The Left in Government – State, Civil Society and Deepening Democracy in Latin America

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Abstract: How can we analyze the relations between left administrations and civil society in contemporary Latin America, and how does it affect the question about deepening democracy? In this paper, the wave of elected left governments in Latin America in the 2000s is explored, and in particular these administrations relations to civil society. Based upon two broad and theoretical models of relations between democracy, state and civil society contemporary empirical cases in Latin America are analyzed. On one hand we have more moderate left-administrations emphasizing the liberal democratic model in which civil society is suppose to be autonomous from the state and involves citizens collective actions of ideas, interest, demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. On the other hand we have more radical left-wing administrations with more emphasize on participatory democracy including aspects in which the state and civil organizations are suppose to work more closely together, in particular in the socio-economic spheres. The issue is if and if so what consequences these different relations between state and civil society might have for democratic development, setbacks or deepening democracy in Latin America.
Introduction

Both the terms of civil society and democracy have indeed various definitions. Historical, civil society has been used as a term for civil activities autonomous from the state. In the tradition of Alexis de Tocqueville’s “Democracy in America” the concept has most often been referred as a free sphere of social activism carried out by groups and associations, sometimes even including broadly political groups and social movements. During the third wave of democratization, the concept had a revival both in terms of being “something” against dictatorship in Eastern Europe and Latin America, but also as a vital and important actor in the further process of democratization to deepen or consolidate the new established electoral democratic rule. However, this “civil society argument” is more complex and could in fact be traced to somewhat different perspectives, aspects and contexts.

In most Western liberal democracies civil society has been operating as a separate sphere from the state representing freedom and activism to influence the state – the political sphere, or the local or central governments. It does not necessarily need to be seen as opposed to the state, but at least it has been working as a counter-part for peoples’ thoughts, ideas and organized activism. However, on the one hand, this is of course also the case for those Latin American countries, who have established liberal democratic institutions, such as Costa Rica, Uruguay or Chile. On the other hand, in contrast to the civil society argument as something “opposed to the state”, the left-wave of democratically elected governments in Latin America, at least, in the radical cases such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, and theoretically in the case of the expanding influence from the Worker’s party in Brazil (though the left in office is more moderate and liberal), have pushed the issue to another type of relations between the state (government) and civil society. For the radical left, though it is not unified in all the ideas, civil society could rather be a part of the political process, in which civil society together with the state for example carry out socio-economic reform, including peoples’ participation in both decision-making and in the implementation phase of policies. While some of these ideas could be found in the concept of radical or participatory democracy; other might not be connected to it. For example, in Venezuela part of the ideas behind the “Bolivarian revolution” has clearly connections with radical and participatory democracy, but in practise the democratic path with decreasing of civil- and political rights has rather pointed in the opposite direction.

There is in fact, at least, two types of broader concepts of civil society. One is the liberal concept in the spirit of Tocqueville and other followers as well as Diamond etc related to theories of
democratization. It also belongs to the tradition of liberal democracy. The other one is radical democracy, which understands civil society somewhat different, and also in which democracy is more referred as participatory democracy. This distinction does not only have consequences for our understanding about the relation between the state and civil society, it also has consequences for how to analyze the path to deepen democracy, or consolidate democracy. It raises questions such as; what kind of civil society do we have in a particular case, and how could it contribute to deepen democracy, or e.g. what type of democracy could be consolidated, and how is civil society contributing to democratic consolidation? It brings us to the main issue in this paper - How can we analyze the relations between left administrations and civil society in contemporary Latin America, and how does it affect the question about deepening democracy?

As a consequence, in this paper, the wave of elected left governments in Latin America in the 2000s is explored, and in particular these administrations relations to democracy and civil society. First, some theoretical remarks is given, both to civil society and to the debate about democratic consolidation. This parts ends with the framework that do consider that different key actor have different views on both the role of civil society and democracy, and as a consequence how it all is related to the state and deepening democracy. Second, some remarks on how to define the left is given. Third, based upon two broad and theoretical models of relations between democracy, state and civil society contemporary empirical cases in Latin America are analyzed. On the one hand we have more moderate left-administrations emphasizing the liberal democratic model in which civil society is suppose to be autonomous from the state and involve citizens’ collective actions of ideas, interest, demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. On the other hand we have more radical left-wing administrations with more emphasize on participatory democracy including aspects in which the state and civil organizations are suppose to work more closely together, in particular in the socio-economic spheres. Finally, the issue about the pattern of the left in government, its policies and the relations to civil society is explored and further analyzed how it might have effect for democratic development, setbacks or deepening democracy in Latin America.
Civil Society and Democracy: theoretical remarks

The concept of civil society can be traced all the way back to the Antiques, but above all to the 18-19th century and ideas from Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hegel and Tocqueville. In Rousseau’s romantic image of the people he claims it deals with the democratic will against the evil of autocratic. However, in modern times it got a revival when the emerging democratization took place in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Civil society was seen as vital part for challenging dictatorship, and included all sorts of formal- or informal organized organizations such as voluntary associations in the neighbourhoods and interest groups, with one unifying factor – to defeat dictatorship and to push for regime change and furthermore democratization. In the early 1990s, Robert D. Putnam’s nowadays modern classic “Making Democracy Work” (1993) was released, in which it was claimed that northern Italy developed an effective government very much because of horizontal networks of civil participation and associations. According to Putnam the rich and industrialized northern Italy stood in sharp contrast to the south, where the lack of a democratic civil society and more vertical networks rather contributed to a weak society, a weak state, and a fragile democracy.

