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Introduction to the Special Section: Social Movements and Social Emancipation in Latin America

by Ana C. Dinerstein and Sara C. Motta

‘Emancipation’ remains marginal as a theme within Latin American studies (LAS) with the focus on questions of institutional politics, democracy, democratization, citizenship and development. Yet for the past two decades social movements have been articulating new imaginaries, ideas and practices beyond traditionally conceived frameworks of social change. They are *anticipating* alternative arrangements towards a dignified collective life. In these alternative possibilities, emancipation does not allude to a revolutionary process to take the power of the state, but denotes other horizons that in principle transcend the state as the main locus of struggle. These movements pose methodological, theoretical and epistemological challenges to the study of Latin America.

The two contributions of this Special Section come from the margins of the margins of engagement with these new practices and horizons of the emancipation: the pedagogical and the juridical. They invite us to examine the new forms in which the struggle for ‘emancipation’ is being understood, theorised and experienced by social movements in the region, with particular focus on epistemological questions, pedagogical practices, and the politics of law and indigenous struggled for recognition of self determination. We aim to contribute to opening and nurturing a dialogue between LAS and Latin American movements through an exploration of their ‘other’ politics. Our main questions are: what are the movements’ prefigurative/emancipatory

politics about? How do the pedagogical, epistemological and juridical practices contribute to a reimagining of emancipatory praxis?

In her contribution titled *Emancipation in Latin America: On the Pedagogical Turn* Sara Motta analyses the role of the pedagogical in contemporary processes of emancipation by social movements. She uses “pedagogical” broadly to refer to an articulation of learning aims and processes embedded in social, ethical, spiritual, and affective as well as cognitive relationships. Using the case studies of two movements in Brazil and Colombia, Motta analyses the centrality of the pedagogical in creating the conditions of possibility of the emergence, consolidation and sustainability of emancipatory politics. Her exploration opens questions about the impact of this pedagogisation of the political and politics of the pedagogical for the revisioning of the epistemologies and methodologies with which LAS engages with this ‘other’ politics.

Honor Brabazon’s article, *Occupying Legality: The Subversive Use of Law in Latin American Occupation Movements in Argentina and Bolivia*, investigates the strategy of occupying land, factories, and other work places which has been a popular tactic amongst contemporary LA social movements. By drawing on field research into the Landless Peasants’ Movement in Bolivia and the movement of recovered enterprises in Argentina, the paper examines the ‘subversive’ use of law entailed in these new occupations which is critical to their success. Brabazon suggests that this subversive use of the law challenges traditional understandings of the boundaries between radical and reformist movements in their engagement with the state, and open other possibilities for emancipatory movements resisting neoliberalism in, against and beyond the state.

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