UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONFLICT IN LATIN AMERICA

Coordinator

Fernando Calderón

Research team

Lorenza Belinda Fontana

María Isabel Nava

Huáscar Pacheco

Special Contributions

Antonio Aranibar

Pablo Antezana

Francisco Canedo

Dulcinea Duarte

Matías Gallardo

Daniel Moreno

Juan Carlos Reyes

Cesar Rojas Ríos

Benjamin Rodriguez

María Soledad Quiroga

Federico Vasquez

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Preface

Democracy is not only the indispensable free and transparent election of our leaders. It is also a way of organizing power that places citizens and human rights at the heart of its concerns. This is the essence of the idea of democracy, and it is what gives this idea its universal significance.

Latin America has experienced three decades of uninterrupted democracy. The triumph of democracy in the 1980s and its current day-to-day development are closely linked to the tradition of social mobilization in Latin America. That is why this publication of the Political Analysis and Prospective Scenarios Project (PAPEP/UNDP) offers a different approach to social conflict.

First, it is necessary to recognize that democracy is, in essence, a conflictive form of order. Based on the monitoring of 54 newspapers in 17 countries in Latin America, it is possible to conclude that social conflicts in the region share certain characteristics. These conflicts are complex and ever more diverse and dispersed, and in some cases they are numerous and reach high levels of intensity. These conflicts are also increasingly expressed through mass communication media, including both classic forms of media and new communications networks. Furthermore, they are expressed within the context of structures of concentrated power which are vehemently questioned by large segments of society. In Latin America, these conflicts are characterized by a high degree of citizen participation. Likewise, the demands that they channel enjoy a high level of social legitimacy.

Secondly, social conflict itself is not necessarily negative. In many cases, it expresses a certain common sense regarding the potential and the limitations of the processes of development. This study identifies three spheres of conflict—social reproduction, institutional, and cultural conflicts—each of which has a different logic. However, these spheres of conflict have a common denominator in the sense that they are all related to pragmatic demands for improvements in the quality of life. We find that behind social conflicts there are real and/or perceived declines in the quality of life for society and these are issues that must be addressed.

Thirdly, the central problem is not that conflict occurs in society today, but rather that the State lacks the necessary capacities to manage them in an effective manner. Society is seeing its collectively-organized actors and their identities become progressively more fragmented. This is reflected in the tendency for their demands to become more diverse and dispersed. The State continues to be one of the main actors in the power struggles related to social demands, and it centralizes the collective dissatisfaction of society. However, many conflicts tend to grow because there is a lack of institutional frameworks which are capable of providing platforms for dialogue and negotiation.

Fourthly, this study supports political constructivism as the best political approach for processing conflict in heterogeneous societies, like those of Latin America, which are fractured by many types of inequality. In fact, social conflicts test the capacity of political systems to respond to the needs and demands of society. Political constructivism seeks to strengthen and expand democracy, and thus it can be a means for truly transforming conflicts; a political constructivist response focuses on strengthening and improving relationships between the

actors involved in conflicts. This approach likewise promotes pluralism and interculturality by recognizing the differences and commonalities within society. Thus it aims to keep incompatibilities or the perception of incompatibility from leading to a breakdown in relations between actors or to increased violence.

Fifthly, it is worth noting that the desired scenario or ideal situation is one in which social conflicts occur where there are institutional and political capacities for addressing them. At the same time, this report is based on the profound conviction that if conflicts are managed through dialogue and negotiation—while addressing the structural causes and momentary conditions that shape them—they can provide opportunities for undertaking the transformations that Latin American societies require to become more equitable and just.

This report not only analyzes the dynamics and tendencies of social conflict in Latin America, but also provides clues on how to address conflict. Thus, the report presents ways on how to strengthen democracy in Latin America, and provides a fresh perspective for those of us who work to prevent, manage, and transform conflicts at the global level.

New York, March 2013

Heraldo Muñoz
Regional Director for
Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP

Presentation

Conflict analysis is a crucial tool for understanding social and political processes, and for guiding conflict management and decision-making toward the peaceful and constructive transformation of conflicts. Both processes of building sociopolitical order and a common vision involve conflict. If it is managed through dialogue and negotiation, and its structural and circumstantial causes are addressed, conflict may offer an opportunity for realizing changes that are required to make society more fair and equitable.

Fundación UNIR Bolivia[1] and the Regional Project of Political Analysis and Prospective Scenarios (PAPEP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have proven track records in research and analysis of social conflict, and they share common objectives related to the constructive management of conflicts and the development of a culture of peace. In 2009, these institutions joined forces to establish the Regional Observatory of Conflict. The objective of the Observatory is to monitor and analyze social conflicts in 17 Latin American countries[2], while taking into consideration the roots and trajectories of conflicts, as well as their potential impact on the development and strengthening of democratic governance.

This joint effort seeks to:

• Strengthen the capacity of national actors to carry out political and conflict analysis.

• Promote forums for debate and dialogue to foster the transformative potential of social conflicts.

• Highlight steps and pathways for improving the quality of politics in the region in order to reduce social inequality and poverty (primary sources of conflict), and to promote the con structive management of conflicts.

• Contribute to the development of citizen democracy and a democratic practice committed to dialogue, the common good and a culture of peace.

The study summarized in the present document is the product of the Regional Observatory of Social Conflict. It examines social conflicts that occurred in the region between October 2009 and September 2010. This was a period of relative stability in which Latin America slowly emerged—and many of its countries relatively successfully emerged—from the initial onslaught of the global economic crisis[3].

Currently, Latin America has unique sociopolitical and economic opportunities that augur favorable future conditions for making progress toward the objectives of democratic development. However, if states and societies do not increase their political capacities for managing conflicts, they will squander opportunities to reduce the social gaps and inequalities that give rise to dissatisfaction and protest. We are confident that this document will contribute to the

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[1]   *Since 2006, UNIR has continuously monitored and analyzed social conflict in Bolivia.*

[2]   *The study examines conflict in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guate mala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Venezuela.*

[3]   *Conflict data was produced by monitoring 54 newspapers in 17 Latin American countries.*

analysis of contemporary conflict in Latin America and the future implementation of a regional network for monitoring and analyzing social conflicts.

This present document summarizes a study coordinated by Fernando Calderon and jointly written with Lorenza Fontana, Isabel Nava, and Huascar Pacheco. Several other collaborators provided support and inputs for the study. Cesar Rojas produced a general overview of conflict around the world, Maria Soledad Quiroga, Antonio Aranibar, Federico Vasquez and Pablo Antezana designed and supervised the initial Latin-American database of conflicts, Daniel Moreno validated the study's methodology, and Antonio Aranibar and Francisco Canedo developed the future scenarios. Recognition is also due to members of the team that produced this English-language summary document specially Matias Gallardo for coordinating this edition.

La Paz, December 2012

Antonio Aranibar
Coordinator PAPEP/UNDP

Antonio Aramayo
Executive Director
Fundación UNIR Bolivia

General framework

Latin America currently has significant, realistic, and perhaps unprecedented opportunities to make profound progress in strengthening its democracies and advancing development. It has emerged reasonably well from the current global crisis and is now experiencing a unique period of relative political stability. Political developments in the last decade, which include the decline in the legitimacy of political parties and the emergence or reemergence of variety of movements and regimes, in a great extent contributed to a political transformation that could strengthen democracy, development, and the global standing of the region over the long term. At the heart of these processes are issues related to social conflict and the political capacity to address conflict.

Understanding how social conflict affects these processes in Latin America is the primary objective of a full report carried out by the Political Analysis and Prospective Scenarios Project (PAPEP)[4] of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) together with UNIR Bolivia Foundation[5], available in Spanish and titled "*La protesta social en América Latina*"[6]. The present document is conceived as a brief report that summarizes that study's findings for a wider public. The precise questions that guided the research process are:

- How is conflict expressed in the public sphere?

- How is conflict characterized and expressed within different political-ideological and sub-regional contexts?

- What are the main categories of conflict?

- What is the relationship between State and society in conflicts?

- What are the dynamics of conflict radicalization?

- What kind of political capacities do exists to manage conflicts?

- What are the possible scenarios over the medium term and how would they affect governability?

- In brief, how do social conflicts impacts democracy and development?

This study argues that the recent social conflicts in Latin America arose within a given historical context and that they were influenced by the region's relative success in resisting the global crisis. The region has experienced significant economic growth rates, has reduced poverty levels, and maintained the public's largely positive view of democracy as a political system and framework for coexistence. Moreover, its societies made a transition from semi-modern democracies to secularized democracies. Despite the relative progress made and the diversity of national contexts, there are problems, trends, and opportunities encountered throughout the region which provide a common platform for social conflict.

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[4]   www.papep-undp.org

[5]   www.unirbolivia.org

[6]   *The full report is titled "La Protesta Social en América Latina" (2012, PAPEP-UNIR, Siglo XXI Ed.) and is available in Spanish at* http://www.papep-undp.org/drupal/sites/default/files/user/libro_completo_conflictos_1.pdf

Methodological framework: Conflicts in the public space

The study adopts a classic definition of social conflict as a process of contentious interaction between social actors and institutions which mobilize with different levels of organization and act collectively in order to improve conditions, defend existing situations, or advance new alternative social projects[7]. The term conflict also refers here to the dynamic of conflicts over a determined period of time. It does not represent a simple sum of specific conflicts, but rather refers to an entire process and the relations that are involved in and inherent to conflict. Conflict implies both the reproduction and transformation of social relations.

It should be noted that the definition of social conflict employed in the study does not include other violent conflicts associated with organized crime, drug trafficking, guerrilla movements or wars. Accordingly, the countries affected by such types of conflicts—including El Salvador, Colombia, and Mexico—register relatively low levels of social conflicts in this study.

This report focuses on social conflicts that occurred between October 2009 and September 2010, a period of relative stability in Latin America. It is based on the monitoring of 54 newspapers[8] in 17 countries in the region[9]. Because the study relies on newspaper reporting and examines past conflicts (2009-2010), it does not necessarily describe the conflicts that affect the region today. Furthermore, far fewer conflicts are reported in newspapers and other print media than really occur in the region. Considering this, the study's findings were assessed using other statistical sources on national and sectorial cases of conflict, and these sources confirmed qualitatively similar trends. The newspaper data was complemented with a variety of case studies, secondary sources, and information on conflicts from bibliographic, conceptual, and Web-based research. Nonetheless, the data considered in the study are insufficient, and the potential discrepancy and confusion between published information and reality constitute a serious shortcoming of studies of this kind.

Figure 1. Relevant events (June 2009 – October 2010)
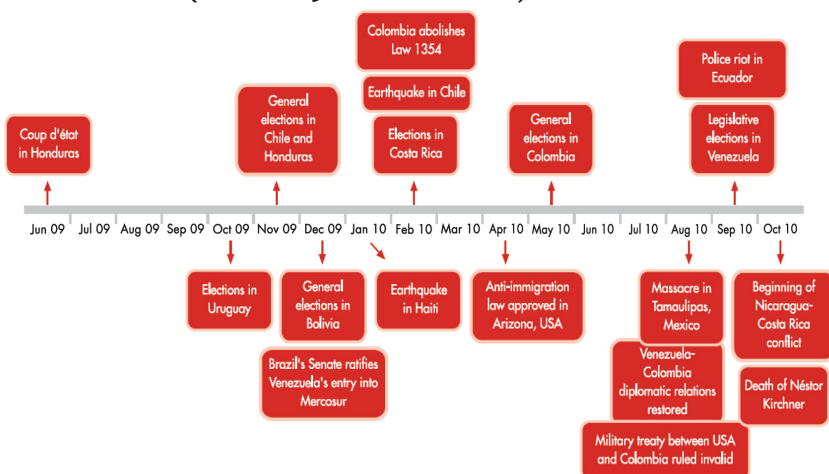
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation

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[7]   Adapted from Cadarso (2001).

[8]   The media sample of the present study is restricted to three or four media outlets per country according to their population in order to achieve balance. Furthermore, these news media represent diverse ideological leanings. They   participate in important markets of information, and to a great extent they form part of complex local and global networks that depend on the use and development of new information technologies.

[9]   The countries included in the analysis are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Nonetheless, the media offer public spaces where power relations are reflected, created and contested, conflicts between opposing parties are recognized, and political and social interests are expressed through different journalistic and editorial lenses. In this sense, there is a notable trend in the region to increasingly transmit conflicts through mass media, including via traditional media (television, radio, and newspapers) and new means of communication (Internet and cellular phones). Media companies are sources of power that create common conceptions of conflict by shaping public opinion and the meanings of conflict[10]. The media need conflicts, and conflicts need the media.

The media are comprised largely of businesses which depend on the market and respond to the interaction of interests and pressures from specific actors[11]. Media companies are never neutral, but nor are they mechanical instruments of power. There is dialectic between the media and society. During conflicts a complementary relationship is established between the media and the actors of the conflict. However, from a constructivist perspective, the media also fabricates social reality, actively portraying narratives and views that influence the political system, decision-making processes, and the actions of social actors.

This study's data suggest the communication media are disinterested in the recent series of social conflicts. On one hand this implies that the press operates according to the logic of the market. It also indicates that journalistic ethics are deficient in terms of the media's potential role in providing indirect support to institutional strengthening, conflict resolution, and the formation of well informed and responsible citizens[12].

The globalization of communications across the region involves five notable trends. The first involves the relationship between the growth of media and the multiplication of expectations. Today's masses form their demands based on greater information about what the markets offer and a heightened awareness of the disparities and social injustices that exist in the region. The second refers to the changes produced by political mediation. New actors, such as media communicators, publicists, and non-governmental organizations are decisive elements in the new order of communicational politics. A third trend refers to a new discourse in the media which disseminates values associated with democracy and the free market. The fourth trend relates to the new relationship between power and press in the region. Assessed from a progressive perspective, the new media oligopolies have an enormous influence. They administer the intersection between politicians and the public. On the other hand, a more institutionalist view questions the growth of media power and the pretensions of media neutrality that escape the control mechanisms and institutional norms that apply to society as a whole.

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[10]   There are distinct types of multimedia corporations/conglomerates that offer a significant number of news media and virtual information platforms. The first group could be denominated as "large" and includes those that have vary ing degrees of ownership of the world's four key communicational platforms (written press, visual media, web plat forms, and mobile multimedia). They disseminate information at the regional level. This group also includes com munication media that is important on a local level. The second group, considered "medium", refers to those corpo rations which in many cases do not posses media companies outside a national area, but which nevertheless oper ate at three or four communicational levels in their local environment. Finally, the group of "small" conglomerates includes mainly editorial businesses that own no more than a couple forms of written press media. These entities do not have complex distribution platforms or participate in information and communication networks on a regional or global scale.

[11]   For a current conceptual analysis of this issue see Castells (2009).

[12]   Beyond the statistical indicators there is also a need to consider the presence of a secular political culture of conflict, especially in certain countries.

Finally, at the same time that communications media companies have grown more powerful there has been a democratizing trend in communications. New media (especially the Internet) offer a more direct and proactive access to global communication. Individuals have increasing space and opportunity to produce information and directly contribute to the creation of narratives and collective perspectives. A broader variety of actors now participate in redefining, differentiating, and/or homogenizing collective notions and perspectives of society. In this context of reconfigured public space, there is growing independence from traditional party systems and personal perspectives have more weight. Visual aesthetics and public opinion polls are the new political instruments of a relatively new system of governance that could replace or complement representative democracy in what Manin (1992) defines as the "democracy of the public sphere".