Quite often, in the tradition of Alexis de Tocqueville and Putnam’s civil society is seen as a struggle for deepening democracy as well as just emphasizing liberal rights to constitute, organize and discuss civil, social and economic issues, most often autonomous from the state. In contrast, in the third wave literature, civil society was most seen as organizations against the state, e.g. authoritarian rule, and which in most cases became a part of the formal negotiations and transitions to the electoral democratic rule. But these two dimensions of civil society, however, only tend to catch the essence of civil society in the liberal tradition. In fact, there are several versions of what civil society represents and what it is suppose to mean, and how it is connected to democracy etc. Mary Kaldor (2003) points out at least five categories; (1). civil society based upon rule of law and civility; (2). civil society as an arena for the bourgeoisie to organize social life between the state and the family; (3). activism as in the case of social movements; (4). neoliberal civil society in which voluntary and charity organizations is included as a sphere free and autonomous from the state, and a (5). Post-modern civil society, in which also nationalistic and fundamentalist movements are included. Still, these five categories seems to include everything related to what and who civil society is, but at the same time it does not catch the essence of the contemporary development in Latin America. Today we have a more radical Latin American left emphasizing radical or participatory democracy, while we at the same time have a more moderate left and a conservative right with more focus on liberal democratic
institutions. Kaldors five categories fit into the liberal version of civil society, but when it comes to the challenging radical democratic framework; it does not really catch the essences of its content.

After the end of the Cold War, some of the most influential postmodern Marxist ideas on democracy and other authors contributing to ideas about participatory and radical democracy have stemmed from Antonio Gramsci, Noberto Bobbio, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Cohen and Arato, and Jorge G. Castañeda, as well as Carol Pateman and Benjamin Barber among others. Pateman (1970) has expressed it as:

Once the participatory system is established, and this is a point of major importance, it becomes self-sustaining because the very qualities that are required of individual citizens if the system is to work successfully are those that the process of participation itself develops and fosters; the more individual citizen participate the better able he is to do so. (Pateman 1970:25)

The ambition is that the increasing of peoples’ participation also will contribute to a better participation in all representative political institutions (see Macpherson 1977, Barber 1984). Benjamin Barber (1984) has further elaborated it:

Strong democracy in the participatory mode resolves conflict in the absence of an independent ground through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods. (Barber 1984:150)

Katz (1997:68-70) has concluded the debate and argues that participation seems to strengthen democracy in different ways. First, all decisions become much more legitimized and will thereby be acceptable by all people. As a consequence, it will establish a society in which the process behind the decisions is more important rather than the outcome itself. Second, participatory democracy will develop an equal society, in which all people have the ability to participate. Third, the idea is to spread participation both to the political as well as the socio-economic spheres at local- and national level, and it will deepen democracy in all aspects of society.

During the 1980s, more emphasizes was carried on the idea of participatory democracy, as a realistic alternative to the liberal democracy. Noberto Bobbio (1990) occupies a liberal view within the left. Bobbio accepts the liberal emphasizes on formal political rights and proper political institutions, but above this, he claims the need to shape participatory democracy. Above all, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have farthest carried out the left’s radical democracy. In “Hegemony & Socialist Strategy – Towards a Radical Democratic Politics” (1985), they argued that the issue was not any-
more a class struggle between under- and upper class, instead several mechanism and social actors take different stands in society. To further develop and shape democratic control over daily political, economic and social issues, there is a need for social movements working with questions related to minorities, women and environment. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that the left no longer can resist liberal democracy without creating a new pluralistic and radical democracy. Prestige words such as class, state and capitalism had to vanish, and the new target had to oppose anti-democratic groups and fighting for a democracy characterized by radical and direct democracy. The new political movements should furthermore replace old mentality of class thinking, and, thereby, the elected officials and civil servants popular support will deepen. Another belief is the strictly divergence between public institutions and the socio-economic sphere. To summarize, Laclau and Mouffe accept liberal democratic institutions, while they at the same time put much more emphasizes on individual and groups rights. In the intellectual Latin American debate, in the early 1990s, Jorge G. Castañeda (1993) defined the future of the left in the now famous “Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American left after the Cold“ (1993). In his view, a combination of multiple local processes with non-governmental organizations and social movements, mobilizing the left in dismantling the patrimonial society, can provide a new foundation. Also, the idea of revolution has lost its significance, and, instead Castañeda argued that the left had to reconsider its position towards the United States, the nation statue, and further provide a strategic perspective for democratization of democracy. Consequently, Castañeda heavily criticized the model of armed revolution and, in particular, the militarization of Cuba.

