Everyday Wars of Position
Social Movements and the Caracas Barrios in a Chávez Era

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Abstract
This article identifies the ways that urban social movements in Caracas have sought to engage the hybrid state during the presidency of radical leftist leader Hugo Chávez. Chávez's election has created avenues for previously disenfranchised groups to participate in governance and decision-making. The structures and discourses of exclusion are being contested in multiple arenas since Chávez has come to power. But, what lines of conflict are emerging as barrio-based movements demand inclusion in the state? In this article, I argue that as urban movements engage with the political arena, they come up against the instrumental rationalities—both liberal and neoliberal—of state administrators. Barrio-based social movements counter the utilitarian logics of technocrats with alternative visions based in "lo cotidiano" (the everyday), local culture and historical memory. We need to combine Foucault's insights about the operation of power through governmentality with Gramsci's insistence on practical politics, in order to account more fully for the contested nature of power. In this article, I suggest the reframing of a Gramscian notion of hegemony in a positive sense as "everyday wars of position," to think about the quotidian and subterranean spaces where technocrats are confronted with alternative visions from below. I use the example of community media in Caracas to illustrate the ways that social movements engage with the state.

Keywords
barrios • social movements • hybrid State • community media

Las guerras cotidianas de la posición
Los movimientos sociales y los barrios de Caracas en la era Chávez

Resumen
El artículo identifica las formas como los movimientos sociales urbanos de Caracas han buscado articularse al Estado híbrido durante la presidencia del líder radical de izquierda Hugo Chávez. La elección de Chávez ha creado vías para que participen grupos que antes estaban marginados del gobierno y la toma de decisiones. Las estructuras y los discursos de exclusión se están disputando en varios escenarios desde que Chávez llegó al poder. ¿Pero qué líneas de conflicto emergen cuando los movimientos barriales exigen inclusión en el Estado? En este artículo se sostiene que los movimientos urbanos, conforme se articulan con los escenarios instrumentales, tanto liberales como neoliberales, de los administradores del Estado. Los movimientos barriales responden a la lógica utilitarista de los tecnócratas con visiones alternativas basadas en lo cotidiano, la cultura local y la memoria histórica. Es necesario combinar las observaciones de Foucault sobre el funcionamiento del poder a través de la gubernamentalidad con la insistencia de Gramsci en la política práctica para dar cuenta por completo de la naturaleza controvertida del poder. En este artículo se sugiere una reformulación de la noción gramsciana de hegemonía en un sentido positivo como "guerras cotidianas de la posición" para pensar en los espacios cotidianos y subterráneos en donde los tecnócratas son confrontados con visiones alternativas desde abajo. Uso el ejemplo de los medios comunitarios de Caracas para ilustrar la forma como los movimientos sociales se articulan con el Estado.

Palabras clave
barrios • movimientos sociales • Estado híbrido • medios comunitarios

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Everyday Wars of Position:
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Contemporary forms of exclusion in cities such as Caracas are based on geographies of inequality and marginality that have emerged over decades of economic crisis and consequent neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and market-based growth. As economic inequalities have increased, there is a growing segregation of urban space. Communal areas of city life such as cultural centers have been taken over by malls and other private interests. Urban *barrio* residents have come to be seen as a threat to the property and security of the middle classes and, as such, are subject to greater policing. The spaces available for public life and deliberation have been further reduced through media consolidation, a process that centralized the media in the hands of a small number of conglomerates.

Since Hugo Chávez was elected in 1998, he has embraced an anti-neoliberal and pro-poor agenda, in an attempt to reduce economic and spatial inequalities, create access to public spaces, and give voice to the black and *mestizo* majority. The Chávez government has sponsored local cultural and media collectives, passing legislation to authorize low power radios as an alternative to media conglomerates. In both his speeches and the new constitution, Chávez has encouraged barrio movements to carry out occupations of public spaces in the city and of non-responsive institutions. Chávez's election has also created avenues for previously disenfranchised groups to participate in governance and decision-making. The structures and discourses of exclusion are being contested in multiple arenas since Chávez has come to power. But what are the lines of conflict emerging as barrio-based movements demand greater inclusion in the state?

