction and delay – the less the probability of an easily reportable target-hitting “success”.

25. Contrast this first, rather stylised, account of a successful pro-poor policy with that suggested by the second perspective, one that is both long-term and political in approach. By definition there will be no single blueprint, agency, or even unique author of a long-term set of pro-poor policies. Although there may well have been a initial diagnosis and an original driving force, over the ensuing decades this will have been so repeatedly revised, adapted, and transferred from one source of authorship to another that both the contents and the responsibility will inevitably have been diffused. Viewed from this perspective the criteria for “success” of a pro-poor policy would have to include its acceptance (and internalization) by “the poor” as a collectivity, otherwise the requisite innovations would not have been stabilized. It is here that the “political”

dimension of long-term pro-poor policies becomes indispensable. Since there can be no permanent external authorship and control of these long-term changes they will need to become “owned” and monitored by the beneficiaries, who must therefore develop their capacities for deliberation and self-government. Thus both the conception of what constitutes a pro-poor policy, and the definition of “success” will be different when we adapt a long-term political perspective on these issues, as opposed to a short-term technocratic one.

26. As noted in the introductory paragraph, current World Bank thinking on poverty reduction has gone well beyond the “technocratic” perspective sketched above, and indicates a clear willingness to incorporate ideas from an alternative longer-term perspective. The most recent outline on the 2000/1 report states explicitly that the forthcoming WDR “will have to go beyond standard economic analysis and reach out into the insights and contributions of other social sciences”, and it describes “the challenge for policymakers” as “the design and implementation of institutions, mechanisms and policies at various levels to harness the potential for poverty reduction, by setting a long-term course that will access global and local opportunity and allow broad sharing of gains from development, while managing the short term risks...[ ].<sup>32</sup> It envisages consultations with development practitioners, NGOs, the direct involvement of the poor and the voice of the non-poor, particularly “social elites which have a strong influence on policy responses”. From a politics of development perspective, this emphasis takes the Bank beyond the narrowness of the technocratic approach, which is welcome. But also opens the way to a babel of incompatible claims and interpretations unless we can establish clarity about the way alternative disciplinary insights are to be assimilated and how competing voices are to be reconciled.<sup>33</sup> The assumption that there remains a powerful and unified agency in control of the essential variables that will determine whether or not global poverty reduction can be met is not one readily

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<sup>32</sup> World Bank (1999).

<sup>33</sup> It is instructive to compare the pro-poor approach advocated by the founder of the Grameen Bank, Mohammad Yunus in his *Banker to the Poor* (Yunus 1998). While his strictures against the aid bureaucracy and the economics profession may be exaggerated, his policy credentials deserve respect. How can his approach be reconciled with orthodoxy?

harmonised with standard political analysis.<sup>34</sup> This raises a number of difficult issues that may need to be aired elsewhere in our discussion. For the purposes of heuristic clarity, meanwhile, this paper continues with the stylised contrast between a “short-term technocratic” and a “long-term political” approach.

27. Both cases present parallel analytical problems. It is not straightforward to isolate a “pro-poor” policy from other related issues, whether the perspective used is short-term or long, “success” is also open to debate in both cases, though more obviously when the chain of cause and effect linking intention to outcome is so much longer, in the second case, and the elements of central control and co-ordination have been dissolved. In neither case is it sufficient to establish intention and then match it by outcome. The poor may benefit as intended, not because of the pro-poor policies but for some other reason. This is true even of the most short-term and technocratic of policies (e.g. post-hurricane reconstruction plans may only provide a governmental gloss to essential works that the locals would somehow have undertaken anyway). It is all the more of a consideration when very broad diffuse and long-term consequences are attributed to measures taken far in the past. When analysing long-term and complex chains of causation, one must expect to find a succession of stages, intervening variables and counter-currents.<sup>35</sup> As illustrated by the Bolivian example, there were no unilinear advances from disempowerment of the poor to their acquisition of political capabilities. On the contrary, the process was more often “dialectical”, in the sense temporary advances on one front (say asset redistribution) elicited new sources of resistance that would have to be assimilated by shifting to an alternative response. There was no guarantee that each positive stage increased the probability of a cumulative response to the next challenge and stimulated the appetite for more self-organisation. At the end of a very long process of this kind there is no final cut-off point. This also means that only

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<sup>34</sup> The evidence from countries like Russia and Pakistan suggests that far from controlling events the international financial organisations may be controlled by local dynamics beyond their control.

<sup>35</sup> For example, although to some extent one might argue that political capability-building is in itself a pro-poor outcome, for the most part it has to be seen as an intermediary variable of interest to us because it should contribute to the promotion and entrenchment of other pro-poor outcomes. Moreover, there can obviously be no guarantee that strengthened political capabilities will always be used in this way, and will never be used to block pro-poor initiatives. As an intervening variable we may be able to argue and demonstrate that capability-building creates an enhanced potential for effective pro-poor policies and so raises the odds in favour of such outcomes, but the connection is by no means automatic or assured.

relative or comparative yardsticks of success or failure can be applied, and that these will often rest on counterfactual judgements, rather than formal modeling.