If Latin America has been characterized by a tendency to combine "government politics" and "street politics", the panorama is now more complex (Calderón and Szmukler, 2000: passim). In general, the region relatively passively experienced the force of globalization and became more incorporated into a cultural world market. In a few isolated geographic regions, particularly the Andean and Amazonian regions, small populations have remained excluded from the globalized world. Socioeconomic equality did not significantly increase, but access to television, cellular telephones, and the Internet grew dramatically, resulting in a new type of socialization in the daily activities of Latin Americans.

Communicational politics and "politics on the Internet" have acquired more importance. Street politics is now made and represented to a greater extent on the Internet. Modern communications media introduce new languages and reconfigure collective action, the practice of politics, and the relationship between state and society. Furthermore, political options and the agendas of the powerful are in large part constructed and configured within this new public space.

Conceptual framework: Social reproduction, institutional and cultural conflicts

Society is formed through different conflict events and processes. Social conflict occupies a central space in politics and power, and above all it represents the consequences, limits, and necessities of the processes of development and democracy. The interests of different groups are expressed through conflict. Conflict leaves bare the relations of power that are challenged or defended[13], and it tests the capacity of political systems to respond to social needs and demands. Political systems also determine how society responds to social conflict.

This report mainly examines conflict as part of a political process. It explores these processes through national case studies and a combination of themes, experiences, and levels of conflict. Given the complexity of the social conflicts in terms of their structure, intensity, and orientation, the idea of asynchronous conflict[14] is central to the study's conceptual approach.

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[13]   *Conflicts often combine social and national logics with cultural and global logics. For example, social resistance and the poor organize in opposition to states and powerful international interests, and the new cultural conflicts confront the logic of concentrated power that is produced by the technological economy of information and the new models of consumption and environmental degradation.*

[14]   *The idea of asynchronous conflict is taken from Gino Germani's concept of asynchronous change. Germani (1971) maintains that change has asynchronous forms.*

Asynchronous conflicts have varying objectives, intensities, and trajectories that are associated with demands for basic living standards, more efficient and proper management of institutions (especially state institutions), and the day-to-day dynamics of intercultural life. During the study period, a broad range of asynchronous conflicts were observed in the region.

Although conflicts have various shades and connotations that make their categorization difficult, the study employs three broad categories of conflict in order to compare and analyze collective action across the region[15]: social reproduction conflicts, institutional conflicts and cultural conflicts. These categories encompass the different demands that are the basis for collective mobilization, and their underlying rationales are somewhat distinct: the demands and struggles for social reproduction and quality of life are essentially practical; institutional conflicts demand more efficiency and legitimacy from State institutions, and cultural conflicts aim to change ways of life, and are thus strategic in nature.

These are theoretical-analytical categories of the actions and demands of different social actors who express their identity, interests, or beliefs in terms of the relationships involved in social structures or power interests. In general, social groups and individuals protest in order to address tangible and pragmatic issues that directly affect their living conditions, improve their conditions of social reproduction, and call attention to deficiencies in institutions. Protests over values and political beliefs are also relevant in the region's cultural conflicts. These three categories of conflicts are not completely independent. They arise from similar needs but emphasize different issues. Thus, they interact and are often complementary, as it is deepened qualitatively in the full report version using a series of national case studies.

The first thematic case study relates to Bagua, a province in the Peruvian Amazon that was for more than a year the epicenter of violent events which peaked between March and August of 2009. The conflict included clashes between indigenous groups and the central government, as indigenous communities protested against new decrees which profoundly changed land use and natural resource management, as well as the participation of foreign multinational corporations in these areas. The Bagua conflict can be placed within the categories of both institutional and cultural conflict. The demands focused on annulling the decrees enacted by President Alan Garcia. Thus the conflict fits within the category of institutional conflicts over legal measures/situations. The conflict was also clearly rooted in cultural demands relating to environmental and natural resources. The events at Bagua reveal a lack of institutional capacity to generate space for opportune deliberation, as well as inefficient mechanisms for citizen participation in the management of this type of conflict.

The second thematic study looked at the coup d'état in Honduras in June 2009. The expulsion of President Manuel Zelaya by the country's armed forces provoked a profound institutional rupture and a democratic governability crisis. This was essentially an institutional conflict, and it corresponds to the type of conflicts that are based on the "questioning of authority". This is the most recent conflict in Latin America that, apart from ending a democratic regime, has reached a level 5 of radicalization by producing a crisis of governability.

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[15]   *Categories of conflict can be defined as the combination of actions and demands brought to bear by the different social actors that express their identities, interests, productions and orientations, and that refer to the social relations and the power interests at play (adapted from the definition by Calderón, 1986: 341).*

The conflict that resulted from the closure of the energy company Luz y Fuerza del Centro de Mexico is the subject of the third thematic case study. This conflict began in October 2009 and lasted for more than a year. While the first protests occurred in Mexico City, the conflict grew to national scale in the context of the struggle of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME). Given the conflict's broad scope of protest, the support it garnered, its radicalization, and duration, it was one of Mexico's most important social conflicts during the study period. This conflict falls into the category of social reproduction "work/wage" conflicts as well as the category of institutional conflicts over "legal measures/situation". The approximately 44,000 people left unemployed by the closure of the company were joined by their families and allied organizations and unions in expressing their repudiation of the decree that closed the company. The actors opposing the decree considered the arguments for the company's closure to be insufficient. The resulting large-scale work/wage conflict remains unresolved, and there has been a gradual rise in the use of repressive measures. This conflict could escalate and become highly radicalized if it is not properly managed.

In brief, social conflicts in Latin America involve both a transition toward and a demand for social change. Sometimes they question the root of the problem, and in other cases they address systemic inefficiencies. Therefore, it is possible for social reproduction conflicts to evolve into institutional demands. At the same time cultural conflicts emphasize social issues that are strategic, horizontal, and complementary.

The study adopts a normative view of political constructivism (politics guided by values), and one of the conceptual underpinnings of the study is the recognition of constructivist politics as the best political model for managing social conflict. Political constructivism engages power struggles and seeks to establish a common order while recognizing that such an order is the result of conflict. It does this by reinforcing democracy and sociocultural plurality without denying that such an order is the result of conflict processes. From an analytical perspective, social conflict ideally occurs when there are sufficient institutional and constructivist capacities for managing them. These are the most favorable circumstances for strengthening democratic societies and fostering conditions that encourage innovation and sustainable development.

Conflict is thus not synonymous of war. Instead, it is a dimension of diversity and interculturality inherent in democracy and peace. Politics and political actors are defined through conflict processes which are driven by unequal power relations (both real and historical). Social conflict in itself is not negative. If conflict is managed through dialogue and negotiation—while addressing both structural and circumstantial causes—it can be a tool and an opportunity for making society more egalitarian.

Politics can be understood as the art of the best possible outcome and a process that leads to the formation of pluralism. According to Gianni Vattimo (2006), it is not that we reach an agreement when we find the truth, but rather that we find the truth when we reach an agreement. Political freedom is possible, and moreover it is a factor of development given that it makes it possible for different options to be created according to cultural identities, values, and personal and collective aspirations (Sen, 1997 and 1999).

The hypothesis here is that the principal historical and contemporary patterns of inequality must be overcome if democracy is to take us beyond the "dialectic of the denial of the other". In order to solve the problems of representation, participation, and mediation that exist between States and societies it is necessary to reject authoritarianism, whether it is communitarian or elitist, or favors the political left or right. This entails recognizing social actors and providing different actors with spaces for conflict and participation in accordance with their goals and interests.[16] Authoritarian culture that denies otherness appears to lead toward a system of final options where "the other" is seen as an enemy to be conquered, destroyed, or bought, or where an instrumental relationship is established. When such dynamics are not surmounted, violence tends to spread. Accordingly, Latin American societies should review the region's frustrated attempts to establish hegemonic systems in which one class (proletariat or bourgeois) or region is dominant over others, or where state elites and messianic leaders rule over parties and social forces.

In a democracy, these challenges are related to human rights and the way citizens form community and coexist. Although the study does not argue for or against any specific type of society, it does argue in favor of a political form of coexistence in which shared objectives may be pursued without denying power, conflict, or discrepancy in their multiple forms. In this sense, the political process is not simply an instrument of negotiation. It can also be genuine exercise in understanding memory and the freedom of others. All people will benefit if the common good can be pursued and deliberated freely with others in public spaces.[17]

Context of the report: national, regional, and global

Conflict as an historical phenomenon in Latin America

The early emergence of the State as a social actor in Latin America is a common historical characteristic that is central to the contemporary dynamic of conflict in the region. The State does not only reflect Latin American societies' social and political conflicts, but is central to the various systems of economic interests and the political actors which define the dynamics of conflict. To a great extent, the Latin American State shapes society more than it is shaped by society. This phenomenon is likely associated with other features of the region's development, namely the relatively slow process of class formation, limited secularization, scarce differentiation between social and political roles, and persistence of atavistic cultural behaviors (particularly among the region's elites).[18]

Populism was possibly the most important political experience in twentieth-century Latin America. The formation of an autonomous nation-state and the process of industrialization and modernization (fed by a strong national-popular culture) were the axes around which conflicts were organized during this period. The central role that conflict played in the development of the populist experience and the process of its disintegration and/or rupture is

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16   *Actors are not made from thin air or eschatologically created, but rather they are formed through projects and in a dialogue with their identities.*

17   *Consequently, it is a procedure that makes sense of political praxis because it is legitimate and efficient in decision-making processes (Sen, 1999).*

18   *The social objectives of progress and the management of conflict regulation have been strategies for maintaining power and accumulating capital with scarce national or ethical consciousness.*

essential to understanding a good part of contemporary conflicts in Latin America. Beyond its successes and failures, populism left a harsh legacy in the political culture of the region, and it is reasonable to conclude that any future political project will have to undertake a critical review of the populist experiences.

Under populism, the concept of "el pueblo" (the people) complements that of the State and is identified with the idea of the nation. Furthermore, el pueblo identified with the State, the State identified with the nation, and together they confronted English and North American imperialism. According to the populist view, imperialism subordinated and oppressed el pueblo and limited the possibility of national development. This confrontation required the construction of a homogeneous actor from a politically favorable and socioculturally heterogeneous reality with scarcely formed social classes. It was a project that homogenized and consolidated society's diversity under the leadership of the middle class, elements of which had a notable role articulating diverse and frequently opposing social forces. The identity of "el pueblo" as a political actor was constructed in relation to conflicts with transnational and oligarchic power blocs. On a political level, "el pueblo" came to represent the incorporation of the masses into politics and development, especially through the expansion of important campesino and workers' unions. This also entailed the expansion of intermediary clientelistic systems based on leaders, businesses, and state institutions.

The patrimonial corporative State and the popular-national regimes that emerged from the populist movements provided the salient foundations upon which new forms of conflict emerged. They included the strategic role of State enterprises in economic development, the emergence of cartels of bureaucratic power, strengthened intermediation mechanisms between the State and society, and the development of bureaucratic clientelism (networks, legitimacy, and the distribution of employment and resources). The superimposition of political actors onto social actors signaled the latter's loss of autonomy. The populist processes increasingly lost legitimacy as conflicts developed within social movements and the State, power was excessively concentrated in the State (particularly in the executive branch), and conflicts of interests developed with international economic powers.

During a new stage of "dependent capitalism", State power was organized in line with modern intelligence institutions in order to instill militarized social discipline and order by means of fear, repression, and the control of public opinion. Conflicts involving popular actors who pushed for even minimal demands ended in purely defensive actions because any expression of contentiousness or combativeness was "taken care of" with heavy repression. In this context, increasingly intense struggles and demands for human rights and the democratization of politics began to emerge.[19]

Conflict over human rights was the avenue by which popular movements were reborn. These conflicts invoked the continuity and historical memory of popular struggle, and they emphasized the need to introduce ethics into politics and the very logic of social conflict. Their demands were not limited to the drama of families of the disappeared and imprisoned. They

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[19] *These movements involved constant communication within Latin American, and they galvanized strong international solidarity. These movements were even emulated in other parts of the developing world, perhaps due to information disseminated by the media and through other communication technologies.*

also tackled the problem of legitimacy in a democratic community. The struggle for human rights under dictatorships principally underscored the indispensable role of ethics in politics and the need for institutional controls on morality and the indiscriminate use of power. These movements involved a social critique of the supposed immorality of the ruling classes and they expressed the desire for more transparent, peaceful, and participatory forms of politics.

Democratization gave way to new types of conflict. The first type involved demands in defense of labor rights and working conditions. A second category of conflict involved demands related to quality of life in urban areas, collective consumption (public transportation, public housing, etc.), and decentralization. A third area consisted of campesino conflicts associated with issue of land tenure, markets, and ethnicity. Conflict also emerged between young people and the State, as the youth demanded participation in the processes of democratic transformation and development. Human rights and the search for equality in gender relations were other notable dimensions of conflict. Gender-related conflicts gained importance with the emergence of movements led by women. These movements proposed a transition from domestic space into public space, and they emphasized the central role women play in social production and reproduction. The relationship between public and private spheres was redefined, and the cultural dynamics of power which subjugated women became politicized.

Essentially no institutional reforms were implemented that promoted the non-confrontational conflict management or could have led to a redistribution of power. Instead, trends continued that reinforced division and conflict between hyper-institutionalized interests and society. The structural reforms spearheaded by a combination of multilateral institutions and the governments of developed countries passively inserted the region into a process of globalization and limited the expansion of conflict. Social organizations defended the minimal conditions of social reproduction—particularly employment and salaries—phenomena that were tied to an economic opening that favored the most concentrated sectors of the economy. The gap between labor and production widened, as it did in the rest of the world. In general, the political capacities of workers to express themselves diminished[20]. Unions and popular organizations suffered successive political defeats in the same years that a "total market" ideology emerged. Old and new socio-institutional problems negatively affected productivity, inequality, and poverty. Likewise, public trust in institutions eroded and the legitimacy of party politics and representational systems declined. The free market "model" did not succeed in establishing a new social order in the region, and its limitations became evident as new issues emerged emphasizing the need for institutional strengthening and greater state involvement in addressing social inclusion and citizen participation. On balance, the effects were not positive for productivity or social equality in the region. However, those countries that applied more heterodox policies involving an active and relatively autonomous role for the state were left better positioned than countries that lacked these attributes.

As a consequence of these experiences, the end of the 1990s saw the emergence of conflicts, mobilizations, and generalized protest practically throughout the entire region. These conflicts were associated with intense economic crisis and they changed the historical course of neoliberalism in Latin America. The region reached a historical turning point that affected

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[20]   *Perhaps the most notable exception is Brazil's Unique Workers Central.*

the orientation and characteristics of democracy as well as the nature and results of development. Among other significant phenomena in the region, we identify (a) changes in economic production associated with demands for complex equality, (b) the emergence of new movements pushing for greater recognition of intercultural society, (c) the expansion of public space for communication, and (d) a return to and redefinition of multilateralism due to crises and the new global realities. Additionally, new international arrangements for furthering regional and sub-regional integration are being formulated and updated. Many countries are developing and participating in diverse economic and commercial treaties that will have significant political consequences for the region.