According to Hawkins and Hansen (2004) both the liberal democratic view and radical democracy have some common grounds. First, both suggest that civil society could improve and develop democracy, e.g. deepen democracy. Second, it provides a sense or a sphere of public deliberation. Third, it provides an alternative how to formally organize collective actions to influence the state, e.g. local or national government. Finally, Hawkins and Hansen (2004) believe that both radical and liberal civic actors contribute to expand individual and collective autonomy. Larry Diamond (1994), though he writes in the pluralistic and liberal tradition, seems to have caught the essence of most versions of civil society, when he defines it as;

…the realm of organized social life that is voluntarily, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from “society” in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interest, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goal, make demands on
the state, and hold state officials accountable. Civil society is an intermediate entity, standing between the private sphere and the state. Thus it excludes individual and family life, inward-looking group activity (e.g., for recreation, entertainment, or spirituality), the profit-making enterprise of individual firms, and political efforts to take control of the state. Thus civil society not only restricts state power but legitimates state authority when authority is based on the rule of life (Diamond 1994:5).

Of course, one could accept these similarities and common grounds between the different views and analyze civil society and its relations to the state and deepening democracy based upon the common ground approach, which also has been the case in most of the liberal democratic consolidation literature. But, one could also make it vice versa and accept the facts that there seems to exist different views of what constitutes a good society, a democracy and how the relations between the state and civil society is suppose to be related to deepen democracy. For several reasons, I prefer the latter, rather than the first one. First, though there seems to exist some common grounds, still there are major differences between a liberal and a radical democratic civil society. Furthermore, these two categories seems to exist in contemporary Latin America, with a radical left on one hand, and the other main actors on the other side representing a more liberal democratic view of society.

The question then is how one defines civil society as well as democracy and democratic consolidation, and what the connection between civil society and democratic consolidation is? Let’s starts with the discussion about democratic consolidation. Most often, deepen democracy has implied and been used through the concept of ‘the only game in town’, in which dimensions of political institutionalization and a behavioural approach have so far been the most useable concept among scholars. However, meanwhile democracy has become the most common rule to govern a country; there is no common sense among scholars on how the path and the destiny of deepening democracy should be defined. Democracy has been rooted all over the world, but in most of the Latin America countries democracy has been shallow, illiberal or poorly institutionalized, or has been closely connected to Guillermo O’Donnell’s (1998) concept - delegative democracy. So far democracy is often seen as consolidated, when it is mostly “likely to endure”, or when it is seen as”the only game in town” (Linz, 1990).

However, this concept gives us a minimalist definition that is fairly applicable in different regions and cultures in third wave democracies. But the concept of consolidation implies several problems and at least the following are important (see for example Schedler 1998, 2001; O’Donnell 1996, 1998). At first the concept was only related to how democracy could become ‘only game in town’ – how the threat to a retreat to an authoritarian rule could be avoided. In the 2000s, the concept had
been faceted and included almost all possible problems of society, such as development and stabilizing of elections, political decision-making, decentralization of state power, democratic norms and values, the institutionalization of the party system, judicial reforms, economic development, civilian control over military, and destabilizing authoritarian institutional enclaves. The main obstacle is that all problems in society, practically, could be traced to democratic consolidation, and therefore the concept as such becomes more or less worthless. There is an urgent need to make it more adoptable to the recent democratic development of today’s Latin America, and in particular to realise that the main actors might have different views on issues related to aspects of democracy and economy.

Second, and perhaps the most important aspect to address, is what kind of democratic rule that is supposed to become consolidated? Is it Joseph Schumpeter’s (1947) elite democracy, Robert Dahl’s (1971) liberal Polyarchy, Arendt Lijphart’s (1977) consociational democracy, or a social democratic society, radical participatory democracy, or is it perhaps even the Marxist people’s democracy that are supposed to become consolidated? This question remains unanswered in the literature of democratization. Implicit, only the model of liberal democracy counts in the process of democratic consolidation; it is the same no matter if we analyze how to develop, stabilize, deepen or consolidate democracy. Chile is such a good example. Before Salvador Allende was installed as president, in 1970, Robert Dahl defined Chile as a Polyarchy with some restrictions concerning the electoral system. To some extent it was a truth; the liberal model of democracy was consolidated but not the democratic rule as such. The problem was raised when the Allende-administration and the democratically elected Unidad Popular tried to impose another model of democracy, which compared to pure liberal democracy emphasized more on social and economic rights, and more of peoples’ participatory in the democratic system. The result is well-known – the military coup - supported by the parliamentary right and the U.S. administration brought general Pinochet to the power, where he remained until 1990. The argument is that just the liberal democracy was accepted by all other major political actors in Chile. Other doctrines such as participatory democracy were not widely accepted by the elite groups or the people in the early 1970s. That is why the current concept of consolidation can not answer the question about democratic consolidation.

