
CLACSO, CROP and Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (FJN)

workshop on:

The Role of the State in the Struggle against Poverty

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‘Anti-globalisation’ and anti-statism: Emergent challenges to the role of the state in poverty reduction

A background paper by

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At a time when global awareness of poverty would seem to be increasing and the cause of poverty eradication is moving up the global political agenda (albeit principally at the level of rhetoric), there are two trends that tend to marginalise or question the role of the state in poverty reduction. The first of these is the inherent *anti-statism* that attends the neoliberal, managerialist and communitarian agendas, each of which in their way is influencing approaches to poverty alleviation (e.g. Deacon 1997; 2000). The second stems from an assortment of radical and critical ideas associated with the ‘*anti-globalisation*’ movement: a complex alliance of disparate factions that challenge the global ascendancy of capitalism, liberal democracy, Western culture and neoliberal welfare theories (e.g. Amin 1997; Burbach et al. 1997). Although ‘*anti-globalisation*’ is a contested and problematic term, its very ambiguity captures some key controversies. The movement encompasses political and cultural, as well as economic concerns. It has attracted not only those who fear that economic globalisation is implicated in the weakening of welfare state provision, but those who recognise that it has in other respects augmented the power of the nation states of the developed world, while often stimulating exploitative or corrupt practices of state elites in the developing world. In this sense, ‘*anti-globalisation*’ and *anti-statism*, though they are ideologically opposed, are each sceptical of, if not hostile to, the role of the state in poverty reduction.

The workshop will address both these trends, ‘*anti-globalisation*’ and *anti-statism*, at each of three different levels of analysis – the *supra-national*, the *national* and the *sub-national* – generating six interlocking sub-themes that together provide an extensive framework for debate.

The supra-national level

Anti-statism is implicit within the approach of the principal supranational bodies concerned with poverty alleviation programmes. For example, the United Nations Development Programme has argued that economic, social and cultural rights should henceforward be given as much attention as civil and political rights (UNDP 2000).

However, the enforceability of rights, it is assumed, requires mechanisms akin to those by which global *trade* is governed. The UNDP's demands are couched in the language of depoliticised, evidence based, policy-making and the processes by which the achievement of human rights can be managed invoke such 'business' oriented techniques as self-assessment, benchmarking, culture change – drawn from the repertoires of new managerialist doctrine (Dean, forthcoming). The World Bank, in spite of its well-established preference for a safety net approach to poverty alleviation with a minimal direct role for the state, has in more recent publications (Narayan et al 2000; World Bank 2000) ostensibly embraced an approach premised on principles of 'good practice' in social policy. Good practice in the eyes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, however, almost certainly entails a pluralist approach that gives precedence to non-governmental organisations and communitarian ideology (e.g. Braathen 2000). The whole agenda is unfolding within the context of the continued attempts on the part of the World Trade Organisation to 'liberalise' the provision of essential public services. The emergent global orthodoxy appears to combine technocratic economic liberalism with a new brand of social conservatism that remains hostile to universal forms of state welfare (cf. Jordan 1998; Dean 1999).

'*Anti-globalisation*' found its voice as a movement through the spectacular public demonstrations mounted in opposition to the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999 and, since then, through an assortment of subsequent anti-capitalist demonstrations, the Jubilee 2000 campaign for the reduction of 'third world' debt, and the burgeoning of organisations like the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions in Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) and the World Social Forum. The movement gave new expression to what has been a relatively long-standing critical intellectual tradition and some of its seminal thinkers have expressed diffidence about the 'anti-globalisation' tag. Susan George, for example, has argued that '[t]his combat is really between those who want inclusive globalisation based on co-operation and solidarity and those who want the market to make all the decisions' (2001: 1). Globalisation remains a deeply contested phenomenon and it is important to distinguish between economic accounts that see globalisation in terms of the ascendancy of corporate capitalism, political accounts that regard it in terms of the reconfiguration of global governance, and cultural accounts that regard it in terms of an accelerating inter-permeability of human life-styles and values (e.g. Held et al. 1999). 'Anti-globalisation' is not necessarily a Luddite rejection of modernity or of internationalism, but may take on very different timbres depending on the priority that is accorded to the political and cultural dimensions of globalisation. It may embrace ideas of global citizenship and humane governance (e.g. Falk 1994; 1995) or of cosmopolitan citizenship and democratic autonomy (e.g. Held 1995). What 'anti-globalisation' analyses have in common is that they oppose the hegemony of free-market forces, but this leaves open a range of questions concerning the basis of our citizenship and the role (if any) of supranational state apparatuses.

The national level

Anti-statism is most evident in political discourses premised on the assumption that globalisation creates irresistible pressures that demand a new post-Keynesian economic orthodoxy and a transition from 'passive' protectionist welfare, to 'active' enabling forms of welfare. This orthodoxy rests, in fact, on a largely discredited

assumption. The sovereignty of nation states has been reconstituted, rather than diminished (e.g. Hirst and Thompson 1996). In particular, the power of states in developed capitalist nations – in relation both to the control of their own subjects and to developing nation states – is probably greater than ever before (e.g. Mann 1997). Despite this, neoliberal or New Right thinking has sought to sideline the nation-state in favour of private welfare provision, while communitarian or ‘Third Way’ thinking – as we shall see below – has been seeking to promote sub-national, decentralised, community-based or micro-level welfare initiatives, based on highly managerialist, rather than collective, notions of partnership and participation. We lack evidence as to whether these participatory, ‘civil society’ and ‘private-public partnership’ based strategies do enhance anti-poverty performance at the national level. At the same time, considerable emphasis is also placed at the national level on promoting forms of electoral democracy that fail to empower oppressed communities or to give a direct voice to those who are most disadvantaged. In the absence of any clear evidence that liberal democracies are any better at pro-poor governance than non-democracies, the UNDP (2000) continues to promote multi-party electoral democracy as the basis for securing the legitimacy of national governance. Democracy is undoubtedly essential to poverty eradication, but there are many kinds of democratic participation and ‘hollowed out’ state administrations accountable through a purely procedural democratic process may be less inclusive, less authoritative and have less impact on poverty reduction than governments that are responsive to those social movements, trade unions and grass roots networks that harness more direct and immediate forms of democratic participation (Braathen and Palmero, 2001).