Consequently, a combination of large and complex political and institutional conflicts arose, many of which involved what could be called "political gaps between state and society". These gaps are related issues of legitimacy, management, and social well-being, and they constitute crucial ongoing problems for democracy in the region[21]. The dynamics of conflicts and social actors were also modified during this process. The region witnessed an accelerated rise and fragmentation of conflicts driven by sociopolitical and cultural factors. The emergence of a polycentric society was a sign of the changing times. Interculturality, democratic pluralism, and social inclusion were issues put on the negotiating table by emergent actors and sociocultural movements.

These developments led to the formation and/or renewal of new political currents and governments that sought (from a variety of perspectives and positions of power) to regulate and address conflicts. These movements and regimes are characterized here as popular nationalism, conservative modernism and pragmatic reformism. These categories are established in order to group the region's countries according to the main characteristics of the prevailing political orientation. In 2009-2010, Peru, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama fall into the category of conservative modernization, whereas Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, El Salvador, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, have pragmatic reformist governments (PAPEP, 2008). Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia has popular nationalist governments. These are not closed categories, and in many cases a government is best characterized with a combination of them, like Argentina or Brazil that are mainly a reformist pragmatic version of popular nationalism, or Bolivia that is a version of popular nationalism with indigenous characteristics.

The logic of conflict management under conservative modernization is related strictly to the institutional sphere. Popular nationalism's approach involves managing conflict simultaneously through political alliances with the bloc that holds power and in terms of a friend-foe dynamic (in which the foe is associated with North American imperialism). Under the politics of pragmatic reformism, conflict is institutionalized and regulated by a system of negotiation and political exchange.

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[21] An in deep analysis of this "political gaps between state and society" is available in Spanish at "Crisis global y democracia en América Latina", Aranibar y Vasquez (coord), PAPEP/UNDP, Siglo XXI editores.

Globalization, crises, and conflict

Globalization is a new source of conflict. Where it causes the loss of employment, businesses, and social programs, it generates protests which vary in strength and in terms of their consequences. Where it creates employment, business opportunities, and social benefits, societies are more grateful and subsequently more loyal to political systems. In the first instance globalization is a destabilizing force, and in the second it is a stabilizing force. To date, the region's insertion into globalization has been limited and unsustainable. However, widening inequality and increasing global influences in different local political scenarios is the social Achilles heel of globalization.

The term "crisis" implies that the continuity of a given process, trend, or intellectual orientation is gradually or suddenly threatened and then destabilized or halted. Crisis is a "decisive moment in the evolution of an uncertain process" (UNDP-PAPEP, 2008:75).[22] Urgent crises prompt decision makers and other affected parties to seek solutions. The interaction of these different actors determines the course of the threatened process, be it a regression, transition, turning point, or breakdown.

Civilization is currently experiencing an unprecedented phenomenon: the simultaneous occurrence of many different crises and opportunities. They include the global financial crisis, geopolitical crisis, European crisis, crisis between civilizations (the West and the Islamic world), and the ecological crisis. The global financial crisis seriously questions the evolution of global capitalism and its dual strategy of deregulation and neoliberalism. The solution appears to involve greater state intervention in both the United States and Europe.

In terms of the geopolitical crisis, the economic emergence of China, India, and Brazil and the re-emergence of Russia signaled a change in their international status and a challenge to western hegemony (and the recent singular dominance of the United States). Today, there is a tendency toward a multi-centric equilibrium, where each of these powers project regional strength and interests and accompany the United States to a variable degree in exercising global influence. The incorporation of new multi-civilization power blocks has thus broadened geopolitics, and the emergent economies apply heterodox development options with significant state participation. In the European crisis, Europe has lost influence and has been affected by a crisis of expectations, identity, and status. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the European Union was expected form part of a global equilibrium based on a "duopoly of superpowers". However, the new emergent economies altered its influence and international status, resituating it as an axis in a "duo of titans" comprised of a Euro-Atlantic geopolitical sphere dominated by the United States and an Asian one dominated by China (Kagan, 2008: 47).

The crisis between civilizations refers to the divergence and hostility between the West and the Islamic world. The recent Arab upheavals, however, could become an unexpected and hopeful historical turning point, especially if they lead to a new wave of democratization in the Middle East. The ecological crisis is due to the degradation of global ecosystems and climate change following industrialization. Society's recent growing ecological awareness, particular-

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[22]   *A procedural approach to the crisis is taken up by a variety of authors. See the concept of crisis in Morin (2002). For a Latin American perspective, see the reflections of PNUD-PAPEP (2008), González (2008), Pérez-Liñan (2009), and Vuskovi! (1999).*

ly among younger people, could lead to the gradual development of green capitalism and a consumer culture associated with a cognitive revolution and an "ecological morality".

These crises have different timeframes[23] and different characteristics.[24] For example, at regional and global scales, the ecological crisis produces widespread dissatisfaction, deterioration of rural areas, spikes in rural to urban migration, and increased urban unrest because of the precarious conditions migrants face.

These crises have redefined conflict on a global scale and have important and complex consequences for Latin America. The repercussions of the geopolitical and European crises for Latin America include an improvement in the international standing of the region and of Brazil's capitalism and regional leadership in particular.[25] The region's notable reductions in poverty and its rates of economic growth—comparatively superior to other world regions—partly explain why these crises have not led to the kind of social upheavals and "failed presidencies" that the region endured between 2000 and 2005.

Latin America is now more open to the world, but it is also more autonomous. This new situation, and that of the majority of emergent economies, does not necessarily mean that it will join knowledge-based economies or will experience a competitive transformation that takes it beyond a reliance on the production of natural resources. This is probably the region's main structural weakness in the context of these ongoing developments.

The State, society, and conflicts

A persistent paradox underlies the interpretative framework of the study of conflicts in Latin America. The State is a central actor in power negotiations and conflict, but it has a limited capacity to manage and resolve them while maintaining social cohesion and strengthening democracy. The characteristics of States and institutions vary significantly across Latin America. Some countries have greater State capacity to manage conflicts, whereas others have lesser capacities and tend to suffer chronic governability failures. At the same time, there is a tendency for social action to become increasingly polycentric as Latin American conflicts experience "fragmentation" and actors become more diverse and dispersed. New and old actors, both collective and individual, interact in different social and cultural dimensions which the state and institutions have difficulty managing.[26]

It is evident that the governability of the State depends on the political capacity of society to manage its conflicts without compromising institutions and provoking instability. Governability is a political construction that requires, on one hand, the maintenance of effective institutions and a minimally functional economy (systemic governability). It also requires capacities for inclusion, social cohesion, and the institutional management of conflicts (progressive gov-

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23   *For example, the European crisis is relatively recent when compared to the inter-civilization crisis between Islam and the West which has its roots in the expansion of the Ottoman Empire.*

24   *On the one hand, the ecological crisis threatens grave changes, whereas the geopolitical crisis offers democratization.*

25   *Brazil's geo-economic ascent has transformed it into a requisite regional interlocutor for neighboring countries, and its growing influence could bring forth a new regional hegemony.*

26   *These social dynamics are part of the collateral effects of globalization that include the unexpected consequences environmental degradation or international wars for contemporary societies.*

ernability). Governability is a requisite for development and a working democracy, but governability—in the absence of conflict—lacks the benefit of an expressive and often creative dimension of society.

In contemporary Latin America, four types of relationships between State and society commonly emerge. The first type, exemplified by Uruguay, is characterized by a robust State capable of articulating institutional frameworks in order to manage significant levels of social conflict. The second type involves conflicts that are not extreme or radicalized and States that possess moderate or uneven capacities to manage them. This type of State involves semiformal mechanisms for arbitration and negotiation, open interpretation of legal principles, sanctioned infringement of norms, and the use of semi-informal legal practices within independent and local jurisdictions. Brazil, with its para-institutional logic of conflict negotiation, represents this second type of State-society relationship. In the third type, society has significant capacity for and tradition of mobilization, but there are insufficient and weak constructivist capacities for managing conflicts within institutional frameworks. This combination results in high levels of conflict as well as radicalization. Peru and Bolivia represent this type of State-society relationship. Finally, the fourth type is characteristic of countries with a strong States and relatively low levels of collective action and social protest. In this case, typified by Chile and Costa Rica, there are few social conflicts,[27] but this is not so much due to an absence of needs and demands as it is the result of the social actors' weak capacity for mobilization.

The study reveals that social conflicts in Latin America are commonly managed in "para-institutional" contexts. The protagonists of social conflicts still pursue their interests through institutions and norms, but to a great degree such recourse is also accompanied by para-institutional measures in which informal social networks and mechanisms of intermediation are often important. The relationship between State and social groups is thus often characterized by shifts between the formal and informal. These are syncretic systems that combine modern institutions with pre-capitalist and pre-democratic organizational and cultural features. Personal networks and informal hierarchies embodied in clientelistic and personalistic phenomena function as everyday mechanisms that regulate social relations between individuals and formal institutions. It is precisely within this para-institutional domain that social actors mobilize[28].

Despite the centralistic logic of state-society relations, there are notable historical and contemporary trends in which conflict is becoming more decentralized as it moves toward territories, regional states, and municipalities. Various studies have linked this phenomenon to the emergence of sociocultural and political actors who seek to expand constructivist politics. The cases of Porto Alegre, Rosario, Bogota, La Paz, and Villa El Salvador are notable examples of conflict management by means of public policies that promote more plural and substantial democracy and address inequality and development problems. These and similar cases show that it is possible to identify and replicate experiences which aim to transform conflicts

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[27]   *Although Chile has few social conflicts, they are characterized by relatively high levels of radicalization*

[28]   *Donzelot defines the Brazilian "art of negotiation" as way of resolving conflicts through informal mechanisms of arbitration and negotiation. It combines the open interpretation of legal principles, accepted infringement of norms, and the production of an informal legality with an inherent and localized jurisdiction. Free from the juridical and bureaucratic ties of the state, it dislocates and subverts the supposed centrality and unity of formal law as a way of regulating social life (cited in Medeiros 2007).*

(totally or partially) into agreements, concrete goals, and results. The legitimacy of these processes depends on the public socialization of information and the participation of actors in defining goals and producing results. These processes also rely on the political-institutional development of the state's capacity to serve and constantly interrelate with society. The development of state action capable of coordinating the most varied territorial and sectoral spaces is an important way of constructively resolving social conflicts like those analyzed in this study.

In the practice of constructivist politics, social and autonomous collective actors spearhead change and development processes. Organized and empowered with information and interactive forms of communication, they define and organize their interests and conflicts within the political system and public spaces that are more open and plural. The status quo represents the opposite scenario: a weak state without legitimacy and social participation, required to manage social conflicts in an efficient way. Societies that only protest and do not function as motivated autonomous actors are incapable of leading development and democratization processes.

Principal findings: general trends of conflict environments, protest, radicalization, and political-ideological orientations (by sub region)

### The context of conflict in Latin America: A common platform for conflict

Conflict data[29] reveal consistent common trends at the regional scale despite sub-regional and political ideological dynamics. In quantitative terms, it can be asserted that Latin America is a region with high levels of conflict. The study detected 2,318 conflicts (and 4,724 conflict episodes) between October 2009 and September 2010. The countries that registered the highest number of conflicts were Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina, with over 200 conflicts occurring in each. The countries with the lowest levels of conflict, Costa Rica, Chile, and El Salvador, had an average of 58 conflicts.

Despite important achievements in reducing poverty and inequality in recent years, economic development is still characterized by social exclusion. Latin America remains one of the most unequal regions in the world, and its poverty rates continue to be very high. The region has approximately the same number of poor people as it did in 1998 (180 million) (CEPAL, 2010d; PNUD, 2010). On the other hand, Latin American society is aware of these inequalities. According to data from Latinobarómetro, around 80% of Latin Americans consider their social situation as unfair (CEPAL, 2010). If this sense of injustice is combined with the current context of insecurity and violence, there is a clear platform for producing conflict in the region.

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[29]   *The data is drawn from the "conflictogram" designed by the Center for the Study of Economic and Social Reality (CERES) for the purpose of analyzing conflict and the Bolivian press during the 1980s (Calderón & Szmukler, 2000).*

Figure 2. Number of social conflicts per month during the study period
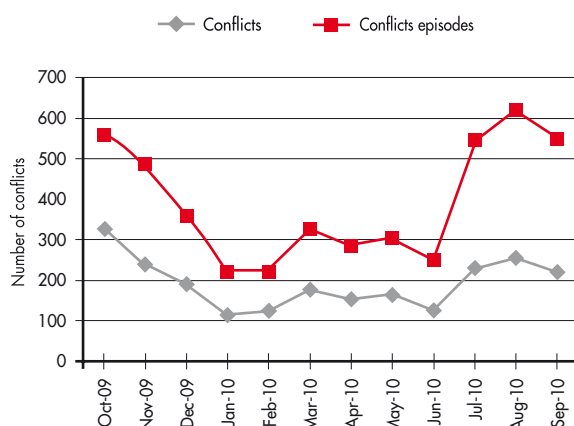
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

In fact, in many Latin American countries power is excessively concentrated, markets are insufficiently competitive for the global economy, state institutions are relatively weak and with questionable legitimacy, citizen participation is limited, institutions inadequately recognize cultural identities, and there are serious problems of violence, public safety, and social exclusion (poverty and inequality). In this sense, they remain "unfinished societies", and the conflicts found on social agendas throughout the region require economic, political, and social changes. The complexity of multicultural social needs require a set of policies that foment socio-institutional and cultural change processes.

The 17 countries examined in the study were grouped into three sub regions: the Andean sub region, Southern Cone, and Central America, Dominican Republic, and Mexico. The first sub region is distinguished by having the greatest number of conflicts. It is followed by the Southern Cone, and finally Central America, Dominican Republic and Mexico. Forty-five percent of the conflicts studied occurred in capital cities. This fact highlights the role of urban centers in many countries as spaces where conflict is catalyzed. Thus, capital cities are privileged spaces where protests for social demands are concentrated.

Considering the political trends, countries with popular nationalist regimes registered the highest number of conflicts. This fact reflects the intensity of change that these countries are undergoing. At the same time, it is possible to correlate a particular kind of conflict management with each type of government. For example, the popular nationalist regimes encourage social participation and the mobilization of the masses. This leads to an increased frequency and intensity of collective action in those countries. Interests of the indigenous communities tend to create strong ties with sociocultural movements and favor the strengthening of community organizations, thus exacerbating polarization and tensions with opposition forces. These characteristics become more evident when accompanied by low levels of institutionalization and chronic weaknesses in communication channels between the state and civil society.

In countries following a conservative modernist regime, there are generally medium levels of conflict. Under these regimes the control of social conflict is maintained thanks to an empha-

sis on public safety policies and the strengthening of the state's coercive apparatus. There-fore, the conservative modernization model manages conflict with "top down" interventions rather than through new social pacts, institutional mechanisms, or increased civil society participation. Finally, countries with a pragmatic reformist view of politics and nationalist ideological tendencies generally experience medium to high levels of conflict.