Finally, and as a consequence of the discussion above, the concept of consolidation does not consider the norms and values behind the entire theoretical concept. All democratic concepts stand on some sort of a norm; the liberal democracy does it; and other types of democracies do it as well. The explicit norm is when all people accept democracy as the only legitimate way to govern a coun-
try. But implicit only the liberal doctrine matters. In the case of Chile (1970-73), the idea about participatory democracy with radical social and economic reforms was not sanctioned among all voters and among elite actors in the Chilean society. Furthermore, the democratic models also have implications for economic and social policies. This is the case for both liberal democracy, social democracy and participatory democracy. For example in the social democratic model – people are both guaranteed some political, economic and social rights. In a participatory democracy, peoples’ participation and rights in the socio-economic spheres are guaranteed in a deeper sense. In contrast, the social dimensions seem to be a non-political issue in an elite democratic rule with the hegemony of neoliberal economic policies. Finally, and an important issue to address – all these models of democracy have different relations to civil society, e.g. the relations between the state and civil society take different paths, as we soon will see.

In conclusion, instead of using the concept strictly within the liberal democratic framework, the important thing must be to analyze the domestic and external actors’ view on democracy and the norms behind it, and how this could be related to the process of deepening democracy. This “game” between elite actors on how to deepen democracy highlights the actors’ preferences for different models or views of democracy and structural possibilities or obstacles to accomplish this type of democratic development. In this perspective, it is not enough to just analyze the actors as pro-democrats or anti-democrats; rather it is a question of what kind of democratic models (or authoritarian) they prefer to develop. All these models have also somewhat different relations between the state and civil society.

The first one is liberal democracy. Robert Dahl’s (1971) polyarchy is the most respected and applied concept of an advanced liberal democracy. Dahl summarizes the criteria in seven points. Besides the content of the electoral democracy it also contains aspects such as; control over governmental decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials; citizens have an effectively enforced right to freedom of expression, including criticism of all officials, the government, the prevailing political, economic, and social system, and the dominant ideology; access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolized by the government or any other single group, and citizens need to have an effectively enforced right to form and join autonomous associations, such as political parties and interest groups. Finally, Robert Dahl’s polyarchy creates the conditions for development towards a more advanced democratic rule meaning effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusions of adults. In a liberal democracy
civil society is supposed to be autonomous from the state and involves citizens’ collective actions of ideas, interest, demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. It is considered as a vital part to further strengthen and deepen democracy.

The second category is participatory democracy (see Pateman 1970, Barber 1984). Participatory democracy, in this version, includes dimensions such as; an idea about the decision-making as more important than the content of the decisions themselves; all social relations in society should be democratized under equal conditions; the people and civil society should be a part of all national and local political decision-making and in other spheres such as at workplaces, educational institutions and housing; democracy needs to be spread to the economic, social and cultural spheres in society (normally these are not part of a liberal democracy), and finally participatory democracy is based upon the principle of the rule of a collective decision-making. In this more radical democracy the state and civil organizations are suppose to work more closely together, in particular in the socio-economic spheres. In a participatory democracy the relations between the state and civil society is more mutual, and together they work for the collectives’ best. The dimension of peoples’ participation is vital to strengthen and deepen democracy.

The final category is electoral democracy – Schumpeter’s (1947) democratic majority rule containing characters such as; the majority of the people have to elect the executive and legislative formal power in free and fair elections and people must have access to freedom of speech, press and assembly; all adults have the right to vote and run for office; the results of all public elections have to be respected, and no illegal constitutional actions are allowed to take place during the mandate elected. In those elite democratic system, the idea of democracy is narrowed down to pure elections, and beyond that civil society and parties could be seen as encouraged to voluntarily engaged in other spheres, such as the socio-economic. The relation between the state and civil society is supposed to be non-existing.

With this in mind one could make four assumptions. At first, the elite actors (domestic and international) have different preferences for democratic models (such as elite electoral democracy, liberal democracy or participatory democracy, with different norms and values). Second, the actors’ views on democracy and the relations between the actors do matter in the game of democratic development, both when democracy is installed, but also in the further process to deepen democracy beyond the first free and fair elections. Third, the relations between the state and civil society looks different depending on which of the model we are referring to. Finally, the established democratic and civil society models might also have implications for future ability to carry out social reforms or
combat poverty, and this will sooner or later challenge the order of today in each country. This is particular the case for Latin America with the recent development of radical left leaders in office.

*Liberal democracy* means more democracy compared to electoral democracy, also because it could even include a socio-economic dimension, as in the case of social democracy. The civil society is supposed to be an autonomous a free sphere advocating peoples’ rights. In contrast to liberal democratic institutions the lefts’ radical or participatory democrats would like the people to participate and co-operate with the state – initiate, make decisions, and implement policies at national and local level, in particular related to social issues. Other communitarians, such as the rights neoliberals or neoconservatives rather emphasize a small state, in which the citizens themselves take decision on issues related to family or the socio-economic spheres.

![Diagram: Elite Actors and Deepening Democracy](compare with Roberts 1998)

Before we move on to the radical and moderate cases in Latin America, let us first briefly define what we mean by the left.
What is the left in Latin America?

In the late 1990s, beginning with the victory of Hugo Chávez, the left started to win elections across Latin America and by 2009 occupied the presidency in as many as thirteen countries. These victories, taken together, represent a monumental trend that has not been matched historically (see Cleary 2006, 35). However, this wave cannot be seen as uniformed left, nor a united left. Among the literature the categorizations of the left have included several acronyms such as moderate left, reformist left, social-democrats, socialists, left-wing populism, leftist neopopulism, the participatory left, the radical left, the petro-left, and the nationalist left. This paper moves beyond the multiplicity of conceptualizations toward two broad categories that encompass distinct tendencies in terms of the party’s degree of radicalism on deepening democracy and socio-economic reforms (see Roberts 1998, 18-19; Castañeda 1993, 2008; Walker 2008). The two categories used are the radical left and the social-democratic left. According to Arditi (2008) the categorization are constructed as the left has manifested itself in different cases through party programs, speeches or in other actions or policies in government or in opposition.

The first category is the Radical Left, which challenges liberal democracy and the hegemony of neoliberal economic policies and social injustice, advocating instead an anti-capitalistic economic order with more state-led economic policies, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth to the masses. The radical democratic platform stems from authors such as Antonio Gramsci, Noberto Bobbio, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and Jorge G. Castañeda. This radical new left is today represented by the primary and dominated left parties in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia, though the left in office in both Brazil and El Salvador in practice seems to be more moderate and social-democratic. This radical left has similarities with Allende’s presidency in Chile (1970-73) and has also linkages to the traditional European social democracy, advocating an active and strong state to promote social and economic development. The radical left has, at least, three different tendencies, which sometimes exist in the same party, but sometimes only one at the time. The first is populism meaning that the radical left quite often adheres to a populist agenda with drastic socio-economic reforms and re-distribution of land that is attractive to the masses, especially indigenous people (see March 2007; Walker 2008). According to Walker (2009:9) the resurgence of this popular left largely depends on the collapse of the old political institutions as well as new social demands from young people, workers and indigenous people. The second is participation, in which the left advocate people’s participation, e.g. Participatory democracy, particular with emphasize to get civil society and people engaged at local level and in the
socio-economic spheres (see for example Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). This idea stands opposed to
the idea of representative liberal democracy. Third, the radical left quite often has traditional linkages
to the ideology of Marxism and to other Marxist parties in democratic as well as authoritarian re-
gimes. Thus far Chávez, and to some extent Morales in Bolivia and Correa in Ecuador, represent the
most radical tendencies of the left (see for example Katz 2007:37; Walker 2008; Moreno-Brid, and
Paunovic 2008).

The second category is the left-of-centre’s Social Democrats, who adhere to policies of developing
liberal democracy and maintaining most of the characters of their predecessors’ neoliberal economic
policies, though some modification have taken place (see Dahl 1971). The modern Social Democrats
– “La Tercera Vía” (Carazo 2000) tend to stand for reformism and pragmatism, having eliminated
former vocabulary such as “class struggle” and “socialism.” This tendency follows the route of An-
thony Giddens’ (1994) analysis of third way of social democracy, standing to the right of the tradi-
tional left in the global era. In theory, this implies a modern stance on issues related to globalization,
economic integration and the free market. In reality, however, it means acceptance of the neoliberal
economic world order, but also encompasses ideas such as protection of the weak, social justice,
rights with obligations, and cosmopolitan pluralism. It also encourages a pluralistic and autonomous
civil society as vital for democratic development. This particular variation of the left is a major polit-
ical force in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, and in Costa Rica. Finally, a third main category could
be the orthodox left-wing Communist parties (in Chile for example), who plays a minor role in a few
countries, but they are no longer any major force against either the right or the left in today’s demo-
cratized Latin America.

As a consequence, there are two main reasons to use two broad main categories. First, for us as
social scientist, it is our duty to make the issues of society or politics easier to understand, and if
more categories are included in the analyses, it gets more complex than necessary to catch the main
ideas of the left and how it affects Latin America of today. Second, the two broad categories of the
radical (with its somewhat different aspects) versus the social-democratic left include all necessary
characters and aspects to analyze the trends of left-wave in the 2000s as well as previous historical
cases.
Democracy, Left-administrations, Civil Society and Reforms

By the year of 2009, thirteen presidencies were occupied by the left. In Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Peru, and Paraguay, and probably in El Salvador, the reformist and social democratic presidents are attempting to carry out modest social and economic reforms. The reforms have been seen as moderate in the sense that they do not challenge the global political or economic order of today – liberal democracy and market economy - though some attempt to modify the neoliberal economy, especially on issues related to free trade and privatization, might take place. However, in other Latin American countries, including the Andes’ Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador and Nicaragua, the presidents have been more radical and have challenged or might challenge the political, social, and global economic order (Katz 2007; Walker 2008; Moreno-Brid, and Paunovic 2008). The left in these cases is considered as radical because it during the presidential terms, the party agenda or through other means such as public speeches, both oppose the ideas behind free trade as well as the supranational organizations behind these marked-based policies. The radical countries creation of ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América), together with Cuba, differs from other trade blocs (Salazar 2006). Rather than only dealing with economic issues, it intends to express the feeling of the Latin American people, with an emphasis on fighting poverty and social injustice. It heads projects such ‘Petro America’ and other energy issues, collective efforts to collective bargain with the international community (such as the IMF), and dealing with social issues such as literacy. Furthermore, these radical presidencies also attempt to challenge the domestic elites who support the global free market economy.

Already back in the late 1980s and in the 1990s and as late as in the early 2000s scholars discussed the democratic pitfalls of the new-born democracy in Latin America. For example in "Dispirited Politics" Peter Hakim (2003) argued that the adoption of the neoliberal economic model in the 1990s led to peoples’ discontents about the democratic regime all over Latin America (see also Becker 1999). These problems still exist in most of the countries and includes aspects such as political, judicial and military institutions, public administration and lack of horizontal accountability, legitimacy and corruption In spite of this, in the UNDP-report "La Democracia en America Latina – Hacia una Democracia de Ciudadanas y Ciudadanos" (2004) it was claimed that the people of Latin America gradually have come to accept democracy as the main principle how to rule a country. Ha-

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1 The FMLN-presidency since June 2009 seems to be more moderate than radical in practise.
kim (2003:111) argued that in most cases in the early 2000s the question changed focus from how to survive to how to develop the quality of democracy.

The most recent democracy reports from also show us that the Latin American countries have reached various degrees of democracy in the early 2000s, in which countries such as Costa Rica, Uruguay and Chile had developed beyond just pure electoral democracy. The left wave with both more radical and moderate left presidencies, as well as the other conservative presidencies, raise the question, however, if it exist other types of democratic regimes in Latin America than the representative liberal democracy? In ”Representation by Consultation? The Rise of Direct Democracy in Latin America” (2001) Monica Barczak discussed the direct democratic initiative in the Latin American democracies. Meanwhile, Barczak (2001:59-) admits several problems with more direct democracy, such as populism. On the other hand, more direct democracy, or at least some of it gives both politicians and people a greater possibility to affect the outcome of the political debate, in particular related to unsolved issues of the representative democracy (see Baltodano 2002). At the same time, the UNDP’s report III (2004) about democracy in Latin America indicated that most of the citizens’ referendums in practice have been constrained. In all the countries, except for Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, the government could proclaim referendums in most of the cases. But only a few have practice it frequently in reality, such as in Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela. The same character seems to be the case when it comes to people’s possibility to influence to raise an issue in the national parliament. In half of the cases, there has been a possibility in theory, but only Uruguay seems to have practiced it. Furthermore in the 2000s, we have not had any fully developed participatory democracies in Latin America, but in a few cases such as in Venezuela and Bolivia some attempts have been made, but it seems actually that at least in the case of Venezuela that the democratic development rather has pointed toward a personal dictatorship and democratic constraints; we will come back to this soon. In Brazil, however, at state- and local level some participatory procedures have been used, for example in the budget process. The direct democratic characters are also limited to a few countries and policy areas, and could rather be seen as a complement to electoral or liberal democracy. However, we have two historical cases in which democratically elected governments tried to carry out more direct democracy and with more concern to socio-economic issues. These two cases are Guatemala during the democratic period (1944-54) and Chile under Salvador Allende (1970-73). The Chilean cases is the most obvious, where the left-coalition Unidad Popular tried to carry out socio-economic reforms and expand peoples participation in elections and on issues related to the socio-economic spheres (compare with Pateman 1970). However, Salvador Allende’s
presidential term ended with the military coup in 1973 – supported by the parliamentary right, the military and United States. (compare with Harris 1992:200). In the 1990s, participatory democracy as a political idea made a real entrance in Latin American politics when the radical left in Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua began to win national and local elections. Still, none of these countries have so far established participatory democracy as a democratic model.

When it comes to more recent attempts to establish participatory democracy, the roots go back to Brazil, where it always has been an idea of the Workers party, nowadays occupying the presidency. According to Avritzer (2002:4) the people showed demand for more participation already during the mass meetings before and under the transition to democracy in the 1980s. Article 204 in the constitution guarantees peoples’ right to participate both in the decision per se and in the implementation phase (Avritzer 2002:169). This has been the case in Porto Allegre (since 1989) and Belo Horizonte (since 1993); in both cases participatory democracy exists at local level. This model is standard procedure in over 100 cities all over Brazil, most related to the budget process and social issues (Schugurensky 2001:30ff, Avritzer 2002:139, Wainwright 2003). Avritzer (2002:147ff) argues that this type of democracy means that the political initiative come from local social actors, and the elected political institutions are affected by the influence from the people, and the decision made could be controlled by the citizens. It does require a lively civil society and a co-operation between the people, civil society and the state. However, at federal level in Brazil the Worker’s party under the presidency of Lula has been much more moderate, or social-democratic, and no attempts have been made to practice the ideas of participatory democracy.

For several reasons Venezuela is seen as the most controversial case of the radical political left. First, Hugo Chávez’s populist “Bolivarian revolution” is by nature deeply anti-globalization and against most of the global institutions and norms coming from the Western hemisphere, and no government have so far challenged the contemporary international hegemony as much as Chávez’. Second, it is the only case so far that has challenged and largely replaced the previous game of democracy and socio-economic system in a country, in the Venezuelan case the liberal political system rooted in the “Pacto de Punto Fijo” of 1958 (see also Moreno-Brid, and Paunovic 2009; Kornblith, and Jawahar 2005; McCoy 2005; Levine 2002). This democratic pact, between all the old elites including the social-democrats, contained representative democracy, market economy, some social reforms, and aimed to maintain the existing economic world order of today (ISI up to the 1980s). Third, the Bolivarian revolution has carried out the most and deepest political transformation and social and economic reforms to reduce poverty. In fact, Chávez’s “Bolivarian Revolution” has de-
creased poverty and some social problems as well as taken measures to strengthen grassroots democracy in the countryside and in the poor city barrios. Fourth, no other leftist government have taken such measures and policies to strengthen the power of the presidency, while weakening the power of Congress and the judicial system, along with some political and civil rights, including the free media as Chávez. Already back in 2000 Chávez organized the civil society in “Círculos Bolivarianos” as a key actor to push forward the Bolivarian revolution. For example in 2001 30,000 members of Círculos all over the country were sworn in a mass ceremony in Caracas, and later it had about 2.2 millions members. They have all expressed values of grassroots participation. At the beginning of Chávez time in office, it played a significant role, but during the last years it has been diminished. According to Hawkin and Hansen (2006), however, its role to strengthen democracy in Venezuela has a paradox. On the one hand, the Círculos have been working with democratic methods and goals and could therefore be considered as pro-democratic actor. On the other hand, the Círculos relations with the presidency under Chávez could not be seen as any signs of autonomous and they embodied strong charismatic and negative linkages with Chávez with strong clientelistic overtones that have undermined their role to strengthen democracy in Latin America.

Fifth, at the same time no other government have challenged or met as hard resistance as Chávez’s, and the radicalization began at once to challenge the domestic economic elite, the Washington consensus, and neoliberal economic policies (McCoy 2005; Kornblith, and Jahawar 2005; see also Levine 2002). Finally, what also is significance for Chávez is that he has survived several major political crisis or attempted military coups. Since the revolution began, he has survived a military coup (2002), won referendums on staying in office and on a new constitution (2004), and, in 2006 he was re-elected as president. But, the failure to win approval for additional constitutional changes in December 2007 seemed to have weakened Chávez’s authority temporarily, but it all changed again when he in late 2008 won another constitutional referendum (this time about the possibility for presidents to be re-elected more than twice). Still he seems to have support from many poor sectors of Venezuelan society. However, the most recent reforms to nationalize a banks, food factories and natural mineral companies have further increased polarization between the pro-Chavistaz and the domestic opposition and international actors such as the United States, and foreign companies. For these six reasons Venezuela is the most radical cases of the left in government of today. As a result of this radicalization, Venezuela might take another direction, more toward a one-man dictatorship and further decreasing of political rights with control over civil society and the media, but with increasing of social rights. It’s a paradox, the poor people might get it better, meanwhile the liberal
The second most radical and controversial case is Bolivia (see for example Walker 2008; Sánchez 2008; Rochlin 2007). In contrast to Chávez, the left government have so far not decreased civil and political right in Bolivia, nor have any major military coups taken place against the democratically elected government. During the first years of this new radical presidency, Bolivia boasted mostly positive macroeconomic indicators related to growth, unemployment and trade. Some reforms were also made such as a campaign against illiteracy, nationalization of the country’s natural gas supply (some from international companies), and a controversial land reform program, which aimed at redistribute land to mostly poor and indigenous people in the countryside. In December 2007, an elected constitutional assembly, representing the major parties voted for major changes to the constitution; thereby establishing Bolivia as a multiethnic country and a new capital in Sucre. During 2008-09, the debate about the constitution changes and its radical measurements further increased the conflict in Bolivian society. As a result, on one side one finds the radical left struggling against the old elite system and the neoliberal policies established in the 1980-1990s. The radical left (Movimiento Al Socialismo) has support from coca peasants, mine workers and indigenous people, and most of the civil society. On the other side one finds the rich upper class representing mainly a few regions and the former political and economic elite of the country, with a minority in the national parliament, trying to maintain the existing political and economic order.

Finally, another case is Nicaragua, where the former Sandinista revolutionary leader Daniel Ortega was installed as president in January 2007 (Kampwirth 2008). Though domestic politics is somewhat different in Nicaragua compared to other radical cases, it is still relevant to categorize the Ortega administration as radical. First, during Ortega’s first months in office, several political and social reforms were put enacted. Some of these, such as free school for children, free medical care and a fifty percent reduction in public servants’ salaries have not been controversial. Second, other more contentious reforms include Ortega’s decision to increase citizens’ participation in government through the creation of new state authorities and committees, and the move to strengthen the president’s control over the police and the military. Ortega’s move to centralize the presidential power immediate inspired criticism from his right-wing opponents, who draw analogies to the revolutionary regime of the 1980s. Furthermore, in November 2007, via a president decree and based upon the Círculos in Venezuela, President Ortega began to implement one of his controversial ideas, Consejos Ciudadanos (People’s committee) a parallel power structure to the political institutions. Third,
also during the past years, Ortega has been accused by the media and human rights groups for “institutionalizing a dictatorship”, increasing corruption, for violating freedom of speech, assembly and for not respecting the constitution and human rights. Another controversial example is the local elections in 2008, in which violations of the electoral laws were obvious, at least, according to the civil society, the church, United States, OAS and the political right. Another example is the government’s attempt to control civil society, by for example forbidding civil organizations from receiving money from foreign sources if the intention is to use them for political purposes. However, if Nicaragua will be further radicalized and how it then will judge in the long run is too early to call.

Turning to other Latin American countries, however, one finds that a different progression has taken place. For example, in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay and Costa Rica, the ruling centre-left administrations have maintained a more social-democratic and moderate path, including support for the liberal democratic route, market economy and only demonstrated modest ambitions for social reforms (for further remarks, see Navia 2008; Altman, Castiglioni, and Luna 2008; Baiocchi, and Checa 2008). In these countries, the democratic institutions with free and fair elections and an autonomous and free civil society go hand in hand with the liberal democratic tradition. It means that civil society is operating as a separate sphere from the state representing freedom and activism to influence the state – the political sphere, or the local or central governments. It does not necessarily need to be seen as opposed to the state, but at least it has been working as a counter-part for peoples’ thoughts, ideas and organized activism. As a consequence, it is important for the process to deepen and consolidate liberal democracies in these countries.

Furthermore, these administrations have thus not challenged major actors, including the economic elite, the military, the U.S. or other international economic forces. These social-democratic governments in Latin America have tried to cope with globalization and have accepted liberal democracy, as well as some features of the neoliberal economic model. At the international level, NAFTA, MERCOSUR and the future creation of a free trade block all across the Americas is a stated objective of these administrations’ policies. All this stands in sharp contrast to the view of the radical left administrations’ policies of free trade and Latin American integration along with their ambition to further develop the ALBA to other Latin American countries. To conclude, though most of the left-administrations in Latin America seems to be moderate in practice, the few more radical might have deeper consequences for the future of the region, and as a consequence it might be valuable to analyze if and what we could learn from similar (or almost) historical cases.
Concluding remarks

In this paper, the wave of elected left governments in Latin America in the 2000s has been explored, and in particular these administrations relations to democracy and civil society. Based upon two broad and theoretical models of relations between democracy, state and civil society contemporary empirical cases in Latin America have been analyzed. The new tendencies of the left in Latin America have followed two distinct paths. One is the reformist, social-democratic left, which supports liberal democracy and market economy, including development of a liberal civil society in which it has been operating as a separate sphere from the state representing freedom and activism to influence the state – the political sphere, or the local or central governments. It does not necessarily need to be seen as opposed to the state, but at least it has been working as a counter-part for peoples’ thoughts, ideas and organized activism. This is of course the case for those Latin American countries, who have established liberal democratic institutions, such as Costa Rica, Uruguay or Chile. Theirs variation of leftist politics therefore complies with the global and national political, social, and economic order of the day (neoliberalism). In contrast, the radical left emphasizes participatory democracy with socio-economic reforms that may challenge the rule of liberal democracy and market economy – and the major actors’ supporting these structures, both on the global and the domestic arena. As a consequence, for the radical left, though it is not unified in all the ideas, civil society is rather a part of the political process, in which civil society together with the state for example carry out socio-economic reform, including peoples’ participation in both decision-making and in the implementation phase of the policy process.

As a consequence, democracy could be deepened, at least theoretically, in both the radical and social democratic alternatives. The consequences of the social democratic’ attempt to deepen liberal democracy, advocating more civil and political rights for the citizens, an autonomous civil society and a more well-functioning democracy , means deepening of democracy beyond just competition in free and fair elections as in an elite democratic system . However, democracy is also deepened in the case of the radical lefts’ participatory democracy because it means more possibility for people and the civil society to actively participate in political decision-making at a local grassroots-level on issues related to daily-life socio-economic issues.

The radical left’s political, economic and social agenda has mainly risen as a consequence of the neoliberal economic model’s failure to solve the highly stratified socio-economic situation in Latin America. Historically, this type of radical agenda with a more anti-capitalistic approach, and socially
conscious has similarities with previous attempts by left-wing parties to develop radical democracy with strong economic and social anti-poverty measures, as in Guatemala (1944-54) and in Chile (1970-73) (see Oxhorn 2003). Both these radical political and economic changes of society were challenged by the same actors - the economic elite, the military and external (mainly U.S.) forces and the parliamentary right - and these actors stood in both cases behind the military interventions and the fall of the democratic governments.

The paradox is that the attempt to deepen democracy beyond the liberal focus on political institutions, e.g. free and fair elections, freedom of political rights and an autonomous civil society may actually cause the failure of these institutions and democratic rule. Though motivated by good intentions to redistribute economic resources from the rich to the poor people and carry out social reforms, it may also mark the beginning of the end of democracy. In the short run, radical administrations may be able to carry out some socio-economic reforms as in the historical cases of Guatemala and Chile, but over the long term the question is if democracy, as it has been seen in Latin America during the past two decades, will survive. The threat does not just seem to come from the enemies of current radical administrations, but more problematic from the left’s own attempts to constrain political rights, as in the case of Venezuela or Nicaragua. Ideas about radical and participatory democracy might be a good thought, but in most cases in reality it seems to have the opposite result – less democracy, rather than more democracy. It is a paradox.
References


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