In this paper, I argue that as urban movements engage with the political arena, they come up against the instrumental rationalities—both liberal and neoliberal—of state administrators. The *economic policy* of the Chávez government has been distinctly anti-neoliberal. Its restructuring of the oil industry has allowed the government to create protected areas of the economy such as social welfare which are not subject to market requirements. But the

realities of Venezuela's continued participation in a global market economy are manifested in a neoliberal *political rationality*, present in areas such as culture and communications. Concerned with securing foreign investment, technocrats in state institutions apply market-based calculations in these fields. I argue that the disjunctures between the state goals of fostering market competition while reducing poverty produce tensions that barrio-based movements experience in their interactions with the state and its intermediaries. Social movements counter the utilitarian logics of state and party officials with visions based in "*lo cotidiano*" (the everyday), cultural heritage, and historical memory.

This article begins with a discussion of urban segregation and how the conditions of neoliberal restructuring have given rise to social movements as important actors in contemporary Venezuela. The second section explores the development of the "hybrid state" as the anti-neoliberal domestic policies of the Chávez government encounter the exigencies of a global capitalist order. I also look at the ways that neoliberal rationalities have come to be embedded within state institutions, and I argue that social movements conflict with those rationalities in a post-neoliberal order. The last section presents the example of community-based media in Caracas. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork, carried out over nine months in Caracas between 2004 and 2007. Shifting our focus from the institutional actors to the state-society interactions occurring on an everyday level helps to illuminate the workings of neoliberalism even within an avowedly anti-neoliberal order.

URBAN SEGREGATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The *barrios* of Caracas, like the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the *periferia* of São Paulo, the *poblaciones* of Santiago, and the *villas* of Buenos Aires, are places that have been formed by exclusion, rural-urban migration, and poverty. An important body of scholarship emerged in the 1960s to document and understand the problematic of urban segregation that the shantytowns present. Some scholars sought to challenge what they saw as the "myth of marginality," debunking the idea that they were peripheral and marginal to urban life (Perlman 1976). Shantytown dwellers, they argued, were integrated into the life of the city and national politics through clientelist networks guaranteeing service provision in exchange for political votes (Ray 1969; Greenbaum 1968) and the struggles of neighborhood associations to improve their standard of living (Lomnitz 1977). Contrary to notions of shantytowns as marginal zones or "cultures of poverty" (Lewis 1966), these scholars argued that the urban poor were capable of social mobility, entrepreneurship, and political participation.

Revisiting these classical theories of marginality four decades later, a new generation of scholars reflected that the conditions of marginality that the scholars of the 1960s sought to challenge were being realized in contemporary societies (González de la Rocha *et al*. 2004). Structural adjustment and neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s produced classical features of marginality such as unemployment, a growing informal sector and barter economy (Portes and Hoffman 2003), as well as social exclusion and violence (Ward 2004). In addition to producing the *conditions* of marginality, with the advance of neoliberal restructuring, the *idea* of marginality has re-emerged in the social imaginary of Latin American urban societies. Intensified rural immigration to the cities, growing poverty and segregation, and rising insecurity has led to the criminalization of poorer sectors, which are seen to disrupt the order and health of the city (Goldstein 2003, 12–14). In Caracas, the poorer areas are generally referred to as the "*barrios marginales*" (marginal barrios) or "*zonas marginales*" (marginal zones). Understanding this new geography of power and marginality in the city is crucial to understanding how it may also be the theater for a new kind of politics.

Cities have played a major strategic role in contemporary processes of social change in Latin America, especially due to the concentration of the population in cities. According to Saskia Sassen (1998), from the start of the 1980s the city emerged as an important terrain for new conflicts and claims by both global capital and the disadvantaged sectors of the population concentrated in urban areas. As emerging elite classes became increasingly powerful and transnational under processes of neoliberal restructuring, the urban informal working class has become the fastest growing class on the planet (Davis 2006, 178). Disconnected from the formal economy, lacking structures of unionization or access to social welfare, and stigmatized by the middle classes, the "new cities of poverty" are important sites for political organizing. The burgeoning population of an informal working class located in shantytowns and shacks on the margins of major cities has implications for the sociology of protest that have been largely unexplored.