Relations between the State and civil society: weak States and polycentric societies

In terms of the protagonists of social conflicts in Latin America, there are several relevant phenomena that suggest that Latin America is a region where weak States and polycentric societies are important. The State continues to be the main point of reference for social demands and a centralizing force for collective dissatisfaction. For example, the state continues to receive the large majority of demands made by sectors (70%). However, its institutional and administrative capacities are limited.[30] The State also has an important role as the antagonist in social conflicts. According to data on all four categories of conflict, the state was the principal antagonist in 63% of the social conflicts analyzed. Finally, the state is challenged by a progressive fragmentation of collective actors and their identities which reflects a tendency of social demands to multiply and spread beyond the classic and institutional frameworks of conflict.

Figure 3. Actors receiving demands in social conflicts
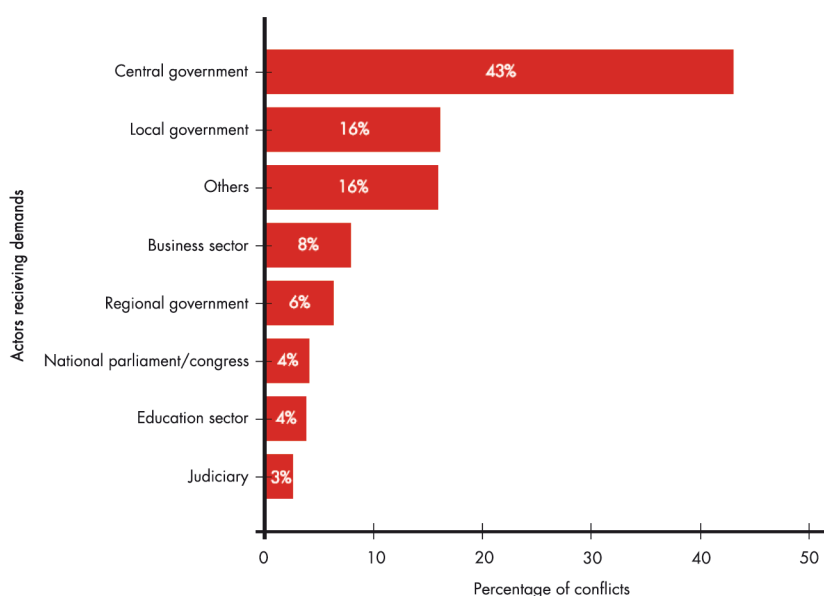
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

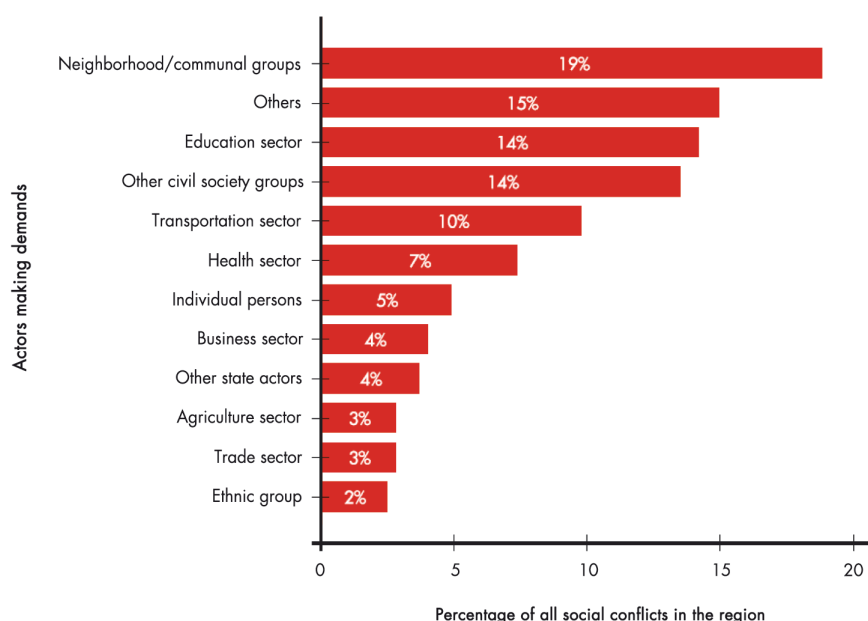*Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.*

Traditional actors are still important in the region. Unions are major protagonists, playing a leading role in 144 conflicts. Above all, unions were responsible for 112 conflicts relating to

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[30]   *In many Latin American countries, the state has less capacity to exercise its institutional and representational functions than control its territory.*

social reproduction and work/wage related demands. Neighborhood organizations led 19% of social conflicts. The popular urban sector seems to be the most important catalyzing force of social dissatisfaction. It is comprised of a diverse assemblage of non-institutionalized actors who struggle on the margins of institutions and therefore act according to logic of conflict that poses potential risks for governability.

Five percent of the conflicts corresponded to circumstantial actors. These are individuals who do not belong to an organized social group or movement. They become active on their own and independently of any specific context in order to solve what generally are concrete problems or needs. Whatever kind of organization they develop dissolves soon after their issues are resolved. This sector best exemplifies spontaneous collective action and what has been termed "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 1999, 2005).

Figure 4. Actors making demands in social conflicts

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.

The transportation sector stands out as one of the most dynamic and problematic sectors in the region. It is the only sector that was active in all three categories of conflict (social reproduction, institutional, and cultural conflicts). Although this sector traditionally adheres to the classic structure of union organizations, a tendency toward individualism in decision-making and collective action is also evident. The dynamics of this "world on wheels" seem to involve new spontaneous and occasional forms of mobilization that produce great impacts on daily life by occupying and altering the use of public space.[31]

Another notable phenomenon in Latin America, which lacks sufficient academic attention, are the "umbrella" movements (*coordinadoras*). These are second-tier organizations that func-

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[31]   *An illustrative case is the motoqueros movement in Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

tion as a kind of umbrella institution which galvanizes social movements that share similar demands. As the name suggests, its principal function is to provide coordination between grassroots organizations and individual actors. Its comparative advantage lies in its capacity to generate dynamics that increase the power of these actors and strengthen the impact of negotiations and collective action strategies.

Dynamics of radicalization: social inequality and institutional legitimacy

One of the central findings of this study addresses social inequalities and institutional legitimacy. The data reveal larger numbers of conflicts in countries with broad social inequality and regimes that have low institutional legitimacy (Figures 4 and 6). The relationship between institutional legitimacy, social gaps, and the radicalization of conflicts is more complex. Conflicts in societies with higher levels of institutional support are less likely to evolve into violent confrontations. The relationship between social inequality and radicalization is not linear. Instead it is generally U-shaped, as the countries with medium levels of inequality have fewer cases of violence and confrontation than countries with high or low levels of inequality (Figure 6). This is due to the different levels of interaction between State, society, and conflict (particularly the capacity to manage these elements), as well as the political culture and historical experience of each country. The data also reveal that there are no countries that experienced both high numbers of social conflicts and high levels of radicalization. This is a positive finding for the region in terms of democracy and development.

Figure 5. Institutional legitimacy and social conflicts
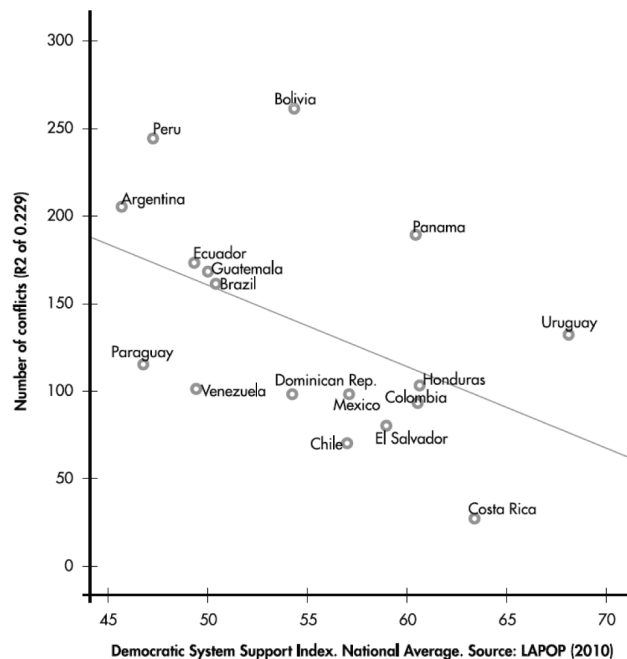
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

The relationship between collective action and radicalization is linked principally to the re-

gion's chronic gaps between institutional capacity and social demands, as well as its political culture of radicalized collective action. Societies with low levels of conflict, strong institutions, and relatively high levels of radicalism are prevalent in the region.

The data correlating conflict radicalization and number of conflicts (Figure 5) reveal four combinations of the two variables:

- Many conflicts and high levels of radicalization: no cases
- Many conflicts and low levels of radicalization: Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Panama, and Guatemala
- Few conflicts and high levels of radicalization: Chile, Venezuela and Uruguay
- Few conflicts and low levels of radicalization: Colombia, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Paraguay, and Mexico

Figure 6. Number of social conflicts per country and percentage of social conflicts involving violent clashes
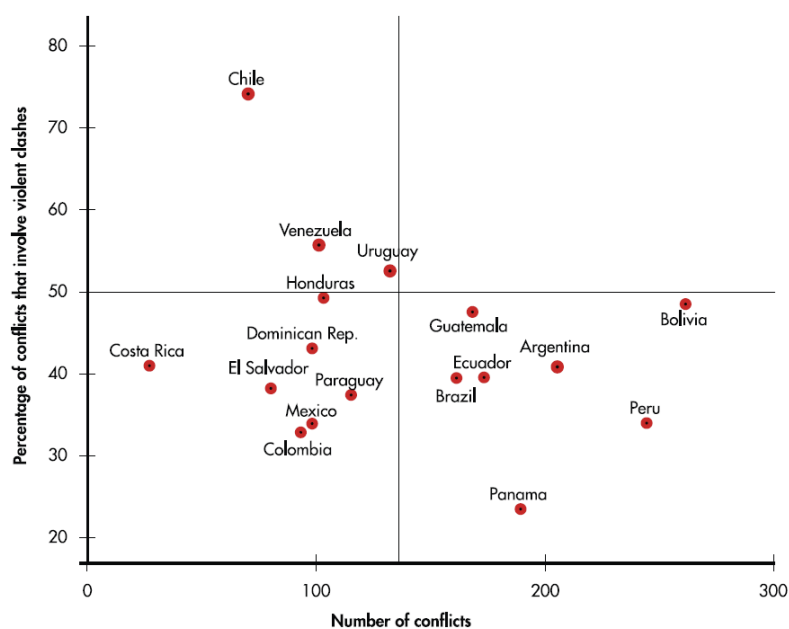
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

In general, there is no direct relationship between the number of conflicts and the level of radicalization where greater numbers of conflicts correlate with higher levels of violence (Figure 6). This is consistent with the study's theoretical framework which considers conflict to be a key element in processes of social change, particularly in democratic contexts. It also underscores the risks of destabilization and violence that are implicit in processes of conflict escalation.

Figure 7. Social gaps and the quantity and radicalization of social conflicts
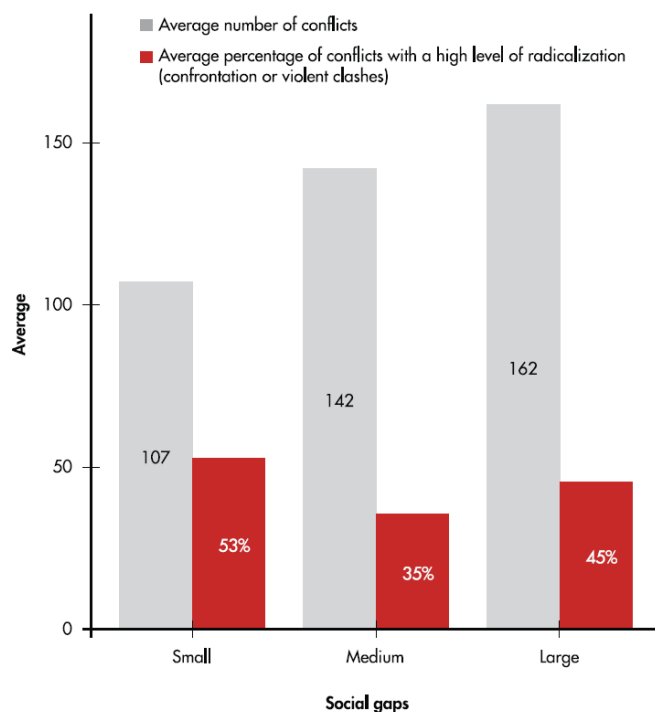
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

This study considers five incremental levels of conflict radicalization: (1) pre-conflict, (2) protest, (3) confrontation, (4) violent clashes, and (5) chaos. Radicalization levels 3 and 4 are associated with conflicts that employ strategies of more forceful and violent mobilization. Levels 3 and 4 are more common to political conflict. Given that the data were drawn from print news media, it is certain that the number of radicalized conflicts has been overestimated. This is due to the media's preference for sensationalism, violence, and disorder. The scaled typology was inspired by the model for levels of escalation used by the Conflict Analysis Institute at the University of Heidelberg. In general, there is no typology of demands that results in higher levels of radicalization. This could signify that, depending on the levels of confrontation, means of pressure are employed which are typical of many conflict typologies.

Of the social conflicts that reached confrontation (level 3 on the scale of radicalization) the work/wage conflicts are notable (Figure 8). These conflicts made up 28% (or 276 conflicts) of the total number of conflicts. Social reproduction conflicts accounted for the largest share of the conflicts that involved violent clashes (thus reaching level 4). Nonetheless, the percentage of conflicts that reached level 4 is significantly lower than that of conflicts reaching level 3. Almost 50% fewer conflicts over workers' salaries reached level 4.

