

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies

# Interrogating the Civil Society Agenda: Social Movements, Civil Society, and Democratic Innovation

An International Conference  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
April 24-25 & 27, 2008

**Thursday, April 24 (UMass Campus Center, Reading Room)**

**7:00-7:15pm—Opening Remarks:** Sonia Alvarez, UMass

**7:15-9:00pm—Session One—*Culture and Politics in the Latin/a-o Américas I: Social Movements as Cultural Agents***

**Facilitators:** Lucía Suarez, Amherst College and Julie Hemment, UMass **Panelists:**

- Doris Sommer, Harvard University
- Graciela Monteagudo, UMass/Argentina
- Joseph Krupczynski, UMass, and Edwin Quiles, Universidad de Puerto Rico
- Rosa Oviedo, local cultural activist/Nicaragua
- Jeff Rubin, Boston University and UMass, and Emma Sokoloff-Rubin, Yale University
- José González, local composer-musician/Puerto Rico

**Session Goals:**

How do cultural producers act to shape social and political change? What aspects of social movement practices engage with cultural forms of power? How are artists/cultural agents influenced by social movements and political contexts? This panel introduces activist cultural projects involving theatre, literature, music, architecture, and performance in urban public spaces in the Latin/a-o Américas.

**9-10pm—Public Reception,** with musical performance by Western Massachusetts-based Peruvian musicians Henry Geddes (UMass) and Daniel Zamalloa (local artist)

**Friday, April 25 (UMass Campus Center, Reading Room)**

**8:30-9am—Continental breakfast**

**9-10:45am—Session Two—*Divergent Responses to Neoliberal Globalization I—Rebellions and Pueblazos: Mobs, Masses or Movements?***

**Facilitators:** Luis Carlos Castillo, Univalle/Colombia and Frank Holmquist, Hampshire College

**Panelists:**

- Amalia Pallares, University of Illinois, Chicago/Ecuador
- Guillermo Delgado, University of California, Santa Cruz/Bolivia
- Graciela di Marco, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina
- Maristella Svampa, CONICET, Argentina
- Liliana Cotto, Univeridad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

**Session Goals:** Since at least the turn of the current century, many, if not most, social movements in the Latin/a-o Américas have extrapolated the parameters of civic participation typical of electoral democracies. Do recent expressions of social mobilization, embodying new participatory practices, portend a deepening and extension of democracy? Or do they instead (or also) undermine democratic governability? Can we conceptualize apparently un/dis-organized social protest actions as social movements? What expressions/forms/modalities of contemporary activism seem particularly promising for democratic innovation and why? Panelists will discuss popular and indigenous mobilization in Bolivia and Ecuador, new forms of uncivil contention in Argentina, and popular movements in Puerto Rico.

**Coffee break—10:45-11am**

**11am-12:45pm—Session Three—*Divergent Responses to Neoliberal Globalization II—Citizen Participation and the Civil Society Agenda: Cooperation, Contestation, or Co-optation?***

**Facilitators:** Ben Junge, SUNY-New Paltz, and Barbara Cruikshank, UMass **Panelists:**

- Gianpaolo Baiocchi and Patrick Heller, Brown University
- Andrea Cornwall, University of Sussex, UK
- Brian Wampler, Boise State University
- Evelina Dagnino and Luciana Tatagiba, Unicamp, Brasil
- Kiran Asher, Clark University

**Session Goals:**

This panel will critically examine movements and popular projects that engage directly with progressive government and civil society institutions, such as participatory budgeting, government-community councils, and NGO funding sources. What have been the benefits and costs of embracing a civil society agenda? How can we evaluate the real vs. ideal meanings of participation and citizenship? What are the gendered and racial dynamics of speaking and acting "within the institutions"? Panelists will present critical reflections concerning engagement with institutions and address participatory experiences in Brazil, Colombia and across the Américas.

**1-2pm—Lunch break**

**2-3:45pm—Session Four—*The Nexus of Civil and “Un-civil” Politics I—Protesta y Propuesta in Social Movement Practices***

**Facilitators:** Michal Osterweil, UNC, Jillian Schwedler, UMass

**Panelists:**

- Virginia Vargas, Universidad de San Marcos, Peru
- Agustín Laó-Montes, UMass
- Millie Thayer, UMass

- Jeff Rubin, Boston University
- Raphael Hoetner, San Marcos, Peru

**Session Goals:**

This panel focuses on movements that straddle the divide between civil and uncivil society, between participation in government institutions and pressure on these institutions from the streets. To what extent and under what conditions do these movements join in initiatives sponsored by government or multilateral institutions? To what degree have they maintained their political autonomy and ability to exert pressure “from below?” How is this autonomy manifested? How do the particularities of either national political contexts and histories or the issues themselves influence the balance of strategies? What have been the costs and benefits of maintaining the tension between insider and outsider, civil and uncivil approaches? Panelists will address these issues with regard to feminist and women’s activism region wide, rural movements in Peru, and the issues confronting Afro-Latino activism across the hemisphere.

**3:45-4:15pm—coffee break**

**4:15-6:00pm— Session Five—*The Nexus of Civil and “Un-civil” Politics II—Social Movements, La Marea Rosada, and the Return of the National-Popular***

**Facilitators:** Michele Bigenho, Hampshire College, and Matt Lepori, UMass

**Panelists:**

- Margarita López-Maya, Universidad de Venezuela
- Marcela Ríos, UNDP, Chile
- José Antonio Lucero, Tufts University
- Leonardo Avritzer, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil
- Alejandro Velasco, NYU

**Session Goals:**

This panel will examine the ways in which emerging national-popular projects, articulated by leaders and parties at the national level, are constituted out of mixtures of civil and uncivil movements, proposals, and actions. How do new leftist projects construct and utilize civil-uncivil mixtures differently as they seek to enact cultural and economic transformations? And how do civil-uncivil interactions produce and shape the national-popular projects themselves? This panel will compare national-popular projects with a range of strategies and results, including Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile.

**Sunday, April 27**

**2-6 p.m.—Session Six—*Culture and Politics in the Latin/a-o Américas II: Linking Latin American and Latina/a-o Social Struggles***

Taller with community activists, open to the general public; to be held at Grace Episcopal Church. (14 Boltwood Ave. Amherst, MA)

**Facilitators:** Millie Thayer, Gizem Zencicri and Casey Steven, UMass

**Panelists:** Mix of Latin America-based conference participants and local community activists

**Musical performance by José González, *cuatro maestro*, 5pm**