Coming on the heels of James Scott's characterizations of "micro politics" as everyday forms of resistance, scholars of Latin America have provided rich accounts of consciousness and culture among urban shanty dwellers in a neoliberal era (Goldstein 2003; Ferrándiz 2004; Smilde 2007; Gutmann 2002). Some have looked at how the emerging urban informal classes adapt new strategies to confront the retreat of the state and the lack of public services. In contexts of material hardship, clientilist practices may re-emerge as a means of survival and problem-solving (Auyero 2001; Arias 2006; Gay 1990). As the state retreats from providing security and policing, urban residents

step in to administer justice through vigilante lynchings (Goldstein 2003). But alongside these everyday forms of resistance and survival, there are also growing spaces for popular participation, where the urban poor have organized and asserted their rights. It is this kind of social movement organizing in the barrios of Caracas that I will address in this paper.

Urban social movements in Caracas are extraordinarily variegated and heterogeneous. Popular movements claim distinct genealogies that include the clandestine movements against the 1950s military regime, the post-transition era of guerrilla struggle in the 1960s, the movements against urban displacement and hunger strikes led by Jesuit worker priests in the 1970s, and the cultural activism and urban committees of the 1980s and 1990s. There are militant cadre-based groupings, as well as collectives that operate through assemblies and mass actions, and cultural groupings based on music, song, and dance. These social movements articulate together in "social movement webs," defined by Sonia Álvarez, Evelina Dagnino and Arturo Escobar (1998, 15) as "ties established among movement organizations, individual participants, and other actors in civil and political society and the state." Urban social movements are distinguished from political parties and trade unions by their basis in the networks of everyday life, their location in the space of the *barrio* rather than the party office or union hall, and their attempts to establish independent linkages with the state.

Urban social movements are strongly engaged in cultural politics, a concept that scholars of "new social movements" such as Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar, among others, have elaborated. New social movement theorists go beyond a reductionist concept of politics and political culture as found in mainstream sociology and some resource mobilization theory to assess the multiple realms in which dominance is contested (Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar, 1998). Although some scholarship on resource mobilization theory, such as Sidney Tarrow's "collective action frames" and Debra Friedman and Doug McAdam's "identity incentives," are concerned with theorizing cultural processes, others have mostly been concerned with institutional and structural processes, and how movement demands are processed in institutional spheres (Álvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar, 1998). Also, while resource mobilization theorists often assume the existence of collective identities, proponents of new social movements theory are interested in the construction and negotiation of identities (Stephen 1997). The term cultural politics not only refers to those groups explicitly deploying cultural protest or cultural forms, it also includes the attempts by social movements to challenge and redefine the meanings and practices of the dominant cultural order. While some movements are successful at negotiating and processing their demands at the

institutional level—which makes them more visible to mainstream collective action theorists—others are engaged in a cultural politics that redefines the meaning of political culture, questioning not just who is in power, but how that power is exercised.

THE HYBRID STATE IN A POST-NEOLIBERAL ERA

The specific configuration of social forces under Chávez has been shaped by histories of the developmental and neoliberal state. In order to comprehend the constraints and obstacles that face social movements as they construct alternative futures, it is important to outline the history and nature of the hybrid state that they encounter under Chávez. While Chávez's administration has been broadly described as anti-neoliberal, I suggest rather that it is a post-neoliberal order, one where neoliberalism is no longer the dominant guiding policy, although it continues to surface in a range of conflicting rationalities and policies that are brought into an uneasy coexistence.

As others have pointed out, the historical experiences of state formation in Venezuela must be understood in relation to the exploitation of petroleum. Due to its oil largesse, the Venezuelan state differed from other peripheral states that were structured around the extraction and distribution of surplus value. For Fernando Coronil (1997, 224), what distinguished the Venezuelan state was its organization around the appropriation and distribution of ground rent. During the period of the 1980s, Venezuelan politicians began to implement a series of neoliberal reforms that would dramatically redefine the character of the petrostate. In 1989, newly elected president Carlos Andres Pérez railed against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international lending organizations in his inauguration speech on February 2, 1989, and just a few weeks later he announced a neoliberal packet, known as *El Gran Viraje* (the Great Turn). Under pressure from foreign creditors to implement an IMF-style austerity program, he dismantled protections, deregulated prices, and reduced social spending.