‘*Anti-globalisation*’ thinking extends to those writers that challenge the assumption that the dominant social welfare regimes that characterise the different kinds of western capitalism (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1996; 1999) can necessarily provide the models by which to interpret or inform social development in the developing world. Wood (2001), for example, has argued that established welfare regime typologies rely on two key assumptions – a legitimated state and a pervasive labour market – that simply do not apply in say parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the South Asian sub-continent. There are parts of the ‘non-Western’ world – such as East Asia and Latin America – where the state and the market have emerged in ways that make it possible analytically to apply welfare regime typologies, albeit in ways that must accommodate quite different historical and cultural conditions, but there are others where it is necessary to acknowledge that economic activity remains embedded in social relations; where the formalisation process or ‘great transformation’ (Polanyi 1944) that has characterised the process of economic development has not occurred in any functional sense; and where informal community based social networks and movements still in practice have primacy as determinants of human welfare over such institutions as the state or the market. In such conditions entitlement to welfare may stem largely from ‘rights of adverse incorporation’: that is to say from codes of fairness negotiated under the rule of war lords, chieftains, mafia bosses, corrupt state bureaucrats and/or benign aid officials.

The sub-national level

Anti-statism, as intimated above, is axiomatic to the new public managerialism that currently informs the local governance initiatives of the international aid agencies

(Kettl 1999). In part this has been informed by communitarian notions of ‘social capital’ and a revitalised normative interest in the role of civil society and social networks – as a sphere that is conceptually distinct from state or the market – in which self-sufficiency may be fostered and welfare guaranteed without recourse to formal systems (Putnam 1993; Etzioni 1995; Woolcock 1998). In part it is informed by neo-liberal assumptions about the inherent efficacy of entrepreneurial motivation and business methods. An example here, would be the World Bank’s Social Funds initiative that is deliberately bypassing government agencies in order to give small capital grants to local communities (see Tandler 2000; Braathen et al. 2001).

‘*Anti-globalisation*’ is an implicit element to a number of localised resistance strategies across the developing world. At the simplest level there are the kind of peasant resistance strategies that employ acts of petty sabotage, pilfering and fraud as a means to subvert dysfunctional state and market institutions (e.g. Scott 1985; 1990). At a more sophisticated or creative level there is the kind of systematic informal economic activities that made possible the production, distribution and exchange of necessary goods and services in contravention of the constraints of the ‘group areas’ restrictions in apartheid South Africa and central planning restrictions in the former Soviet Union (see Jordan 1998: 164-5). At a policy level there are examples of radical rather than managerial participatory strategies – espoused by certain local state administrations in Brazil and India – that explicitly challenge the sclerotic, corrupt and anti-poor state bureaucracies of national government. At a more intellectual level we have a range of green-anarchist and civil society socialist critiques of *dirigiste* state bureaucracies and, for example, demands for the kind of counter-hegemonic globalisation process envisaged by de Sousa Santos (2001). He has argued that we should be reinterpreting ‘native languages of emancipation’ in order to provide the basis for a ‘bottom up’, cosmopolitan and progressive form of multiculturalism driven from the local level by a wide range of indigenous peoples, groups or organisations and by movements from the periphery of established national and supra-national systems. One example of a sub-national movement that has arguably managed since 1994 to combine several elements of an anti-globalisation strategy, is the Zapatista movement in Mexico (Kagarlitsky 2000).

Call for papers

As a supplement to the official Call for Papers for the workshop, we suggest that papers should critically address one or more sub-themes from within the following framework are therefore suggested. However, the topics identified are intended to be primarily illustrative. It is the overarching framework that will provide a theme for the workshop and potential contributors are encouraged to explore the many links or connections that can be made within this framework.

	<i>anti-statism</i>	<i>'anti-globalisation'</i>
<i>supra-national level</i>	The influence of global managerialism and/or communitarian doctrine in human development discourse.	Concepts of global citizenship and governance and their relevance to poverty eradication.
<i>National Level</i>	The tensions between effective pro-poor governance and liberal democracy at the level of the nation state.	The limits of capitalist welfare regime theory to the analysis of developing nation states. The experiences of radical-participatory strategies.
<i>sub-national level</i>	The application of new public managerialism, local governance, public-private 'partnerships', etc. in the developing world.	Examples of localised resistance strategies and radical 'grass-roots' participatory initiatives and their consequences in the developing world.

The framework should not be regarded as a rigid model, so much as a limited heuristic device to guide and stimulate discussion. More generally, we would welcome papers that address the 'global' question of which of these three levels provides the most 'effective' locus of poverty reduction, and how the levels interact in new emerging and/or competing welfare regimes (see Kagarlitsky, 2000).

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