Figure 8. Incremental levels of conflict radicalization and corresponding actions

5. Chaos

4. Violent clashes
Occupation of facilities/institutions...6.1%
Aggression toward people..2.0%
Armed uprising (ambushes, kidnappings)...1.1%

3. Demonstration
Strike...21.0%
Destruction of goods...1.7%
Crucifixion...0.2%
Stitching of lips..0.08%

2. Protest
Hunger strike..5.0%
Demonstration..16.0%
Road block..12.8%
March..10.6%

1. Pre-conflict
Declaration of conflict...21.9%
Ultimatum..1.2%
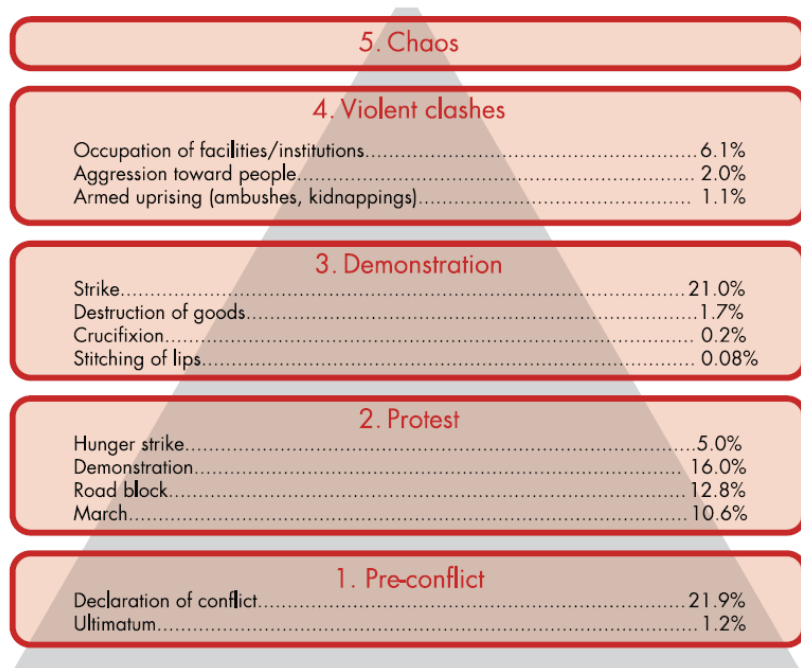
Source: Elaborated by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

The data also show that there is a fragmentation of conflicts that employ violent strategies. This suggests that there is a multiplication of non-institutionalized conflicts. There is also evidence of a proliferation of more dangerous conflicts that threaten governability. Conflicts over land represent the largest percentage of this class of conflict. Structural issues, socioeconomic conditions, and institutional failures also continue to be strong sources of instability[32]. However, in general the data on conflict radicalization suggest that Latin America seems to be entering a period of greater stability, and that social conflict does not seriously affect governability. Although these struggles represent a small fraction of the total number of conflicts in the region, in many cases they reach relatively high levels of violence. Institutional conflicts related to the nonfulfillment of agreements comprised the next most significant group of violent conflicts. The hypothesis is that these conflicts tend to escalate due to a lack of institutional frameworks capable of offering solutions and platforms for negotiation.

The most common conflict actions can be characterized as declarative (Figure 8). This is because conflict does not generally start with protests in the streets but rather with statements and discourses. By paying greater attention to these discourses it would be possible to detect more opportunely the elements of tension that provoke conflict. However, the communication media and politicians tend to ignore these precursors and turn on the 'hazard lights' when conflicts have already escalated into action.

The second level of radicalization includes measures categorized as protest actions. These are conflicts that reject a specific measure and involve protests with direct action. A third level of

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[32]   *Social relations are recognized as inequitable and perceived as unjust by national majorities.*

radicalization encompasses manifest symbolic and direct actions of violence and control that strike against the established order. Road blocks, marches, and demonstrations are the most common of these measures. Finally, there is a group of more radical "confrontation" measures that are employed less frequently and only when conflict reaches medium to high levels of radicalization. They include the occupation of facilities, hostage taking, sieges, ambushes, and aggression toward people.

The variables and factors that explain the proliferation and radicalization of conflicts in certain contexts include levels of corporativism, the capacity of social actors to mobilize, relations between the state and civil society, and the authoritarian tendencies of state security forces. In the Andean region, for example, the inheritance of colonial social structures is more evident than in other sub-regions. This has imprinted aspects of discrimination in society that partly explain the social dissatisfaction and high levels of conflict. In the Chilean case, the high levels of radicalization in the country's relatively few social conflicts can be understood as linked to the culture of repression that was instilled in the security forces and which sharply raises the risk of conflict escalation and radicalization.

Social reproduction conflicts

Social reproduction refers to the capacity of a society to reproduce itself and change over time. It is associated with basic factors for reproduction, such as food, health, education, and income, as well as broader factors related to quality of life, well being, dignity, and the basic conditions for real liberty (Sen, 1999). Social reproduction refers to the very reproduction and value of human life, and it is essential for any institutional, cultural, or political activity[33]. Conflicts over social reproduction include the struggles and protests that occur when social reproduction factors are adversely affected. In other words, they are related to the quality of change that occurs in society and its economy. In this sense, the binary logics of equality/inequality and inclusion/exclusion, in their multiple dimensions, are the key axes of the conditions for social reproduction. It is within the framework of social reproduction conflicts that the pragmatic logic of social protest is most evident. Above all, people go onto the streets to ask for improvements in the conditions of their life, protest against destabilizing economic measures, and ensure elements of social reproduction, such as improved salaries, employment conditions, medical assistance, and education. The data on conflicts suggest that collective action is linked to real and perceived socioeconomic problems across the region.

Social reproduction is the category of conflict that accounts for the highest percentage of the conflicts documented between October 2009 and September 2010. In 12 of the 17 countries social reproduction issues accounted for the largest number of conflicts. Likewise, in 9 of the 17 countries, salary/work issues and economic conditions were at the root of more than 50% of the conflicts. Fifty-six percent of the social reproduction conflicts were based on demands for broader factors of reproduction, whereas 44% related to demands for the basic factors of reproduction.

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[33]   *Social reproduction is the end, and not the means of politics, given that it establishes the limits of what is pos sible. Hinkelammer (2005) argued that reproductive rationality is a critical rationality, since it recognizes the natural cycle of human life as the medium of all rationality. It evaluates the means, and it is itself the end (Hinkelammer and Mora, 2005:37).*

At the sub-regional level, social reproduction conflicts represented the greatest percentage of conflicts in the Southern Cone (nearly 59%). In the Andean sub region and Central America these conflicts accounted for a similar portion of their conflicts, comprising close to 42% of the total number of conflicts in these regions. In general, the situations within sub regions were not homogenous.[34] In the Southern Cone, social reproduction conflicts in Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil accounted for larger percentages of their social conflicts. In contrast, social reproduction conflict represented a lower percentage of social conflicts in Paraguay and Argentina. In the Andean sub region, conflict related to social reproduction issues represented similarly moderate percentages of the total numbers of social conflicts.

Map 1. Level of social reproduction conflicts (social reproduction conflicts as a percentage of each country's social conflicts)

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

No uniform trend stands out in terms of social reproduction conflicts and the type of national political model. In countries with practical reformist or national-populist characteristics, conflict over social reproduction accounted for moderate to high percentages of social conflicts. Reformist governments are divided into two groups.

In one group, comprised of Guatemala, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, social reproduction conflicts represented a moderate fraction of all social conflicts. In the other group, comprised of Chile and Costa Rica, this category of conflict represented a moderate to high percentage of all social conflicts. Finally, in countries following a conservative modernism orientation, social reproduction conflicts made up a moderate percentage of social conflict.

The majority of conflicts over social reproduction were related to socioeconomic problems. These include demands related to work/salary issues, collective consumption, land use and property, and political or social measures that could improve conditions, or conversely, threaten the status quo. More than half of social reproduction conflicts stemmed from demands relating to work/wage issues (59%), but the business sector was the protagonist making demands in only 13% of this category of conflict. The data on labor-related conflicts registered in

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[34]   *For example Mexico and Honduras have similarly high percentages, whereas the Dominican Republic and Guatemala have low percentages.*

the study reveal the strategic role that work has in the daily life of Latin American societies in terms of quality of life and opportunities for taking part in labor relations.

Figure 9. Issues and types of demands in social reproduction conflicts
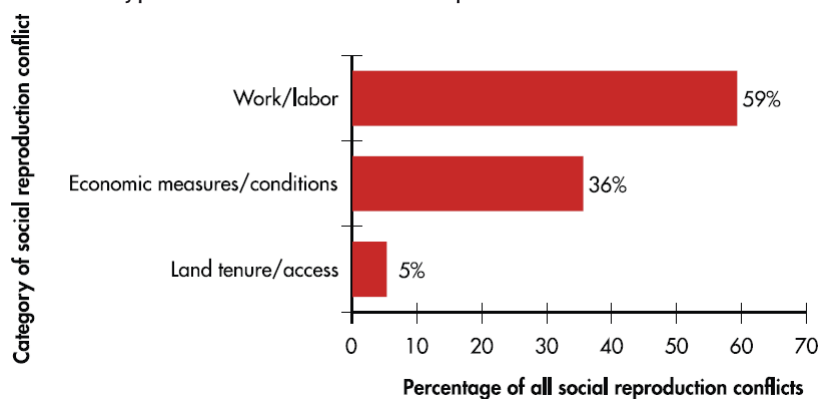
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

The health sector played an important role in many social reproduction conflicts, both as an actor making (11%) and receiving demands (2%). Education is another key social domain, and it represented 14% of the actors making demands in these conflicts. Both health and education are the two spheres of social life with primary importance in modern societies, and the patterns of conflict in each are evidence of endemic problems in these sectors[35]. Another equally relevant sector is transportation. With 120 conflicts it accounted for nearly 11% of social reproduction conflicts.

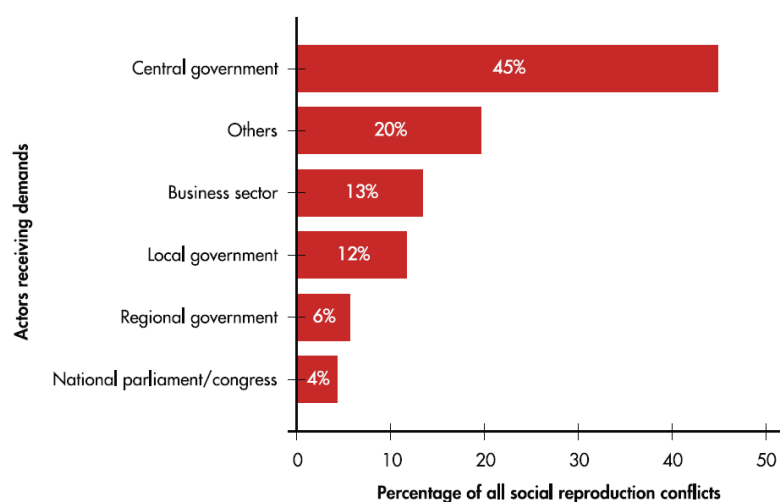Figure 10. Actors making demands in social reproduction conflicts
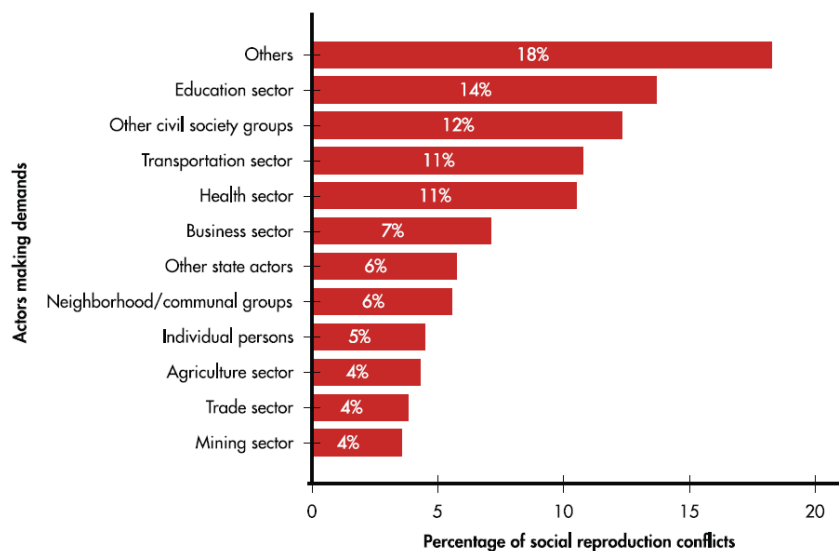
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company. Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.

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[35]   *Professionals in these sectors are not guaranteed acceptable working conditions, and the quality and availability of health and educational services are threatened.*

As noted earlier, the data show a multiplication of conflicts and protagonists. This is particularly the case in economic and work/salary conflicts where a plethora of collective actors participate in relatively few events. They include circumstantial actors, local governments, police, and the mining, agriculture, energy, commerce, and communication sectors. In conflicts over land tenure, the agricultural and ethnic sectors mobilized to a lesser extent.

This information is consistent with observed trends in the fragmentation and diversification of collective action and the simultaneous decline in the protagonism of classic actors. This is particularly notable considering that social reproduction is the category of conflict in which the structured power of classic movements is strongest. This is the domain in which unions continue to lead many struggles (112 conflicts). Guilds and associations also maintain a certain role in the coordination of these struggles. Finally, more than three fourths of "umbrella" movements tend to be related to issues regarding social reproduction.

Figure 11. Actors receiving demands in social reproduction conflicts
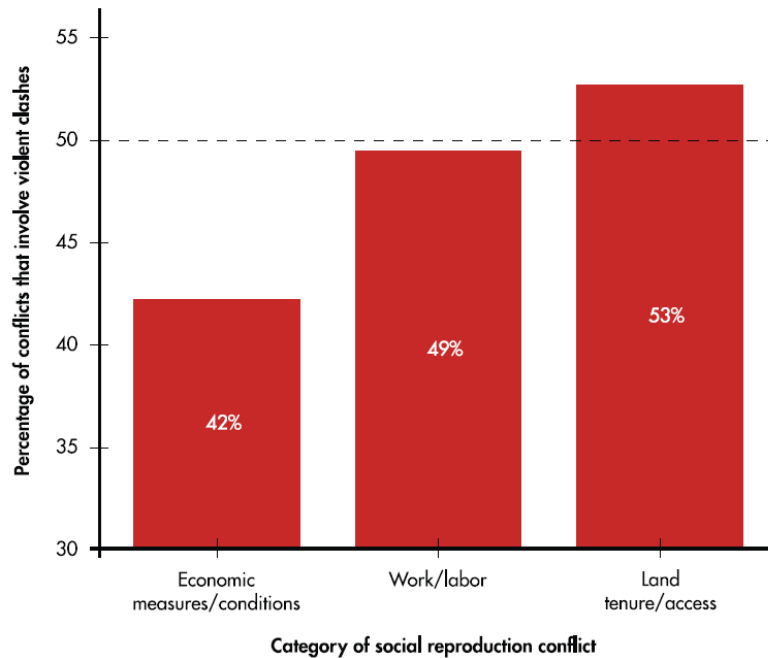

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company. Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.

In terms of radicalization of social reproduction conflicts, the issues that commonly reached a significant level of radicalization include land issues (53%), work/salary grievances (49%), and protests against economic measures (42%). The data show that the more radicalized conflicts are those related to land tenure and access. Although there are relatively few conflicts over land, they tend to be violent more often than other conflict issues. It can be surmised that there is a lack of institutional space for channeling these demands. Moreover, it can be assumed that these conflicts become more ideologically charged and volatile when they merge with other issues related to ethnic identity or local economic and political interests. Moreover, the agrarian question is still an unsettled issue in many Latin American countries, and the social consequences of a strongly rooted neo-feudal system of landed estates still persist.

Finally, in the Andean sub region, colonialism provoked at least a partial breakdown in local models of social reproduction and traditional management of ecological niches. This resulted

in a still unresolved problem that has been a historical source of conflict and motivation for resistance in rural parts of the Andes. Within this context, land and territory are not only productive goods. They also have sociopolitical and cultural relevance that lends itself to the radicalization of discourse and action, transforming divisible demands into indivisible ones. This logic underscores the destructive potential of these conflicts.