However, the neoliberal narrative about markets as the source of advancement did not resonate strongly in Venezuela. An early indication of this was the *Caracazo*, a series of protests and riots which came weeks after Pérez announced the *Gran Viraje*. Two subsequent coups, one in February 1992 led by an army colonel Hugo Chávez and another in November led by high level officers, signaled a continuing rejection of the neoliberal project. Nearly ten years after the *Gran Viraje* was announced, Chávez was elected to office on an anti-neoliberal agenda, with plans to rewrite the constitution. From the beginning of his tenure in office, Chávez linked his new development strategy with a redistribution of the oil wealth. According to Dick

Parker (2005), the government strengthened the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and contributing to an increase in oil prices. A few changes were made in the early years of Chávez's administration to the internal structure of PDVSA, the state-owned oil company; but, following participation by oil executives in a work stoppage that preceded the coup against Chávez in April 2002, and a lockout and dismissal of 18,000 employees in December that year, Chávez took control of the oil company. Chávez's language harked back to earlier eras of rentier liberalism, and the sharing of the oil wealth.

Although Chávez has consistently drawn strong popular support for his return to a policy of capturing and redistributing oil rents, his project confronts a new stage of capitalism, where production and accumulation have been globalized. This has made it harder for individual nations to sustain independent polities and economies (Robinson 2003, 12–13). As Coronil (2000) has noted, the state is torn by its desire to both subsidize gasoline on the local market and obtain international rents, while maintaining the global competitiveness of the oil industry. The insertion of Venezuela into a global order requires certain policy adjustments and concessions that do not always fit with the anti-neoliberal rhetoric of Chávez.

The debate over whether the Chávez government is pro-neoliberal or anti-neoliberal has also tended to revolve around its economic policy. Neoliberalism is typically understood as a set of economic policies that attempt to privatize and deregulate the economy in order to promote free trade, foreign direct investment, and export oriented industrialization. Some argue that especially after 2001, the Chávez administration has pursued anti-neoliberal measures—establishing majority ownership over the oil industry, passing agrarian reforms, reversing the reduction in social spending, and assigning resources to health and education that envision universal coverage, despite the tight constraints of the international context (Parker 2005; Ellner 2008). Others contend that the Chávez government has pursued macroeconomic stability rather than confronting multinational capital (Vera 2001), and that, despite Chávez's rhetoric, there have been no ruptures with foreign creditors or oil clients (Petras and Veltmeyer 2005, IX). But, following Wendy Brown, I argue that we must look at neoliberalism not just as a set of economic policies, but as a modern form of power, labeled by Michel Foucault (1991) as "governmentality." Governmentality refers to knowledge and techniques that are concerned with the regulation of everyday conduct (Rose 1999). Neoliberal governmentality involves the extension of market rationality, based on an instrumental calculus of economic utility, to all state practices, as well as formerly non-economic domains (Brown 2003).

As Aihwa Ong (2006) has argued, these rationalities and techniques can predominate, even in contexts where neoliberalism as an economic doctrine is not central. I suggest that this is the case in Chávez's Venezuela, a post-neoliberal formation that has adopted significant anti-neoliberal reforms, while its ongoing subjection to the requirements of a global economy has given impetus to neoliberal rationalities and techniques in a range of state and non-state arenas.

In Venezuela, neoliberal rationalities were deeply etched into the visions of technocrats who tried to reorganize arenas of public and private life to meet global competition during the 1990s. Like the Chicago-trained econo-mists known as the "Chicago boys," who implemented the neoliberal turn in Chile, Venezuela also had a group of select, foreign-trained economists who spearheaded the *Gran Viraje*. The Institute of Higher Management Studies (IESA) became the training ground and platform for a new breed of technocrats, business elites, and managers who would form the "Venezuelan technocracy." Known as the "IESA boys," like their Chilean counterparts, these technocrats had privileged positions in the Pérez government, play-ing key roles in public and private enterprises. According to Miguel Angel Contreras (2006, 52), the term "technocratic" refers to a culture of technical decision-making by specialists rather than through a process of democratic debate and consultation. In the name of fighting bureaucracy and corruption, state institutions were scaled back and their operations were often linked to the priorities of the market and international lending agencies. While some institutions—such as media and cultural agencies—have undergone changes of personnel and policy under Chávez, they continue deploying market logics as they appeal to funders and corporations, even as they pursue their com-mitment to a pro-poor agenda.