28. Although these analytical problems may be more severe under the second perspective than under the first, they are mainly different in degree, rather than in kind. Thus the same methods that are used to tackle such problems when evaluating short-term technocratic pro-poor initiatives can in principle be made to work when evaluating long-term political transformations as well. This involves reliance not on a single method, but rather on a combination of methods. Thus, where possible objective measurement and testing for association should be undertaken. But the construction of plausible explanatory methods is also appropriate. In addition the more qualitative methods of comparative and historical judgment, and even the recovery of participant memories and interpretations can also serve to eliminate misinterpretations, and even to provide corroboration of probabilistic inferences. Even when all these methods are combined to maximum effect they can be insufficient to establish conclusive proof of any particular causal connections, even on the short-term technocratic perspective, and all the more so on most long-term political interpretations. Therefore, all postulated results linking pro-poor policies or initiatives to subsequent outcomes or "successes" must remain provisional and subject to correction in the light of further evidence. However, with appropriate use of all the available methods relatively robust probabilities can often be established even on the longer term perspective. This paper has attempted to demonstrate the general point by reference to a particular sequence of developments in Bolivia. If the hypothesised causal processes were indeed in operation, that would represent a substantial contribution to the explanation of poverty alleviation prospects in Bolivia. If they were in operation as hypothesised, then it is difficult to see what more conclusive method of demonstration could be developed – although every effort to do so should be commended. To refuse to consider this type of explanation on grounds of methodological punitivity would be to turn a blind eye to useful knowledge in an area where the alternative ways of knowing are also limited and unsatisfactory, and where a theoretically well structured interpretation with reasonable evidentiary support should provide a better basis for policy-making than the alternative, namely a refusal to contemplate the long-term political aspects of causation.

29. Although this paper has only presented one illustrative case study of the long-term political approach, there is certainly scope for several more. As mentioned in the introduction we think that at least thirty developing countries can be evaluated in this way. Latin America provides a particularly promising laboratory in part because for almost the whole of the region, the necessary minimum conditions of rational integration have been met for at least the half-century we propose as the “very long term”. In addition, at various times different Latin American governments have experimented with almost every possible variety and sequence of poverty management strategies that we identified for the Bolivian case. For example, Argentina under the first Peronist regime carried the universal welfare benefits model about as far as it could go, and under the present Menem administration, the same party has pursued liberalization and stabilization to the limit (in each case scorning trade-offs with other approaches). Cuba has persisted for over forty years with an extreme version of public ownership, rationing and the curbing of market mechanisms in the pursuit of equality. Guatemala has a similarly durable and inflexible record of controlling poverty through repression and exclusion, including the denial of basic education. Venezuela currently seems to be experimenting with a late vintage model of an anti-party strategy that was thought until recently to have been completely discredited -- economic populism for short-hand. The restless search for successful pro-poor policies is one of the main defining characteristics of Latin America’s comparative political economy, and after at least half a century of experiments in the region, still remains notorious for its inability to reduce extreme inequality or to eliminate the mechanisms that reproduce both inequality and severe poverty. Which is not to say that all these experiments have been equally unsuccessful. Just as we argued that compared to highland Peru, the cumulative learning experiences of the Bolivian poor have produced potentially more favourable capabilities and political endowments, so similar paired comparisons can generate similarly instructive path deviations – for example, contrasting Costa Rica and Nicaragua; or the Dominican republic or Haiti; or Puerto Rico and Cuba. All of these comparisons would seem to confirm the significance, for poverty outcomes, of long-term political processes of the kind identified in this paper.

30. The long-term political perspective on pro-poor policies is only one perspective among various. It is not intended to displace the rest, only to complement them. It does

not purport to resolve all questions about the determinants of success of pro-poor policies, only to highlight and clarify an important subset of such questions, as they concern one important (but by no means all –inclusive) set of countries and societies. The limited scope of these inquiries means that they are compatible with other types of work at other levels of analysis. We think that the ways we have characterised these particular issues, and outlined the appropriate methodology for investigating them, shows that they can be reconciled with more standard lines of enquiry, without forcing a choice between alternative styles of investigation.