Figure 12. Percentage of social reproduction conflicts (by type of demand) involving violent clashes

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

Institutional conflicts

Institutional conflicts account for the second largest number of conflicts (874 conflicts). This is where the state's role as a source of conflicts is most evident. These conflicts resulted from discrepancies between people's demands and the capacity of state institutions and policies to satisfy them. Institutional conflicts place emphasis on deficiencies in the institutionality and functioning of the state[36]. Conflicts in this category are based on demands for practical improvements in administrative management, the provision of public services, legal measures, the fulfillment of agreements, legitimacy of public authorities, and the definition of political-administrative limits.

These conflicts seek primarily to address chronic issues. Above all, people mobilize against the long-standing dysfunction of institutions. To a lesser extent they advance transformative agendas, proposals of profound change, and visions for new systems. In this sense, institu-

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[36]   *In some cases, the institutional system itself is part of a subtext of the general discourse, but it not the focus of these conflicts.*

tional conflict follows an ambiguous and reactive logic. Actors recognize dysfunctional aspects of institutions and propose changes, but with the exception of ecological movements, they do not propose new visions for change or question the democracy's framework or logic of power[37].

The data for the region indicate that the main demands at the root of institutional conflicts are related to issues of administrative management (35%) and the provision of public services (30%). This first group of issues includes demands resulting from disagreements over the management of institutional actions in both public and private spheres. The second group of demands addresses problems with basic services and public works (e.g. roads, schools, and hospitals).

Institutional conflicts are to a lesser extent focused on the approval or abolition of norms where the legal instrument itself is at the center of the conflict (18%). Institutional conflicts in Latin America more often address the inefficiency or weakness of institutions in implementing norms. Demands involving requests for the resignation, reinstatement, or ratification of a public or private authority or representative accounted for 9% of institutional conflicts. Disputes over the non-fulfillment of agreements account for an even smaller portion of these conflicts (7%). In this last case, disputes are frequently the result of the non-fulfillment of agreements made in the context of prior conflicts. The main political-institutional problems underlying institutional conflicts include the structural limitations of representational systems, widespread mistrust of institutions, broad gaps within the state, and the endemic weakness of the relationship between the state and democracy.

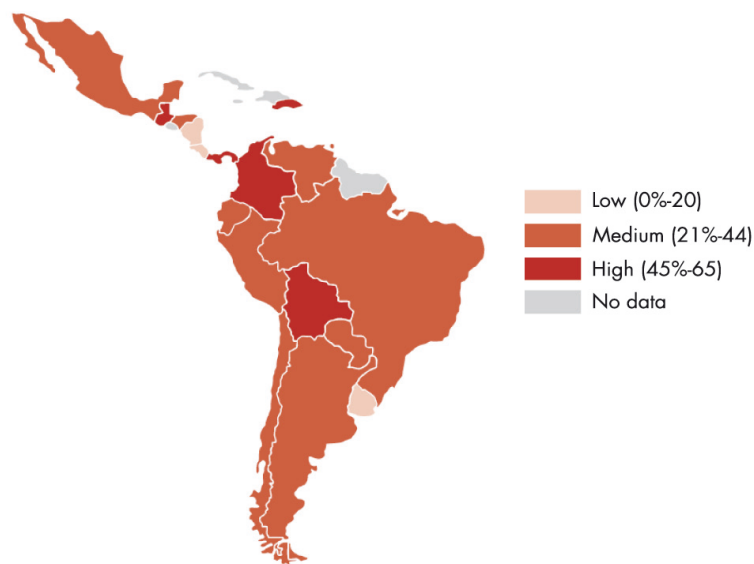Figure 13. Issues/types of demands in institutional conflicts
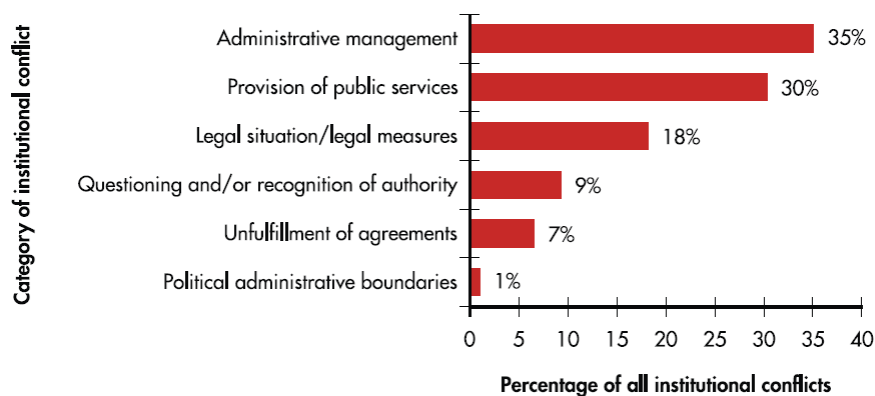
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

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[37]   The fact that the democratic system is not questioned and few significant counter-hegemonic proposals are made can be interpreted as a sign of relative stability. However, it does not imply that the system functions smoothly or efficiently. In contrast, there seems to be significant criticism of inefficiency in the public and administrative management of democracies, and of the weak state model implemented in many countries of the region. This means that Latin American citizens "interiorize" democracy as a form of governance, but remain unsatisfied with its performance.

A comparison of the numbers of institutional conflicts in each of the sub regions reveals that the greatest number of these conflicts was concentrated in the Andean sub region (41%), especially in Bolivia and Colombia. Looking within the sub region that is comprised of Central America, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, we see that institutional issues made up 41% of this sub region's social conflicts. Institutional conflicts constituted a particularly significant category of conflict in Panama, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. In contrast, institutional conflict represented small to moderate fraction of all conflicts in Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Finally, the Southern Cone was responsible for nearly 29% of the region's institutional conflicts. In the countries of this sub region, institutional conflict accounted for a moderate percentage of all social conflicts, except in Uruguay where only 20% corresponded to this category.

Map 2. Level of institutional conflicts (institutional conflicts as a percentage of each country's social conflicts)

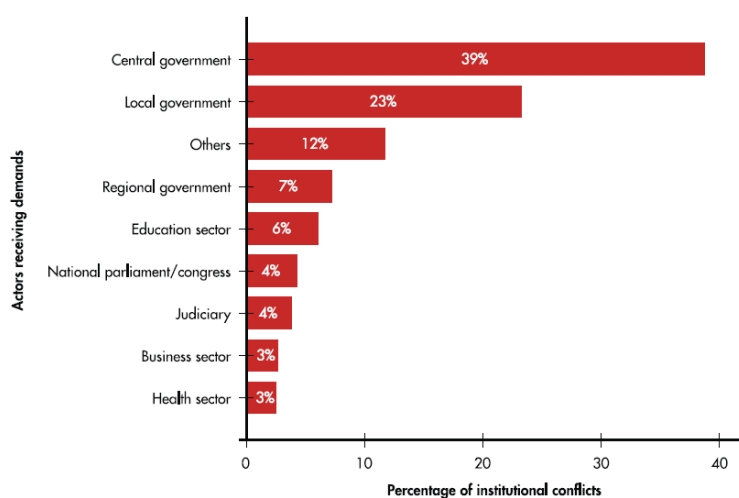Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

In terms of national political systems, institutional conflicts made up a moderate to large portion (45%) of all social conflicts in countries with reformist governments. This kind of conflict accounted for 37% in countries with conservative modernization regimes. In countries with national reformist governments, institutional conflict made up 29% of social conflicts.

The central State received the great majority of institutional demands (78%). Local governments, which are considered here to be part of the central state, received 23% of institutional demands (ten percentage points higher than their share of demands in any of the other categories of conflict).[38] This is evidence of a notable trend in the decentralization of institutional conflicts to other territorial levels. This phenomenon may be the result of the decentralization reforms implemented in recent decades by numerous Latin American countries, including Bo-

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[38]   *This actor is an oppositional actor in 13% of social reproduction and cultural conflicts.*

livia, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina. The growing importance and legitimacy of local jurisdictions in institutional conflicts could be interpreted as a positive development, particularly if it means that demands are directed to the appropriate institutional level. If there are competent local institutions and capacities for addressing conflicts, this trend could help alleviate bureaucratic congestion at the national level of the central state where there generally is limited capacity to deal with conflicts that evolve at the local level.

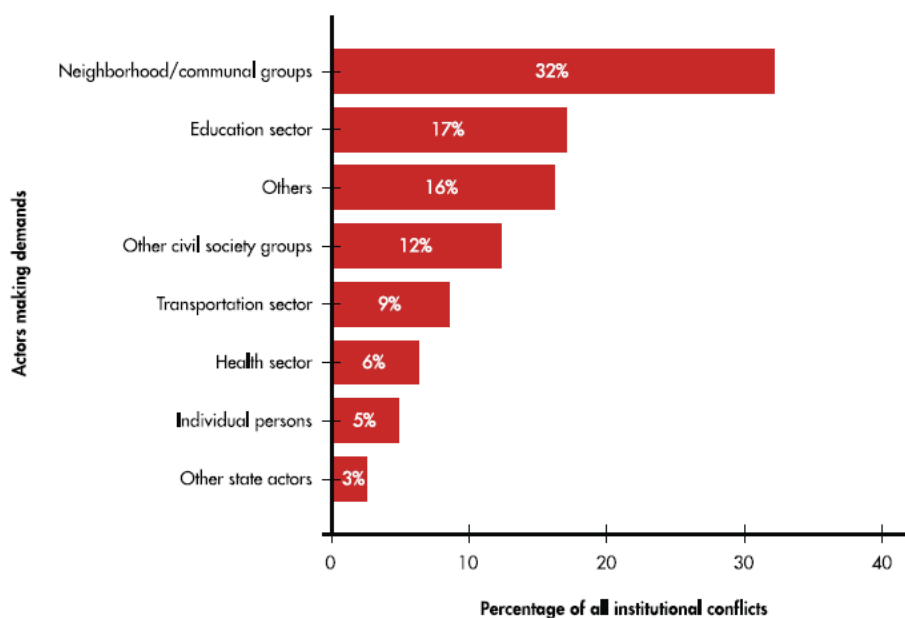Figure 14. Actors receiving demands in institutional conflicts

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company. Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.

If decentralization processes have fostered a new legitimacy at local levels, there are unanswered questions about multiple aspects of this transition. The outstanding issues include questions about administrative decentralization, institutional resources, and autonomy. Nonetheless, many successful experiences with participatory local management have been documented and are closely analyzed in the full study report.[39] Finally, the effective management of institutional conflicts at the local level appears to be a strategic theme in Latin American democracies. The opening of new spaces for deliberation could play an important role in preventing radicalization and violence.

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[39]   *These experiences include deliberative processes in major municipalities, workers councils, traditional indigenous practices, Afro-descendant organizations, and unions.*

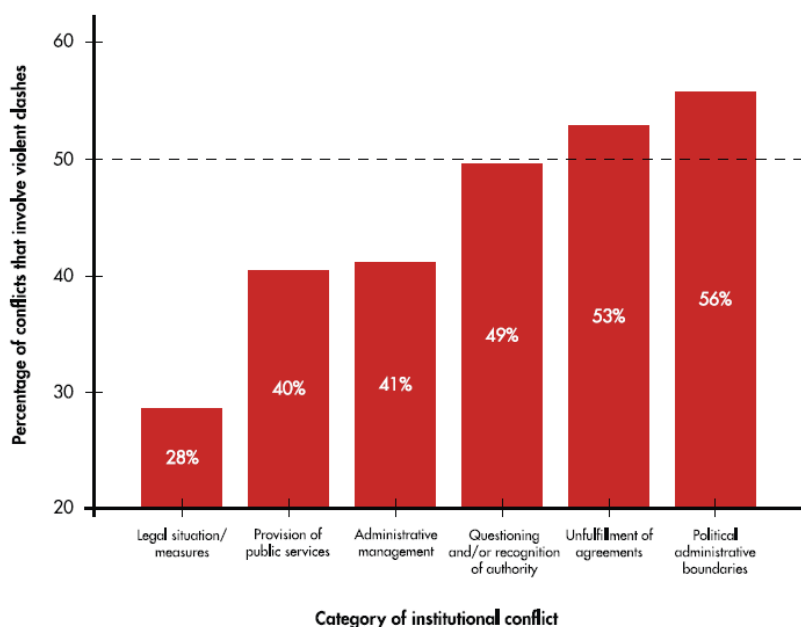Figure 15. Actors making demands in institutional conflicts

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company. Actors with at least 2.5% of the records were included.

The fragmentation or diversification of actors in this category is more significant than in the other categories of conflict. Thirty-one percent of institutional conflict was spread out over a wide variety of actors. It is also noteworthy that the actors that mobilize the most in this category of conflict, such as neighborhood organizations, were those who were the least institutionalized. Circumstantial actors also play an important role in institutional conflicts. These actors include those people who mobilize individually, without an organizational framework. Other important sectors in terms of institutional conflict are education (17%), health (6%), and transportation (9%). The conflicts that most often reached a significant level of radicalization were those related to problems with political administrative boundaries (56%), recognition of authorities (49%), administrative actions (41%), fulfillment of agreements (53%), provision of public services (40%), and legal issues or measures (28%). The significant number of institutional conflicts that reached a high level of radicalization (350 in total) is evidence of structural problems that are at the root of the chronic weakness of the state and institutional mechanisms.

Institutional conflicts also show that social demands are not only expressed in terms of inequality and social gaps, but also in terms of the chronic inability of institutions to address marginalization and increase inclusion. Regardless of their type of political system, Latin American countries are affected by a structural problem with conflict management that is exacerbated by the incapacity of political and state institutions to identify and respond to society's needs and demands. This problem makes governability more precarious.

Figure 16. Percentage of institutional conflicts (by issue/type of demand) involving violent clashes

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

Cultural conflicts

Latin America's chronic institutional weaknesses and high levels of socioeconomic inequality provide fertile ground for cultural mechanisms that maintain inequality. This complex environment of inequality leads to the emergence of new issues on the multifaceted agenda of Latin American cultural mobilization. The category of cultural conflicts is based on a broad definition of culture that emphasizes daily life, identities, subjectivities, cultural markets, and industry. Accordingly, cultural demands are generally related to certain quality of life issues, the recognition or strengthening of identities, third generation rights, and the concept of cultural citizenship.

The cultural conflicts examined in the study were relatively few (347) in comparison with the other categories of social conflict. However, this category is important for understanding contemporary Latin American conflicts and their logic. Moreover, these conflicts have significant systemic consequences, principally due to the role that culture is playing in the new globalized context of Latin America. This is why these conflicts are considered strategic when analyzing the impacts on globalization, governability, and democracy[40].

It remains unclear if the structural fragmentation of cultural demands will allow the protagonists of these conflicts to network and communicate with other actors or whether it will en-

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[40]   *It has yet to be seen what capacities exist for multicultural conflicts to become venues for intercultural communication and dialogue.*

cumber the development of more inclusive and widespread movements for social change. In this sense, radicalization that leads toward ultra-communitarianism and religious dogmatism could risk dragging social movements towards the "shadows" of anti-systemic or anti-democratic positions.

In cultural conflicts, the youth have an essential role in protests and the development of new social demands. The youth's tendency to mobilize has significantly increased as their expectations have been frustrated by the negative socioeconomic outcomes of recent years. In addition to shattered illusions, their distrust of institutions and rapid incorporation into the informational culture are relevant factors in their level of activism. Furthermore, the youth's frustration and their day-to-day sense of insecurity and exclusion involve growing tensions between the collective and the individual and are motors of contemporary cultural conflict.