A post-neoliberal order is a hybrid state formation that has mounted certain challenges to the neoliberal paradigm, but which remains subject to the internal and external constraints of global capital. Some might argue instead that the Chávez government is "neo-neoliberal," given its continu-ities with the past. The Venezuelan economy continues to be dependent on a boom-bust cycle of fluctuating oil rents and an export-oriented model of development. It faces unfavorable external conditions due to the strength of fiscal austerity policies across the rest of the continent. Despite the rhetoric of Chávez, it is unclear whether his policies are actually creating an anti-neoliberal challenge that could counter the influence of the US or the strength of the global market (Albo 2006). But at the same time, the Chávez government's policies of land and resource redistribution, social welfare intervention, and restructuring of trade to promote joint ventures

and "fair trade" bilateral agreements are incompatible with a neoliberal agenda. As the financial resources and influence of the IMF have entered into decline, Venezuela has offered alternative sources of credit to countries like Argentina to pay off their debt (Weisbrot 2008). Chávez has nationalized the telephone company CANTV, the steel maker SIDOR, regionalized electricity companies, the remaining privately controlled oil fields, and foreign cement companies. Although these nationalizations were fairly moderate in that they reversed privatizations that took place under previous governments, or gave the state majority rather than minority stakes, they were symbolically important and financially lucrative for the state (Wilpert 2007, 221–223). The Venezuela case contains both continuities and ruptures with the past. For the most part, new policies and orientations are being fashioned from within neoliberal state institutions, bounded by but also reshaping those institutions. The "post" in post-neoliberal does not intend to imply that neoliberalism has been superseded, but rather that the state is grappling with the legacy of neoliberalism, responding to and at times providing alternatives to the neoliberal model.

In contrast to the notion that neoliberalism is a set of economic reforms that were adopted uniformly across third world debtor nations, there is a growing sense that neoliberalism is a "moving target, subject to hybridizations" (Craig and Porter 2006, 21) and consists of "different rationalities and techniques, often working at odds with each other" (Ong 2006, 95). Neoliberal governmentality is just one modality of power working among others. In Venezuela under Chávez, neoliberal rationality fuses with rentier liberalism in the contours of a hybrid state formation. The task of ethnography is to identify the scope of liberal and neoliberal logics as they come into collision with new forms of collective action. It is often the disjunctures between anti-neoliberal rhetoric and market-based rationalities that open a space for critique by social movements.

This raises the specter of not just a post-neoliberal order, but a post-neoliberal social imaginary, where alternative visions are being put on the agenda by social movements. According to Alejandro Grimson and Gabriel Kessler (2005, 191), the post-neoliberal imaginary refers to the new contestatory narratives and forms of collective action that are dislodging neoliberalism from its quasi-hegemonic position. As Nancy Postero (2007) has argued, the emergence of alternative and collective responses to neoliberalism shows the limitations of theories of neoliberal governmentality, which have tended to focus mainly on the production of consent to regimes of structural adjustment. We need to supplement Foucault's insights about dispersed forms of governance with Gramsci's insistence on practical politics and the negotiation

of hegemony from below, in order to account more fully for the contested nature of power. While some scholars argue that Foucaultian and Gramscian perspectives as top down interpretations of power are incompatible due to their vastly different models of causality and agency (Barnett 2005), I find it more fruitful to hold them in tension with one another (Mallon 1994), especially if one embraces an alternative interpretation of Gramscian hegemony as promoting struggle rather than consent (Roseberry 1994).

EVERYDAY WARS OF POSITION

Just as in earlier eras of Venezuelan politics, class struggle in the Chávez era has centered on the state and access to the state. The difference with earlier periods is that the unifying nature of the state as a force that claimed to stand above and bring together different classes has been disrupted with the appearance of a polity divided by race and class (Coronil 2000). Sectors of the poor and marginalized majority have aligned themselves with Chávez in order to wrest control of the state—and its considerable oil resources— away from the hands of multinationals and the privileged, transnational elites. Ongoing struggles for control over the state apparatus include the general elections of 1998, Chávez's standing for re-election in 1999 under a new constitution, and the general elections of 2006, as well as responses from the opposition which has orchestrated both a coup in April 2002 and an attempt to legally remove Chávez from office through a recall referendum in August 2004. Urban social movements were central participants in these battles.