31. Since the long-term political approach suggested in this paper may seem rather unconventional, it is worth mentioning other disciplinary approaches that provide an understanding of the dynamics of poverty which go much further in extending the time horizon of the analysis. For example, Bronislaw Geremek's comparative history of the emergence of anti-poverty policies in early modern Europe contains no suggestion that there were any that could be described as "pro-poor" policies.<sup>36</sup> He argues prevailing positions were motivated by a mixture of Christian belief about charity, and the propertied classes guilt and fear concerning the "dangerous classes". Insofar as repression was not considered enough of a remedy for the instability arising from the inevitable cycles of impoverishment, these policies sought to meet the basic needs of those as the "deserving" poor, in exchange for their commitment to work, order and submission. The deserving poor had to be distinguished from the undeserving poor and policies, also had to be designed such that they would not harm the interests of the mendicant orders (worthy beggars inspired by religious ideals), and would shelter the resources of the Church (since serving the glory of God necessarily took precedence over alleviating earthly poverty). Clearly those operating within the framework of belief could produce anti-poverty policies but not pro-poor policies. From this historical perspective, attention focuses on changes in the dominant ideology or belief system about the causes and moral significance of poverty, rather than on the mechanics of policy-making abstracted from social context. By the early eighteenth century European social theorists were beginning to produce rationalist, as opposed to religious standpoints on poverty alleviation, but here too it would be wrong to speak of a "pro-poor" orientation. Those

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<sup>36</sup> See Geremek (1994).

who celebrate Bernard de Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1716) as a foundation for currently fashionable ideas about economic liberalization, rational action and the scorn of altruism may have overlooked his key point that "in a free nation, where slavery is forbidden the surest treasure is the existence of large numbers of working poor". Poverty, in short, was the guarantee of a labour supply.<sup>37</sup> Geremek extends his discussion of changing such beliefs and theories up to the recent past, and concludes that accurate comparisons of poverty between different periods is "impossible because so many factors such as the degree of public awareness, the amount of information available...and the conceptions of what constituted basic needs were constantly changing...The way in which poverty was perceived, and in particular the way in which the poor perceived and felt their own poverty, played an enormously important role, quite independently of objective definitions of poverty or empirical methods of establishing the poverty line".<sup>38</sup> Not only historians adopting a long term view of poverty, but also anthropologists examining very concrete and immediate social realities, are more likely than most political scientists to express a radical skepticism about the basic assumptions on which a global pro-poor strategy would have to rest. Certainly the anthropologists of Latin America with whom I am most familiar tend to take the view that the official labeling of the communities in which they live and work as "poor" as disempowering and disrespectful; a case of boosting the authority of government bureaucrats and planners through negative stereotyping of an inferior Other. Most political scientists are easier to dialogue with than that.

## V. Conclusion

32. Although the issues considered in this paper are only a subset of all the topics that need to be addressed when analysing pro-poor policies, they are a substantial and

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<sup>37</sup> They may have also overlooked Jonathan Swift's devastating riposte to those who thought self-interest could govern society without any offsetting moral constraints. See his "Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of the Poor People from being a Burden to their Parents or the Country", Swift (1729).

<sup>38</sup> Geremek (1994: 235-237).

revealing subset.<sup>39</sup> Attending to them broadens our overall coverage, and adds to our armory of investigations and resources for policy-making. As stated in the introduction, the obvious null hypothesis would be that whatever factors may contribute to poverty alleviation they have nothing to do with the adoption of any variety of pro-poor policies. (It is easy to identify a range of standard alternative determinants of the level of poverty present in an economy, from factor endowments to security of property rights, to flexibility of markets etc.). A modest improvement on the null hypothesis would be to think that although deliberately designed pro-poor policies might have no effect, the cessation or suspension of patently anti-poor policies (such as apartheid, the denial of education to women, or the forced conscription of youth and even children in civil conflicts) could at least be expected to have a positive effect.

33. Our paper provides some reasons and evidence for the claim that one can go further than that. The claim is that in a substantial number of “developing” countries (notably in Latin America, but also including some highly populated countries in Africa and Asia and the Middle East) national integration the establishment of administrative capacity, and a degree of political accountability to the population has progressed to the point where broad gauge pro-poor policies can be introduced and sustained until they produce a marked, long-term positive effect. This claim rests partly on the assumption that a properly conceived “pro-poor orientation” must include a significant degree of participation in the shaping of public policy, unless it was also accompanied by and serve to reinforce other changes that would strengthen the capabilities of the poor over the long-term changes such as literacy drives, micro-credit provision, asset redistribution, improved communications, etc. Such changes are all potentially capability enhancing over the long run, although the chains of causation involved are lengthy, and often indirect. Nevertheless we have tried to present evidence and arguments that when such changes occur across a sufficiently broad range, they improve the chances that subsequent developments should, in many cases, also have a lasting pro-poor orientation. If so, this would positively defeat the “null hypothesis”.

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<sup>39</sup> We have not discussed the long-term politics of pacification and institution-building that would be needed in much of Sub-Saharan Africa before we could seriously establish lasting “pro poor” policies. Similarly, we have not discussed the long-term politics of overcoming kleptocratic rule in such countries as Russia and Indonesia. There can be no pro-poor policies there either, until these previous political problems have been tackled.

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