While the youth are a crucial sector in society and are seen as having great potential for offering new ideas and proposals for change, they also represent a Pandora's Box. They are capable of causing chaos if their demands, expectations, and frustrations are not appropriately channeled. Thus, the youth are comparable to conflict itself in the sense that they can rework, renew, or potentially threaten the social order.

A sub-category of cultural conflict includes demands concerning ecological issues or the control of natural resources. The success of these movements can be partly explained by their ability to place particular issues in a universal context. They simultaneously question the current model of development and advocate certain global values which are difficult to challenge, such as the protection of global ecosystems.

Ethnic conflicts constitute another significant area of cultural conflicts. The study approaches these conflicts conceptually as "dialectics of the denial of the other" in which elites or more powerful groups differentiate themselves from others and subsequently denigrate them. These conflicts stem in part from chronic problems of exclusion that have existed since the colonial period.

Women are also key actors in cultural conflicts. Gender factors have strategic potential for influencing cultural change in modern societies, despite the fact that the media give only limited recognition to the tensions of gender issues. In particular, women can play an important role in society and politics as advocates of change and justice.

Finally, human rights and public safety issues represent an important number of cultural conflicts. Given the importance of these issues in the collective imagination of the public, they are increasingly important on the agendas of the majority of Latin American countries.

Within the sub regions, cultural conflicts accounted for 16% of all social conflicts in Central America, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, 16% of conflicts in the Andean sub region, and 13% in the Southern Cone. Cultural conflicts made up the largest portion of social conflicts in the countries of the northern Andes (Colombia and Venezuela). In the Southern Cone, Argentina had the highest number of cultural conflicts in absolute terms. In contrast, cultural conflicts represented a small percentage of conflicts in Brazil and Chile. With only five cultural conflicts in the year, Chile had the second lowest number of cultural conflicts after Costa Rica. Finally,

in the northern reaches of the region, Mexico and El Salvador stand out with cultural conflicts accounting for a larger percentage of their social conflicts. This could be partially explained by ethnic diversity, insecurity, and the large numbers of human rights violations in these countries. Looking more closely we see that conflicts related to human rights represented 31% of cultural conflicts in Mexico, and public safety problems were at the root of nearly 67% of cultural conflicts in El Salvador.

Map 3. Level of cultural conflicts (cultural conflicts as a percentage of each country's social conflicts)
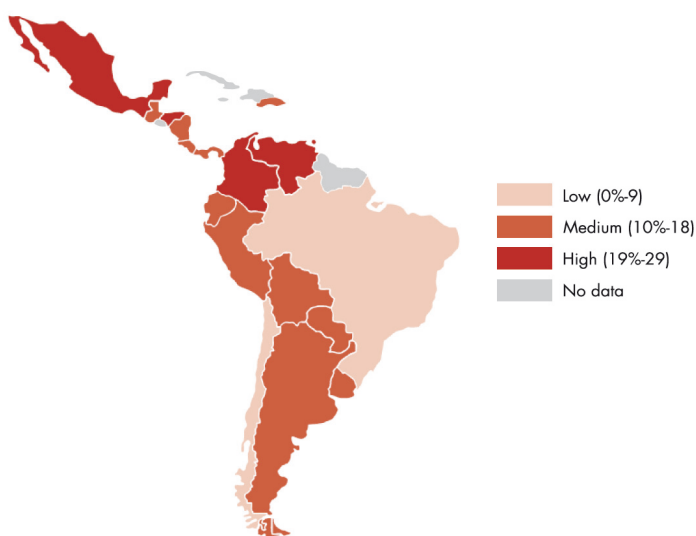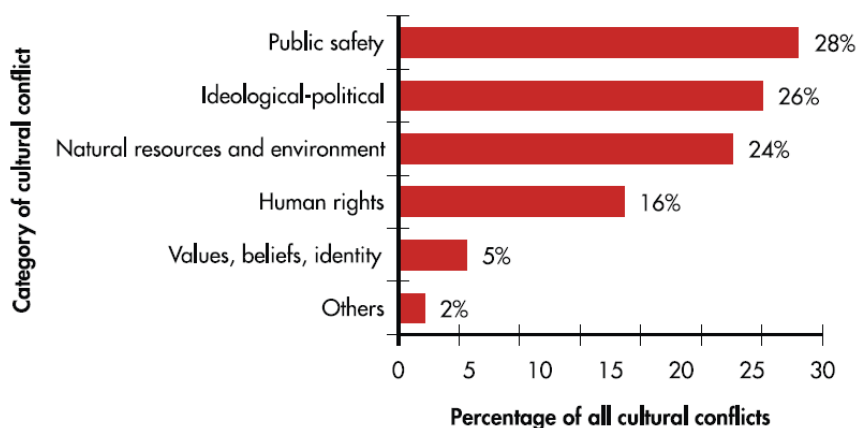

Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

The data indicate that irrespective of national political trends or type of government, cultural conflicts represented relatively low percentages of social conflicts (9-28%).Under conservative modernist systems cultural conflicts accounted for a comparatively higher percentage of social conflicts (18%). In national populist countries, the percentage of cultural conflicts represented approximately 15% of their social conflicts. Finally, in countries with practical reformist governments cultural conflicts made up a smaller percentage of their social conflicts (13%).

Demands for public safety generated 28% of all cultural conflicts in the region. These demands frequently involved calls for increased police presence on the streets. The second most important group of demands related to ideological-political struggles (25%). These struggles are related to factional conflicts that generally occur between political parties, groups that comprise political parties, and similar sectors. Close to 24% of cultural conflicts are rooted in problems associated with natural resource use and environmental degradation caused by specific actions of public or private parties. Conflicts generated by human rights violations or by demands for recognition and respect represented 16% of cultural conflicts. The defense, claim, or appeal of certain cultural values and rights accounted for a very low percentage (5%) of cultural conflicts.

Figure 17. Issues/types of demands in cultural conflicts

Almost half of all cultural demands are directed at central governments, a phenomenon that mirrors a trend in the other categories of social conflict in Latin America. The percentage of cultural demands that are directed at the state increases to 72% when cultural demands made to regional governments, courts, and national congresses or parliaments are also considered. This could be understood as the "return of the state as a sociocultural coordinator and hinge between social integration processes and the positioning of the globalized economies" (PNUD-PAPEP, 2008b: 10).

Figure 18. Actors receiving demands in cultural conflicts
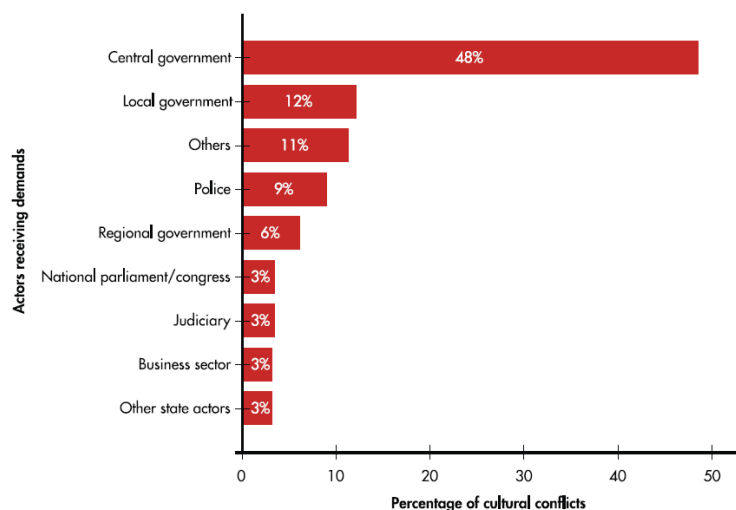
Within the array of state institutions involved in cultural conflicts, the courts and police have significant roles. This could be partly explained by the logical relationship between human rights issues and the courts. In the same way, appeals made to the police for greater public safety are increasingly important on the agendas of regional protests[41]. The police are naturally seen as directly responsible for these issues and as having the ability to improve security in concrete ways. They receive demands in 9% of cultural conflicts.[42] The police are seen as the cause of certain cultural conflicts due to their role as a repressive agent in social struggles, but they are also a proactive actor in terms of negotiations and its potentially positive social agency. While the memory of the police's repressive role in authoritarian regimes is difficult to erase from the minds of Latin Americans, the public image of the police seems to be transitioning away from negative symbolism toward that of an oppositional but legitimate mediating force.

Figure 19. Actors making demands in cultural conflicts
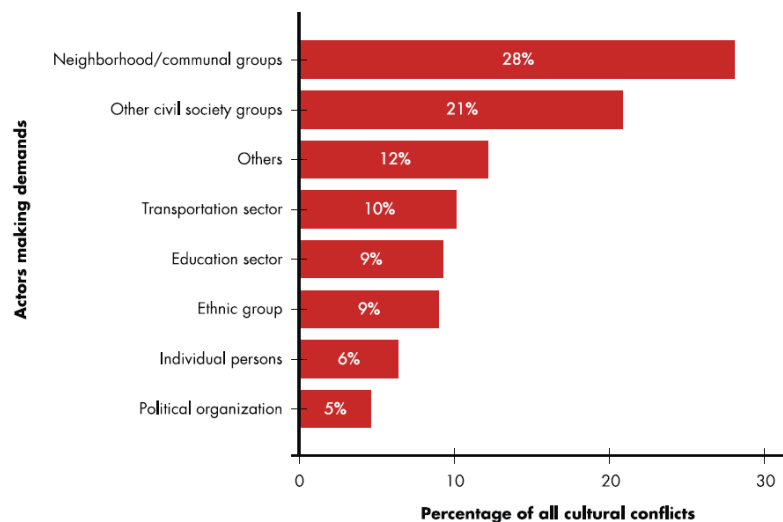
An analysis of the actors that advance cultural demands reveals that in addition to key sectors there is a variety of organizations that mobilize around a wide range of issues, including public safety, human rights, and natural resource management. Circumstantial actors were responsible for another small portion of cultural conflicts (6%). Neighborhood and communal groups typically mobilize to demand a better quality of life (unrelated to social reproduction) and better public safety, and they are notable for being involved in 28% of cultural conflicts. These demands relate to issues that reinforce ties and coexistence in the public space (Calderón and Jelín, 1987). In these cases, society is transformed more than politics, and social aspects become assimilated into the cultural domain.

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41   *Twenty-five of the 51 conflicts directed at the police involved demands for greater public safety.*

42   *The role of the police in other categories of conflict, such as social and institutional reproduction, is more marginal.*

In terms of organized sectors, around 10% of cultural conflicts involved the mobilization of the transportation sector through individual participation and protest (rather than central or national organizations). Ethnic groups led 9% of cultural conflicts and are key actors in Latin America in terms of their capacity to transform states and society. Cultural conflicts driven by ethnic groups constitute a "new way of doing politics and a new form of social interaction […] a new way of relating the political with the social domains, and the political world with private life, where daily social practices are included with and in direct interrelation to ideological and the political-institutional domains" (Calderón and Jelín, 1987: 19). In some cases where indigenous actors press demands, cultural conflicts embody and articulate contradictory trends, such as localism and globalization. On the one hand, a powerful symbolic dimension of these struggles involves of the "territorialization" of protest, occupation of common living space, and the recovery of values, world views, and traditional mythologies. At the same time, indigenous mobilizations are increasingly fluid in that they have both a growing capacity to build international alliances and a discursive strategy that takes advantage of the globalized world's technology and narratives.

The cultural conflicts that were most commonly radicalized were those addressing ideological-political struggles (34%), public safety issues (32%), environmental issues (26%), human rights conflicts (20%), and finally, issues of values, beliefs, and identity (13%). Of cultural conflicts that became radicalized, a greater percentage of conflicts based on ideological-political struggles and public safety demands tended to include violence.

Figure 20. Percentage of cultural conflicts (by issue/type of demand) involving violent clashes
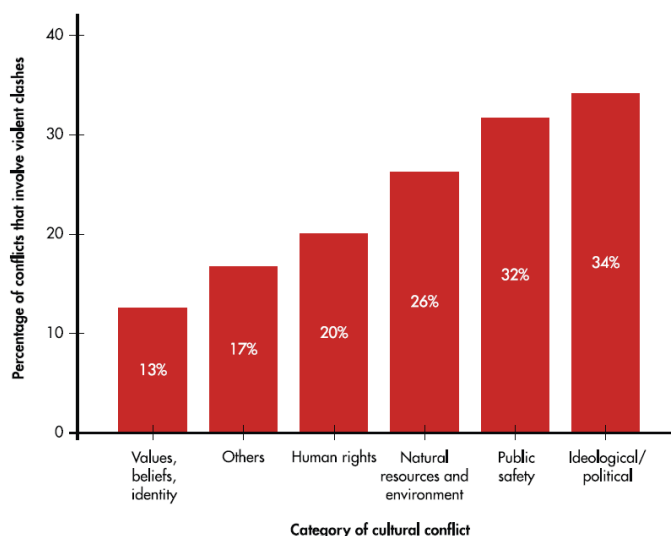
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company.

Political-ideological radicalism has potential to seriously affect governability and democratic coexistence due to the violence and confrontation frequently associated with it. Considering these risks, it is fundamental to forge agreements allowing the coexistence of political-ideologies in common democratic spaces. Such agreements require society to move beyond

the instrumental and anti-political friend-or-foe logic that has been so prevalent in the region's history.

Cultural demands related to public safety and human rights also tended to evolve into violent confrontation. Public safety is an increasingly important issue on the agenda of actors in Latin America, but there is a lack of institutional space for debating and negotiating public safety demands. Limited debate and negotiation is a key factor in the radicalization of public safety conflicts.

In contrast, conflicts over natural resource and environmental issues reached moderate levels of radicalization. However, in some countries these conflicts can become more radicalized and gain potentially strategic force. The importance of these struggles can be linked to the post-neoliberal wave's criticism of industrialized and privatized systems of resource exploitation, as well as post-neoliberal guidelines for a new approach to resource use and the local redistribution of income. Working with this theoretical orientation and new normative proposals, actors motivated by the unsustainable path of development have started to mobilize and address the adequacy of institutional spaces for discussing these issues. Additionally, these struggles reflect the influence that the international debate on climate change has at a local level, where the implications and effects for the environment and human life are concretely manifested.

This is a critical moment for linking the dynamics of cultural movements and demands with the paradigm of conflict. The movements that embody new cultural demands have a significant potential for contributing to the reconfiguration of public space and political systems, the definition of patterns of development, and the forging of new social pacts. These demands have superior structural potential principally because they tend to have greater systemic consequences, especially when compared with demands that focus on satisfying specific needs[43] (Calderón and Dos Santos, 1987).

Some cultural protests have the potential to be very destructive. Therefore, it is important to appropriately channel and develop institutional mechanisms that engender pluralism and greater recognition of the inherent multiculturalism of Latin American societies (PNUD, 2009). These tasks are especially complex and challenging because of the relative novelty of these processes, the sensitivity of the themes involved (notably questions of identity), and the lack of institutional space for addressing such new demands and guiding actors toward constructive solutions. Cultural conflicts have another dimension of complexity given that they are often interrelated with other categories of conflict and problems of inequality. As Vega (2004: 90) explains, "the demand for recognition is sustained through praxis of political and economic redistribution. Political culture cannot be disconnected from the recognition of the social politics of equality".