But beyond these larger struggles over the state apparatus, I would argue that the structures and discourses of exclusion are being contested in a range of quotidian sites, through everyday wars of position. My formulation "everyday wars of position," combines Antonio Gramsci's term with James Scott's concept of "everyday forms" of resistance and "*lo cotidiano*," (the everyday) invoked by social movements themselves, in order to describe the multiple battles that they have participated in daily on numerous fronts. Although Gramsci (1971) was concerned with hegemony in a negative sense as domination, he was also interested in hegemony in a positive sense, looking at how subordinate populations employ wars of position to remake their material and social worlds. Gramsci used the military metaphor "wars of position" to describe political struggle between classes. In contrast to the Leninist notion of a vanguard party which would lead the working classes to victory, Gramsci saw conflict as being fought out in the trenches of society, where incremental changes could help to shift the relation of the forces in conflict and build counter-hegemonies.

One battlefield opened up on the level of media and access to information. Cutbacks to the public sector had involved substantial deregulation of the media: Pérez and subsequent presidents had expanded concessions to media corporations, leading to the centralization of the media in a small number of private conglomerates. According to Elizabeth Fox and Silvia Waisbord (2002, 12), the Venezuelan media market is dominated by Venevisión and TVC, which receive the biggest share of advertising revenues and have the largest audiences. Private television at a national level was monopolized by the Cisneros group (Venevisión) and the 1BC group of Phelps-Granier (Radio Caracas Televisión). Out of 44 regional television networks, nearly all are linked to private networks such as Venevisión, Radio Caracas Televisión,[1] Televen, and Globovisión. Of these groups, Cisneros, Phelps, and Televen receive 70 percent of all television advertising revenues (Mayobre 2002, 182). This small group of corporations also controls radio-electric spaces and the national press.

Telecommunications were seen as a cornerstone of neoliberal policy and crucial to attracting investors in all sectors of the economy. In October 1991, a new Law of Telecommunications was passed, which sought to stimulate private investment in communications and deregulate media services. The law created a new autonomous regulatory body called the National Commission of Telecommunications (CONATEL), which had the technical functions of assigning frequencies, granting concessions and permits, and applying administrative sanctions.[2] Given the neoliberal climate that favored free markets and a user-pays system, CONATEL was also given the task of promoting competition in the telecommunications sector. These technical responsibilities and competition-related tasks combined to make CONATEL a powerful instrument for policing the airwaves and enforcing the new regulatory regime in the interests of private media corporations and commercial stations.

Since Chávez was elected president in 1998; especially in the tense days of the oil strikes by business sectors in December 2001 and during the lead-up to the coup in April 11–13, 2002, the private media ran a fierce campaign to discredit Chávez. On April 11, 2002, the opposition took the government-owned station Channel 8 off the air, the mass media falsely broadcast that Chávez had resigned, and then the private media ran its regular broadcast with no further information. Community radio and print media played an

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1   On May 27, 2007, the Chávez government decided not to renew the broadcast license for Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV). RCTV continued to offer a paid subscription service via cable and satellite.

2   http://www.vii.org/papers/vene.htm.

important role in releasing news about the coup and restoring Chávez to power on April 13. For many this was a wakeup call to develop their own local forms of media in the face of corporate consolidation and ownership of mass media.

By the middle of 2005, there were over 300 community radio stations operating across the country. Many of these stations had their origins in long-term social movements such as *Macarao y su Gente* in the parish of Macarao, the *Coordinadora Simón Bolívar* in 23 de Enero, or the movement of community media started by community activists in Caricuao and La Vega in the early 1990s. Community radio collectives took advantage of their high locations to compete with mass media for airspace, and they made creative use of text messages, internet, and local networks of communication to build up a following. The idea that media should be locally managed, collectively owned, and facilitate a plurality of voices and viewpoints was counter to the homogenization and concentration of media that had occurred as a result of media deregulation and privatization. In their battles with the opposition and the private media, urban social movements allied themselves with Chávez. The Chávez administration also sought to bolster these movements. Following the coup in 2002, Chávez gave substantial money towards the development of community radio stations.

But closer collaboration between these media-based social movements and the state brought into relief the contradictions of the hybrid state. Communications policy under Chávez continues to be oriented towards a global market as the sector seeks to attract foreign finance and investment. The field of telecommunications has experienced significant growth and foreign investment since 1999. This is partly due to the expansion of areas such as land-line telephone services, cell phones, wireless services, and internet and satellite services. Overall revenues for the telecommunications sector in 2007 were USD 8.64 billion. Income from the telecommunications sector is a major contributor to Gross National Product (GNP); in 1997, it represented 2.3 percent of GNP and by 2007 it had grown to 4.26 percent of GNP. State agencies structure the field of telecommunications to continue to attract foreign and private capital, regulating the field to provide a stable environment for private investors, while at the same time enhancing equity and universal access.

One area where these competing interests are manifested is in the Law of Telecommunications passed in 2000 under Chávez. The 2000 law bore strong similarities to its predecessor in 1991, and to the 1996 Telecommunications Act passed in the US, which sought to lift media regulations and ownership restrictions, promote free competition among media providers, and

reduce the interventionist role of the government (McChesney 2004, 51). The language of the 2000 law passed under Chávez reiterates these concerns of free competition and it minimizes the idea of government as representative of the public interest. At the same time, the law promoted the rights of individuals to establish community television and radio networks, and it gave CONATEL the authority to grant administrative authorization to these stations. But the ability of CONATEL to democratize the field of media was limited by its continuing need to appeal to and protect corporate media interests as a condition of growth and investment.

Following the 2000 Law of Telecommunications, community media organizations sought inclusion in the drafting of legislation pertaining to media, and in 2002 several groups participated in a process of debate as to the Regulation of Open Community Public Service Radio and Television. In order to gain authorization, CONATEL proposed that community radio stations meet requirements in four fields: social, legal, technical, and economic. The *social* aspect requires an analysis of the social conditions and necessities of the community; the *legal* component is related to the registration of the community radio or television station as a foundation; the *technical* part requires a study by CONATEL of the radio spectrum and the assignation of a frequency to the station; while the *economic* analysis involves a study of the local market to assess the possibility of self-sustainability. Community media activists welcomed certain aspects of the Regulation, such as the promotion of self-financing, which would contribute to the autonomy of radio stations and the stimulation of local businesses which advertised on the radio. But at the same time, members of radio stations Radio Perola, Radio Negro Primero, Radio Macarao and others which were involved in drafting the authorization procedures voiced criticisms of the neoliberal rationalities involved. Media collectives were to be structured along the lines of corporations; they had to present their projects in instrumental terms of resolving problems in the community, and were asked to justify the benefits and returns of investment in their project. In contrast to the language of statistics and diagnosis, they put forth a strong, community based vision of what validates an alternative radio station. They opposed what they saw as an instrumental neoliberal rationality of utility, and they rejected a technocratic analysis of the social.

One of the major areas of contention in the drafting of the authorization procedures was the legal components. Article 12 of the Regulation says that in order to present themselves for authorization, a community radio or television station must form a "foundation," with a board of directors, and a General Director. The language borrows from broader neoliberal development discourses of international agencies and private funders, that

have sought to refashion community organizations along the lines of corporations. Rafael Hernández from Radio Macarao argued that the corporate model of a board of directors, which is responsible for running the organization and making decisions, goes against the collective and non-hierarchical forms of decision-making that some of the community radio stations are trying to build. Carlos Carles from Radio Perola said that they would prefer a general Coordinating Committee or an Assembly as the highest decision-making authority, rather than a General Director. In the legal component of the authorization procedures, there was a provision for a recall referendum to revoke the leadership of the station. The "community" is defined in vague and general language as those who reside in the neighborhood. Media activists also critiqued this vague definition, saying that the label of "community" could be appropriated by a group with specific economic or political interests who want to remove the leadership. For Rafael, the community must be clearly defined as those who work in the radio, support it, and attend events, and criticisms should be brought up in assemblies and meetings.

The social component of the authorization procedures most strongly reflected the neoliberal rationality of the Regulation. In order to obtain authorization, the members of the station are asked to justify the media project in instrumental terms: "Describe the principle necessities, wants, and existing problems in the community where the service of a community radio station will be installed and demonstrate the bridge, path, or mechanisms that will be implemented to facilitate the solution of these problems in a positive manner." The community radio stations are supported by state institutions not for their intrinsic value as creations of the community, but in terms of utilitarian calculations of the returns they will provide. There is no doubt that the government wants the media to be socially useful to the community, but this goal of social benefit intersects with other rationalities of cost and benefit calculation that are being driven by the broader market orientation of the communications sector. The residents of the neighborhood are imagined in passive terms: they are "beneficiaries" who will receive the "services" provided by the station, rather than active participants in the activities of the station.

As part of the social component, the members of the station are asked to carry out a "Social Diagnostic," which consists of the application of a predetermined methodological instrument, or a quantitative survey, that collects data on educational level, occupation, participation, problems and necessities of the community, and knowledge of the television or radio. The community radio members are required to collect data in the *barrio* using this quantitative instrument, then codify and tabulate the data, and finally analyze and

interpret their results. As George Yúdice (2003) has shown, the requirements for this kind of quantitative data have come from the market incentives that structure funding bodies. In order to assess the numerous projects that come to institutions for evaluation and funding, these agencies must be able to measure the benefits and returns that justify investment in a project.

Instruments for measuring cultural and community media projects are modeled after market indicators, which allow economists to measure the health of the economy and the types of structural interventions that will be required (Yúdice 2003, 15–16). This diagnostic approach conflicts with the approach to knowledge production among barrio-based media groups. Carlos Carles described how heated debates arose during meetings over this issue. "They proposed techniques of demonstrating statistical data," said Carlos. "Against this, we proposed local knowledge, oral narrative, historical memory, and the everyday work of the community." The approach chosen by the community media groups highlighted the alternative epistemologies that were emerging from their community-based work. These criteria were not incorporated into the final authorization process, which required media collectives to put together a document of several hundred pages of data. Yet historical memory, everyday work, and local knowledge constituted an alternative set of values that Carlos, Rafael and other media activists continued to appeal to in their negotiations with bureaucrats.

CONCLUSION

Urban social movements must navigate an often complex terrain between states and markets in a post-neoliberal era. Barrio-based groups in Venezuela made use of changes in communications technology to start up their own radio stations. The idea that media should be locally managed, collectively owned, and facilitate a plurality of voices and viewpoints was counter to the homogenization and concentration of media that had occurred as a result of deregulation and privatization under neoliberalism. Community radio stations flourished as a result of funding and legislation under the Chávez administration. But as media activists interacted with state agencies, they came up against the instrumental rationalities of administrators. During the process of drafting a regulation to authorize community media, the barrio activists brought out local knowledge, historical memory, and everyday work in response to the technocratic analysis of the social and quantitative data of the bureaucrats.

The tensions between these competing visions reflect the contradictions of a revolution fought from within the structures of a neoliberal state apparatus, as well as Venezuela's continued subjection to a global

market economy. Urban social movements are making demands—for public space, for inclusion in the state, for social rights, and for a redistribution of resources—that cannot be accommodated within the framework of the present order. Pointing to Chávez as their representative within the state, community activists struggle to identify who the state represents and in whose interests it is operating. Often they find that it is not the interests of ordinary people, and this realization is generating a greater impetus towards self-organization and autonomy.

But on a deeper level, these struggles reveal the continuing predominance within the Chavista project of Enlightenment notions of progress and knowledge construction which have been historically associated with colonialism and European capitalism. Arturo Escobar (2010, 11) refers to this project as one of "alternative modernizations" being pursued by the new left states of Latin America, in contrast to what he calls "de-colonial projects" of social movements that present an alternative to Euro-modernity and consist of a pluriversal set of practices. Unfortunately Escobar's substantial treatment of the Venezuela case leaves out urban popular movements dating back many decades, dealing mostly with current state-promoted groupings such as the communal councils and claiming erroneously that "Venezuela has little history of collective action compared to other Andean countries" (Escobar 2010, 16).[3] But his argument could be more profoundly illustrated through ethnographic explorations of the politics of everyday life, the fiestas, storytelling, historical memory, murals, barrio assemblies, and popular radio through which the urban poor make their presence felt and seek to build alternative kinds of community.

Social justice and political transformation do not depend only on coming up with new policies and legislation as the Chávez government has done. Rather, they require generating alternative rationalities to counter the market-based rationalities that have come to structure political and social life. By emphasizing local knowledge, oral narrative, and historical memory against the rationalities of administrators, social movement actors were formulating these alternative visions. Ultimately, this points to the role played by local actors in mediating and contesting global configurations of power. While state-society alliances can alter the trajectory of neoliberalism, state-centric solutions remain subject to the internal and external constraints of global capital.

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3   For a detailed discussion of the decades-long history and trajectory of urban social movements in Caracas, see Fernandes 2010.

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