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[43]   *These demands for specific needs do involve institutional and economic changes, but they relate to the exercise and expansion of particular rights.*

Conflict and new information and communication networks

Latin America is confronting a new global system made up of real-time networks of information flow and exchange. New forms of communication, knowledge, and life styles lend themselves to what Castells (1997) has termed "network society". The intensive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the public space can be understood as creating "encounter" space, where ideas and values are formed, transmitted, supported, and fought over (Castells, 2009: 395). The culture of techno-socialization changes not only the daily lives of people and communities, but also politics.[44] The Web (or Internet) has become a place where new forms of conflict and power are expressed and developed. ICTs allow for a more agile, flexible, and spontaneous form of exchange between actors, and participation in forums, blogs, or social networks increases the possibilities for political participation. Values and ideas are disseminated through these media, increasing the options for promoting political or cultural change and influencing public opinion. The possibilities for collective action have grown because of easy access to and low costs of Internet and cellular phone use.

Both classic sociocultural movements and actors in spontaneous conflicts are increasingly taking advantage of ICTs and real time information and communications networks. Many use Web pages to position themselves nationally and internationally. Fifty-nine percent of the actors in the conflicts examined in the study have a presence on the Web. The Internet and other ICTs allow movements to interact, coordinate activities, share their experiences, spread messages and discourses through videos (as the Zapatistas did in Mexico), maintain contact with members, report on their activities, and even raise funds.[45] This is "massive automatic communication" in terms of a potential global Internet audience (Castells, 2009: 105). It is self-generating in terms of content, and is freely chosen by those who receive the information.

Figure 21. Percentage of each country's actors (in social conflicts) with a presence on the Web
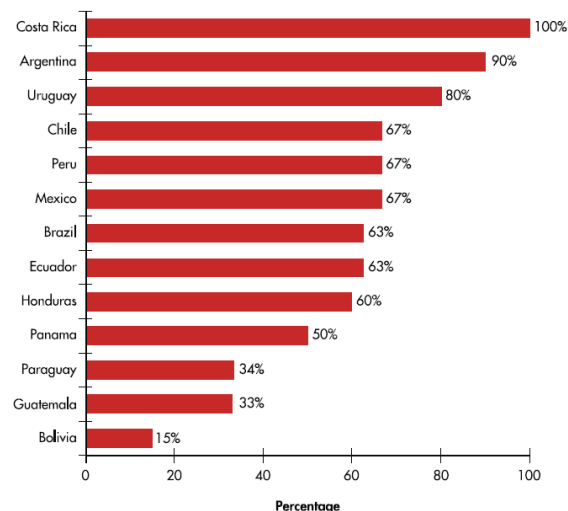
Source: Produced by the UNIR-Bolivia Foundation with data provided by the NOTILOG Company. Actors with more than five conflict episodes during a determined conflict in the study period were taken into account.

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44   *However, the structural social gaps within Latin America society are reproduced within information society.*

45   *Protests or marches that do not take advantage of vertical or horizontal communication media have lower impact and are less likely to see demands satisfied.*

Network society facilitates the appearance of "spontaneous" actors. These actors are characterized by their origin on the Web. When a demand or grievance is manifested, it can be transmitted spontaneously by thousands of people in a relatively short period of time through social networks, blogs, forums, chain e-mails, or text messages. De Ugarte (2008) terms this phenomena "cyber activism", and it is understood as the "strategy that pursues change in the public agenda through the dissemination of a determined message and its propagation by word of mouth, multiplied by personal electronic publication and communication media." There are two phases of cyber activism: a deliberative phase in which "blogs and forums open debate", and a second phase of action in which "e-mails and cellular messages signal people go out onto the street" (ibid). During the last few years, there have been cases where cyber activism has successfully changed the public agenda.

Consequently, globalization has strengthened individual capacities where spontaneous as well as voluntary political activism and self-organization are emphasized (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It has become necessary for collective projects to redefine themselves on the Web. Although spontaneous and classic social movements use digital communication to organize themselves, the public space for those movements also includes real places. The relevant questions here are "how individual action results from a collective commitment, and how the collective domain can be thought of from the perspective of individual agency" (PNUD, 2009: 49).

Prospective Scenarios

The report includes four medium-term national scenarios that are based on the evolution and context of conflicts in Latin America.[46] The objective of these conflict scenarios is to identify the conditions that determine the number and intensity of conflicts in different contexts. With this objective in mind, two variables are employed to illustrate the dynamics of these conflicts: social climate and conflict management capacity.

This first variable (social climate) addresses the factors, including time and mechanisms, which affect quality of life. These include factors that can trigger short-term dissatisfaction, as well as cumulative factors that have the potential to cause widespread unrest over the medium-term. The buildup of tension over the long-term is linked to the persistence of an inequitable development model, different kinds of social gaps, and complex and multifaceted social inequality. The factors that trigger short-term tension and dissatisfaction lead to greater numbers of conflicts and radicalism. Conflict and radicalism are two elements that form part of social climate, and they indicate the degree of society's distress or satisfaction in different national contexts.

Conflict management capacity is the second variable, and it is relevant in all of the conflicts addressed in the study, including state-society conflicts. This variable is understood as the capacity of both the state and society to address conflicts within the political process. It involves society's need not only to protest but also to interact with other actors and the state.[47] In addition to institutional capacities of conflict management, this variable also implies a certain

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[46]   *These narratives are guided by a normative paradigm which is related to the pursuit of a fruitful relationship be-*
        tween the capacity of constructivist political action and a positive climate that fosters social progress and public welfare.

[47]   *In this sense, society is an autonomous actor which is involved in deliberating issues of development and democracy.*

level of tolerance for collective action. Furthermore, this tolerance can be understood as an expression of democracy and the result of positive social and political views toward conflict.

Figure 22. Four conflict scenarios for Latin America (2012 – 2015)
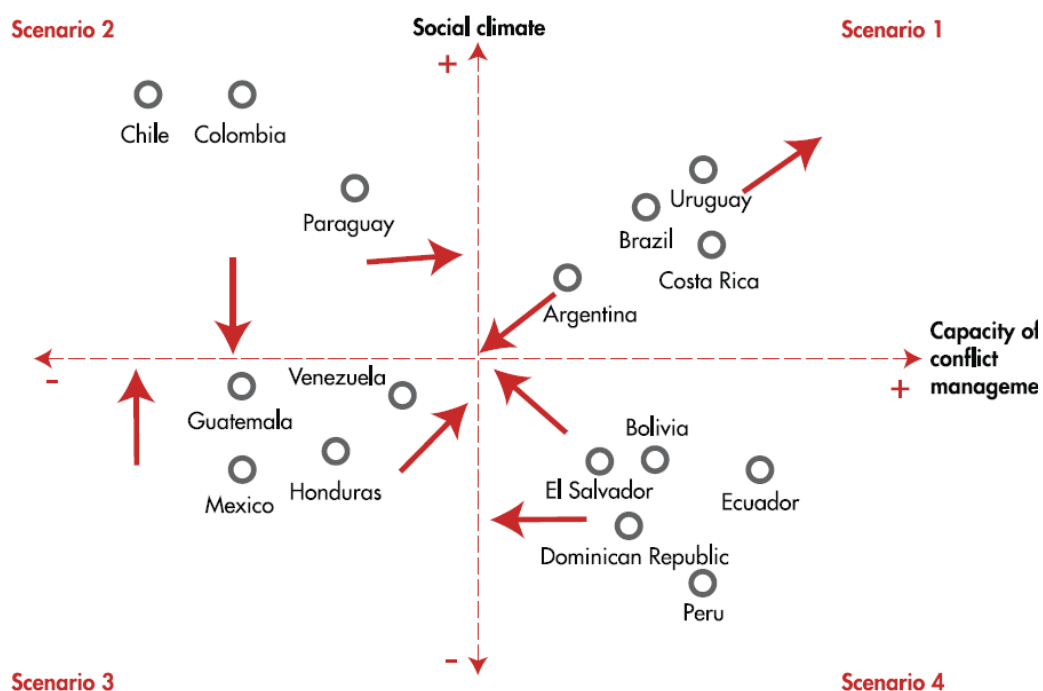
Arrows indicate the plausible evolution of countries within or between scenarios. Source: Produced by PAPEP

Considering the two variables described above, four likely conflict scenarios emerge for Latin America during the period 2012-2015.

Scenario 1: Constructive and plural order involving confrontation – In this scenario, conflict is accepted as an expression of democracy that tends to reduce or close structural social gaps, such as poverty and inequality. Accordingly, there is a positive social climate, but there is also a moderate level of conflict, especially social reproduction and institutional conflicts. Under this scenario, there is significant capacity for conflict management, and conflict is a means by which spaces for negotiation are established and institutionalized. Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Argentina currently represent this scenario, although there are significant differences between these cases.

Scenario 2: Rigid with disproportionate institutional order – This scenario includes a relatively positive social climate and low to medium levels of conflict. However, its social conflicts have a strong tendency to become radicalized. States in this scenario are generally characterized

by moderate levels of legitimacy, weak social participation, and limited capacity to address the challenges posed by social conflicts. This scenario is exemplified by Chile, Colombia, and Paraguay. It is possible for countries to move from scenario 2 into scenarios 1 or 3.

Scenario 3: Vulnerable and disrupted order – Under this scenario the state has very little or no capacity to manage conflicts. There is a deteriorated social climate, and the increasing frustration of society leads to growing instability. As the sense of marginalization and injustice grows in society, there is potential for increased dissatisfaction and eventually violent protest. The chances for an improvement in social climate or an increase in conflict management capacity are comparable. Under this scenario it is likely that countries experience positive change, but it is not entirely improbable that they fall into chaos. Venezuela, Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras are countries with circumstances that currently exemplify scenario 3.

Scenario 4: Overwhelmed and unstable order – Under this scenario, high levels of conflict overwhelm institutional capacities for conflict management. Society has significant capacities for collective mobilization and protest, but action does not always produce agreements or positive results. Scenario 4 applies to countries that have significant capacity for conflict management but face complex and challenging social climates. Given favorable circumstances, countries may evolve from scenario 4 into scenarios 1 or 2. On the other hand, it is possible that they experience crisis and greater conflict, and slide into scenario 3. El Salvador, Bolivia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Peru are examples of countries that exemplify scenario.

Final Remarks

Social conflicts affecting Latin America between 2009 and 2010 arose within a historical context influenced by the region's relative success in resisting the global economic crisis. During this period, Latin America sustained significant rates of economic growth, reduced its poverty rates, and maintained a mostly optimistic and positive public opinion of democracy as a political system. Despite this progress and the diversity of national contexts, there are problems, trends, and choices encountered throughout the region which provide a common platform for social conflict.

Latin American societies are generally characterized by an excessively concentrated power, markets that are uncompetitive in the global economy, relatively weak state institutions of questionable legitimacy, limited citizen participation, and inadequate institutional recognition of cultural identities. In order to solve the problems between states and societies—especially in terms of representation, participation, and mediation—it is necessary to reject all forms of authoritarianism. Accordingly, States and societies should advocate a kind of political coexistence that does not deny the different types of power, conflict, or discrepancies that exist in a plural society.

In recent years, Latin America has experienced a political transformation that could strengthen democracy, foster development, and improve its global standing over the long term. This

transformation is facilitated by political changes which include the erosion of the legitimacy of political parties and the emergence or reemergence of variety of movements and regimes (characterized here as popular nationalism, pragmatic reformism, and conservative modernism). Considering that societies result from conflict processes, it is natural that social conflict is a central part of this transformation. Social conflict in the region should therefore not be considered a negative phenomenon. If it is managed through dialogue and negotiation—and both structural and circumstantial issues are addressed—it can offer means and opportunities for pursuing greater social equality.

Political systems play an important role in conflict management. Countries and societies respond differently to similar demands depending on what kind of institutions they have. The state's historical role as a social actor is a central factor in the contemporary dynamics of the region's social conflicts. The state not only reflects social and political conflicts, but it is a central element of the system of economic interests and relationships between political actors which define the dynamics of conflict.

Governability is a requisite for development and functional democracy, and thus it can have a profound effect on the evolution of societies and states. In large part, governability is determined by the political capacity of States and societies to manage their conflicts without compromising institutions and stability. Although structural issues continue to be significant sources of instability in the region, particularly in terms of socioeconomic problems and institutional failures, the study summarized here shows that social conflict in Latin America does not present serious problems for governability.

The characteristics and capacities of States and institutions, including their capacities to manage conflicts, vary significantly across the region. The Latin American State has a central role in negotiations and conflicts, but paradoxically it has limited capacities for managing and resolving them without threatening social cohesion and democracy. In countries where the State is weak and lacks legitimacy, citizen participation is required to manage social conflicts. Similarly, local institutions and municipalities are becoming legitimate and important actors in the management of conflicts.

The analysis of social conflicts in Latin America reveals that they are commonly managed in para-institutional contexts, and the relationship between State and social groups often shifts between formal and informal contexts. Actors in social conflicts still resort to institutions and norms to pursue their interests, but such recourse is often accompanied by para-institutional measures in which informal social networks and mechanisms help to regulate social relations between individuals and formal institutions. It is precisely within this para-institutional domain that social actors mobilize.

Social conflict in Latin America can be divided into three broad categories that represent the different kinds of demands that are collectively pursued: social reproduction, institutional, and cultural conflicts. Social reproduction conflicts stem from demands relating to labor and wage

issues. Institutional conflicts most often address the inefficiencies or weaknesses of norms and institutions. Cultural conflicts generally involve demands related to quality of life issues, the recognition of identities, third generation rights, and the concept of cultural citizenship. Cultural conflicts in particular have significant systemic consequences given the growing role of culture in a newly globalized Latin America.

Countries with broad social inequality and governments with scarce legitimacy experience greater numbers of conflicts. Conversely, more socially-equitable countries with governments that enjoy greater levels of legitimacy experience fewer conflicts. More complex relationships were observed between the quantity of conflicts and other factors, such as conflict radicalization, institutional legitimacy, and social gaps. However, in general, conflicts tend to escalate and radicalize because institutional frameworks are incapable of offering solutions and spaces for negotiation.

Finally there is a growing trend for traditional and spontaneous conflicts and actors to spread, mobilize, and gain support through information and communications networks. The region is taking part in a new global system made up of real-time networks of information flow and exchange, affecting society and its dynamics. Technology and globalization are affecting the evolution of social conflicts in the region by redefining public space, favoring individual capacity and participation, fostering spontaneity, and elevating the profile of actors and issues.

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List of acronyms

AECID   Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development

BCPR   Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Resolution

CEPAL   Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

CERES   Center for the Study of Economic and Social Reality

FLACSO   Latin American School of Social Sciences

ICT   Information and communication technology

ISBN   International Standard Book Number

LAPOP   Latin American Public Opinion Project

PAPEP   Regional Project of Political Analysis and Prospective Scenarios

PNUD   United Nations Development Programme (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, UNDP)

RBLAC   Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

SME   Mexican Electrical Workers Union

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme