

# From Agrarian Reform to Ethnodevelopment in the Highlands of Ecuador

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*Through an examination of interventions in the agrarian structures and rural society of the Ecuadorian Andes over the past 40 years, this article explores the gradual imposition of a particular line of action that separates rural development from the unresolved question of the concentration of land ownership and wealth among the very few. This imposition has been the consequence, it is argued, of the new development paradigms implemented in Andean peasant communities since the end of land reform in the 1970s. The new paradigms emphasize identity and organizational aspects of indigenous populations at the expense of anything connected with the class-based campesinista agenda, which was still operational in the indigenous movement in the early 1990s. The essay concludes with some thoughts on the remarkable parallels between the 1990s neoliberal and counter-reformist models of action, and the pre-reformist indigenist policies of the period that ended in the 1960s.*

*Key words:* land reform, rural development, ethnodevelopment, Ecuador, Andes, neoliberalism

## INTRODUCTION

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, rural society in the Ecuadorian Andes has undergone significant changes that could not have been foreseen only a few years before. These shifts can be traced to particular developments: the disappearance of the *hacienda* system, thanks to the 1964 and 1973 land reforms; the inception of hundreds of rural development projects in the 1980s and 1990s; and the proliferation of agroexport businesses linked, for instance, to the floriculture boom in certain areas of the country (Korovkin 2005; Korovkin and Sanmiguel-Valderrama 2007). Underlying these transformations, however, is a series of structural elements that requires examination.

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The first of these elements is the appearance of new actors or, perhaps more accurately, new subjects of rural development. The consolidation of the indigenous movement, institutionalized in the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Ecuador Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities, CONAIE),<sup>1</sup> is one of the newest factors in the recent social history of the country, and forms part of a general tendency that also can be observed in other Latin American countries with a significant indigenous-peasant population. There is a great deal of literature that relates the emergence of ethnicity as a unifying umbrella for collective action to the strategic deployment of identity politics in the struggle of subaltern groups for access to and control of key resources (Koonings and Silva 1999). This strategy gathered momentum as a result of the collapse of state-centred models of development and the rise of neoliberalism as a hegemonic doctrine of macroeconomic policies (Veltmeyer 1997; Petras and Veltmeyer 2001).<sup>2</sup> Further, in the Ecuadorian case, as a new actor in the national political arena, the indigenous movement turned the 'ethnic question' into a high-priority item on the agendas of both governments and development agencies. The emergence of indigenous organizations seized the imagination of a number of social scientists and analysts. At a time when, in the aftermath of the Cold War, the left was going through one of the most severe crises in its history, many of these scholars projected their hopes onto nascent forms of militancy in Latin America that pointed to the possible emergence of a new agent of historical change.

A second factor is the change that is taking place in the rural development *modus operandi*. The proliferation of new actors and new beneficiaries has accompanied (or been the consequence of) those changes. Structural adjustment policies emerging from the Washington Consensus, with its anti-state philosophy, have resulted in a significant reduction of state involvement (Green 1995). While in the 1960s and 1970s the state was the principal force behind the

<sup>1</sup> The indigenous movement of Ecuador has a pyramidal structure, with autonomy for each level and for the organizations that form it. At the lowest level, there is a dense fabric of local organizations – called 'first-tier' or 'basic' – which includes the whole territory (communities, co-operatives and associations). Out of this level the federations or OSG (*organizaciones de segundo grado*, second-tier organizations) have been gradually emerging, each of which includes a greater or lesser number of first-tier organizations. Further up, we can find a third tier (federation of federations) that normally coincides with the province. The union of these federations gives rise to three big platforms that correspond to the natural regions of the country: ECUARUNARI in the Andes (*Confederación de los Pueblos de Nacionalidad Kichua del Ecuador*), CONFENIAE in the Amazon (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana*) and CONAICE on the coast (*Confederación de Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana*). The alliance of all three in 1986 produced CONAIE, which is the most representative organization at the national level, though it is not the only one: there are also FENOCIN (*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indias y Negras del Ecuador*), which is more class-based than CONAIE, and FEINE (*Federación Nacional de Indígenas Evangélicos del Ecuador*).

<sup>2</sup> To a greater or lesser extent, and keeping in mind the specifics of each case, this is what has happened in Chiapas (Díaz-Polanco 1997; Dietz 2004; Nash 2006), in Bolivia (Viola 2001; Albó 2002), in the western highlands of Guatemala (Palenzuela 1999; Hale 2002), and in the Ecuadorian Andes (Zamosc 1994, 2004; Barrera 2001; Guerrero and Ospina 2003). For a comparative overview of Guatemala and Ecuador, see Lembke (2006). The relationship between the end of the old class-based patterns of peasant mobilization and the rise of ethnic organizations in the Andean region has been analyzed by Van Cott (2005) and Yashar (2005).

structural policies that were concretized primarily in land reform, in the 1980s and 1990s private agencies got the upper hand. Conspicuous and controversial synergies and reciprocal feedback would develop among these private agencies – especially NGOs – as I will try to show in this article. Thus, while in the 1980s land reform lost momentum as a hegemonic paradigm in favour of integral rural development (IRD), different ways of applying and understanding the notion of development in rural contexts have proliferated ever since. The range extends from ‘social capital’ to ‘ethnodevelopment’, passing through every imaginable version of ‘sustainability’, always with a ‘gender’ focus and a spirit of ‘empowerment’. What this collection of buzzwords signals is, in effect, a radical shift in approaches to rural poverty and new peasant movements.

In the Ecuadorian Andes, in the 1990s, the indigenous movement showed a notable capacity for mobilization and a remarkable ability to negotiate both with the state and with development agencies.<sup>3</sup> Through an examination of this particular case I intend to demonstrate that the abovementioned series of fashionable concepts has as its common denominator the attempt to separate rural development from the inconclusive and unresolved question of land ownership and concentration of wealth. It will be argued that all the new development paradigms that were tried out on rural society since the end of land reform were conceived along these lines. They all emphasized aspects related to identity and organization, ignoring anything that had to do with the class-based peasant agenda that was still part of the indigenous rights movement in the early 1990s. In sum, I wish to show how the past 25 years of experience with IRD and development agencies of many kinds implicitly constitute an excellent laboratory – because of their deadening effects on indigenous peasant leaders and their class-based demands – for conducting experiments such as *development with identity*, promoted by the World Bank as the cornerstone of the continuing struggle against poverty and exclusion.

#### THE LEGACY OF THE DEVELOPMENTALIST MODEL: BETWEEN INDIGENISM AND LAND REFORM

For several decades, ‘land reform’ was a magical phrase in the world of rural development. This was the period of import substitution industrialization, when

<sup>3</sup> These capabilities were evident in the big *levantamientos* (uprisings) of the 1990s and what they achieved: among other things, constitutional recognition of a package of the movement’s historical demands. Without minimizing the importance of these gains, it is worth pointing out some of the movement’s limitations. For instance, we should not forget the negotiations with the state that took place in 1994 concerning the Agrarian Development Act, a clearly neoliberal law designed to liberalize the land market. After a second indigenous uprising, the government had no choice but to take CONAIE’s demands into account in drafting the law. However, the result was rather disappointing: the final text was very similar to the initial proposal, the main concession being a long preamble framed in ethnicist language (Bretón 1997, 68–72; Navas 1998). A similar point could be raised concerning the articles introduced into the Ecuadorian constitution of 1998, which made it one of the most generous constitutions in Latin America in terms of the rights of indigenous peoples. None of these articles, however, took concrete form in legislation, so they had practically no effect on the everyday life of indigenous groups.

it was believed that the complete transformation of agrarian structures was a necessary condition for economic take-off. It would not only facilitate the progress of capitalization and the adaptation of the traditional peasantry to an expanding economy, but also reinforce the social cohesion of societies immersed in a process of nation-building that, in many cases, remained (and remains) incomplete.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the social and economic modernization of the countries of Latin America required the consolidation of strong interventionist and protectionist states capable of reforming agrarian structures seen as obsolete, in order to facilitate the diversion of resources (human and monetary) towards industry and urban growth. It also required a national discourse that could create broad social consensus in support of this project (Kay 1998, 2001). Hence the strategic importance of land reform as a token of the alliance between the state and the peasantry, and of indigenist programmes, focused on the integration of those who were the most marginal among an already marginalized rural population (De la Peña 1997, 239–41).

*The Limits and Paradoxes of Indigenist Policies in Ecuador*

In the Ecuadorian Andes, different models of indigenist intervention have been distinguished in the present article, both in relation to their orientations and their consequences, between the 1950s and the end of the 1960s: (1) indigenism originating in the First Interamerican Indigenist Congress of 1940 (Pátzcuaro, Mexico), which produced a final declaration emphasizing the need to preserve the ‘positive values’ of the ‘cultural and historical personality’ of indigenous peoples (América Indígena 1990, 75); (2) indigenism represented by the *Misión Andina del Ecuador*, strongly influenced by the Pátzcuaro proposals but with a more pragmatic and technocratic profile resulting from its connections to the applied anthropology of the time; (3) forms of indigenist praxis supported by progressive elements in the Catholic Church that differed significantly from the first two models;<sup>5</sup> and (4) work done under the auspices of the Communist Party by the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians, FEI).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This model was extensively theorized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and became the dominant development paradigm for the entire region from the end of the 1940s until the early 1980s (Kay 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The work undertaken by several evangelical churches should also be included here. On this topic, see Muratorio (1982) and Andrade (2004, 2005). Since an analysis of indigenism falls outside the scope of this essay, and given the importance of the *campesinista* turn in the Catholic Church, I have focused my attention on the processes stemming from the progressive bishops’ activities. It was not a coincidence, as Muratorio notes (1982, 87–8), that this change gave evangelism, under heavy attack from traditional Catholicism, greater freedom to expand by creating a climate of tolerance that put an end to persecution.

<sup>6</sup> The FEI, which dates from 1944, was created by the Party to promote unions among the indigenous population (Santana 1988, 280). It was a key organization in the struggle for the passage and implementation of redistributive land reform. Because of the growing importance of state activity in the oil boom of the 1970s and the gradual consolidation of ethnic organizations, the FEI began to lose power until it was finally displaced. It disappeared in the early 1980s. See Guerrero (1993, 104).

In the first model, we should emphasize the very limited horizons of conventional indigenist practice as represented by the *Servicio Ambulante Rural de Extensión Cultural* (Rural Itinerant Cultural Extension Service), organized by the Ministry of Education in 1950 (Villavicencio 1973, 26) or, in the sphere of private institutions, by the *Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Indigenist Institute), founded in 1942 under the auspices of Pío Jaramillo Alvarado. This was the case even though, as in other Latin American countries, 'indigenism became the idiom for articulating the integration of the Indians and resolving the tension between equality and exclusion', and for 'accepting the coexistence of Western and *non-Western* ways of life', as the indigenists themselves acknowledged (Prieto 2004, 185–6). The Mexican anthropologist Alejandro Marroquín was very explicit in his *Balance del indigenismo* about the limits of these experiments: 'The Government of Ecuador . . . has not understood that the general standard of living cannot be raised if the indigenous population remains inadequately developed.' Apart from insufficient financial resources and lack of technical skills, he found evidence for this in the fact that 'many problems affecting indigenous people have been approached independently of the national situation; as if [indigenous] communities . . . were floating in the air, without the national background that surrounds and oppresses them' (Marroquín 1972, 178–9).

The results achieved by the *Misión Andina del Ecuador* (MAE) were more positive.<sup>7</sup> This initiative, a significant departure from classical indigenism, was the first in Ecuador to promote systematic improvements in the quality of everyday life for indigenous communities. A closer look at MAE's projects, however, reveals its technocratic orientation. Investment in roads, local schools, health infrastructure of various kinds (latrines, clinics, clean water, vaccination), rural housing and, especially, the green revolution – so fashionable in those years – reveal its limitations. In fact, much more should have been done to address the economic marginalization and social exclusion of indigenous communities (Bretón 2001, 61–86). Misión Andina initiatives were doomed to failure because the concentration of land ownership was never questioned, and therefore – despite the pervasive atmosphere of protest and readiness for change in Andean communities when the first land reform act was passed in 1964 – little or nothing was done to facilitate peasant access to plots of land or challenge the *hacienda* system. To the extent, however, that this organization also invested in such unconventional activities as training peasant leaders, the imprint it left on the first generation of indigenous intellectuals was quite remarkable. After more than forty years, these intellectuals still acknowledge their debt to those formative and innovative workshops, which had transforming effects in the majority of Andean cantons where they were offered.<sup>8</sup> Paradoxically, its homogenizing

<sup>7</sup> This organization was designed by the United Nations in 1952 and led by the ILO (International Labour Organization) until its full integration into the structure of the Ecuadorian state in 1964. Misión Andina represented the most ambitious indigenist project in the Andes region at that time.

<sup>8</sup> Interviews conducted by the author with historical leaders of ECUARUNARI. See Bretón (2001).

philosophy contributed, in the long term, to the development of ethnic consciousness and the struggle for difference as a way of asserting a political claim by those who were meant to be integrated into national society. Misión Andina exemplifies the paradoxes of classical indigenism insofar as it promoted (in spite of itself) the reproduction (even the strengthening) of ethnic boundaries and the later articulation of indigenist movements as a reaction (in part) to institutional practices that spoke in the name of Indians and to their supposed benefit, but often left the Indians themselves without a voice (Favre 1996).

At this point it should be noted that, in a way, this kind of indigenism was related to modernization theories in vogue at the time. Beyond the undeniable originality of Latin American indigenist thought, especially Mexican, the truth of the matter is that it coincided with the more culturalist version of the peasantry represented in the work of North American anthropologists such as Redfield and Foster. This perspective offered a view of traditional rural societies as isolated, self-sufficient and closed; frozen in time, governed by ancestral customs and using age-old technology perfectly adapted to the environment. From this point of view, modernization would open these societies to the outside world, a process entailing loss of autonomy, acculturation into the value system of urban society and, finally, the obliteration of their traditional ways of life.<sup>9</sup> In any case, this kind of pre-reformist indigenist politics attempted to solve the contentious 'indigenous question' without questioning either the structures of power or the system of land ownership in Ecuador. The problem of peasant underdevelopment was seen not as the consequence of asymmetrical land distribution and ethnic domination, but as a result of indigenous communities' traditional, isolated, distrustful and backward character. Thus, it sought solutions by fostering education, health care and, at most, transfers of conventional technology.

In the case of indigenism originating in liberation theology, strengthened by the spirit of Vatican II (1963) and the III Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín (1968), we have a very different approach. This was closer to some of the ideological alignments of the left, at least in matters of agrarian redistribution and support for the peasantry in the seizure of *haciendas* and the pro-reformist struggle for the land.<sup>10</sup> This approach is exemplified in the Ecuadorian sierra by the work of the diocese of Riobamba (in the Chimborazo province, which had the largest indigenous population) at the time of Monsignor Leónidas Proaño, who went so far as to define it publicly as 'the Church of the Poor'. A detailed account of its importance in the struggle against the big estates and what the loss of one of their traditional allies – the Church – meant for the ruling classes of rural society is beyond the scope of this article. It is, however,

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Redfield (1953, 1960), Foster (1980) and Rogers and Svenning (1979). There is a marked convergence between these approaches and those of noted indigenists such as Aguirre Beltrán (see his argument that refuge areas would explain the survival of indigenous cultures) (Aguirre Beltrán 1967). The same could be said of the much admired and imitated Mexican *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*, at least prior to the sharp criticisms levelled against it in the 1970s.

<sup>10</sup> A reform in which the Church itself was involved as a large landowner.

important to underscore its impact on the formation of the indigenous movement in two senses. First of all, in the particular case of Chimborazo province, the Diocese supported the communities, not only in their opposition to landowners, but also – and especially – in their organizational structure. A quick look at second-tier and even third-tier grass-roots organizations shows how many of them are grounded in the *proañista* priests' efforts to strengthen indigenous associations as an instrument of social change (FEPP 1987). Second, beyond the specific case of Chimborazo, it set in motion and later supported a series of development institutions (NGOs) that have continued to work up to the present, under the auspices of the Church, in favour of a particular conception of rural development focused on communities and especially federations of communities (the so-called second-tier organizations or OSGs) as their central objective.<sup>11</sup> The research done by Carmen Martínez Novo (2004) on the Salesians' work in the Zumbahua parish, in the neighbouring province of Cotopaxi, reaches similar conclusions. In this particular case, the Salesian missionaries 'are pioneers within the Catholic Church in the promotion of ethnic pride and identity through culturally sensitive pastoral groups'. Their emphasis on education, organization and leadership training led them 'to promote respect for cultural difference' (Martínez Novo 2007, 191).

Another interesting aspect to which Martínez Novo draws attention is the way in which, unlike other countries such as Mexico, in Ecuador indigenist practice was limited to institutions outside the state itself: Misión Andina and the Catholic Church. I think this is consistent with the Ecuadorian system of government since the first decades of the Republic. As Andrés Guerrero has shown in several publications, at least since Indian tribute (an institution rooted in colonialism) was ended in 1857 and until the destruction of the *hacienda* system in the 1970s, the state – using the legal argument of citizen equality<sup>12</sup> and the official elimination of the 'Indian' category – delegated the administration of indigenous groups to the private sector (the sphere of the *haciendas*, and the rural parishes and cantons). In this way, ethnic domination seems to disappear when in actual fact what happens 'is that the Republic withdraws completely from the government of indigenous populations' (Guerrero 2000, 44). In this way, Indians were rendered invisible and Indian voices were silenced for nearly a century and a half. Their interaction with the state was carried out through others who 'translated' their demands and aspirations into politically correct language: this is what Guerrero calls 'ventriloquist modes of representation'. This state of affairs lasted

<sup>11</sup> The most important are the *Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas* (CESA) and the *Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio* (FEPP), two of the most active NGOs in Ecuador.

<sup>12</sup> On the historical construction of the concept of citizenship, see the very important essay by María José Vilalta, which questions the universalist scope of this concept. Citizenship is seen as an 'instrument for classification, order and government of populations, for exclusion and inclusion; a Western myth that, like a Janus-faced hydra, apparently seeks universalism, but never achieves it, and in fact does not wish to; always an ambiguous territory with imprecise boundaries that shift to widen or restrict access only in accordance with particular interests arising at different historical moments, with the imperishable burden of economic inequality and at the will of the most powerful of those it includes, now open and tolerant, now restrictive and fearful' (2007, 62).

until the emergence of the contemporary indigenous movement (Guerrero 1994, 2000). This system of government was consistent with the context in which indigenist initiatives, both anti-reformist and pro-reformist, originated. Whether they implicitly supported the status quo or explicitly advocated revolution or reform, they thrived within a framework in which the state had apparently turned its back on the indigenous question, which was dealt with in local contexts on a day-to-day basis, and therefore in an evidently ventriloquist manner.

We should not lose sight of the fact that, in addition to elements from the progressive Church (council priests, catechizers, literacy tutors, rural promoters), left-wing militants had for some time been doing significant work through the *Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios* (FEI) developing a cadre of indigenous leaders. Research on the intricate processes through which the *haciendas* were dismantled turns up references to FEI lawyers and activists who advised villagers regarding the most efficient strategies for obtaining land and actively helped to form interim peasant unions on the great estates as platforms for the struggle. Guerrero reminds us of the way in which the Federación:

is constituted as a sort of indigenist non-state apparatus; a mediating entity for the expression and translation (political ventriloquism) of social subjects, the *Indians*, lacking any legal recognition or legitimacy and, therefore without a recognized discourse and direct access to the political system. It did not seek to turn the *huasipungueros* (indigenous laborers living with their families on the haciendas where they worked)<sup>13</sup> into ethnic citizens. On the other hand, the Federación tried to deprivatize agrarian conflicts and relocate them beyond the region in the decision-making centre of the national state. . . . Finally, by intervening as an indigenist organization, an institution of white citizens mediating on behalf of *Indian subjects*, it reproduced the *quid pro quos* inherent to the state in its relationships with *colonial subjects*: a population without recognised rights in the legal and political system of the nation-state, whose reality appears in the interstices of third parties' interests, in double-speak, in deformed versions of itself and of others. (1993, 102–3)<sup>14</sup>

The most remarkable aspect of all these varieties of indigenism, it seems to me, is that, whether they were anti-reformist or pro-reformist in philosophy, their effects were similar. Instead of contributing to the dissolution of Indian identities they

<sup>13</sup> The social and economic hegemony of the *hacienda* system explains the persistence until the 1960s of different kinds of relationships (*precarias* in the language of the time) between the peasant economies of the sierra and the landowners. These relationships, the most important of which was the *huasipungo*, consisted in the collection of rents by the landowners in exchange for land use rights and access to other resources of the *hacienda*. See Guerrero (1991a, 1991b) on the *huasipungo* tenants, the functional and hierarchical interdependence between them and the *hacienda*, their internal power structure and the personalization of domination. A contemporary description – with a typology included – of the different ways in which the system was dissolved can be found in the well-known CIDA report (1965).

<sup>14</sup> I believe that some of these observations on the FEI can be extrapolated to the progressive Church. Such as the former's *de facto* operation as an independent indigenist apparatus, raising the struggle for the land to the level of a national issue, mediation and, in a certain sense, ventriloquism, despite successful efforts to consolidate an important group of catechizers and indigenous rural promoters.



strengthened them; instead of helping to constitute an imagined (and imaginary) *mestizo* national community, they unleashed processes of identity reaffirmation (and re-invention) based on a fundamental dichotomy between indigenes and white-*mestizos*. This leads to a consideration of the importance of different models of indigenist intervention in the education of true organic intellectuals, in the Gramscian sense of the term,<sup>15</sup> who would play a key role in the struggle for land, in the dismantling of the *hacienda* system, and in the construction of a subject of collective action under the umbrella category of 'the indigenous'. In the formation of this peasant elite of organic intellectuals – who became the first union, community and association organizers, presenting themselves as mediators between the complex world of the *precaristas*, their *hacienda* communities, and their external allies against the landholding oligarchy – there were many who actively contributed to their strategic indoctrination in the terms of the struggle at that time being waged against the landlords' monopoly of power.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Asymmetrical Results of Land Reform*

A detailed review of the abundant literature dealing with the impact of the land reform laws of 1964 and 1973 on structural changes in the Ecuadorian rural landscape is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>17</sup> It is, however, worth noting that in 1954, when the first agrarian census was taken, 2.1 per cent of farms – those larger than 100 hectares – accounted for 64.4 per cent of all arable land, while farms smaller than five hectares (73.1 per cent) accounted for only 7.2 per cent of all arable land (Table 1). The expansion of the agricultural frontier and – to a lesser extent – redistributive reform (limited to the Andean area) led to a significant change in landholding patterns. Thirty years later, in 1984, estates larger than 100 hectares did not account for more than 34 per cent of the arable land; the proportion of arable land accounted for by average-sized land holdings (between 30 and 100 hectares) had risen to 30 per cent; and farms smaller than 20 hectares comprised 35.6 per cent of the arable land, a substantial increase (Chiriboga 1987, 6). This apparently greater equity, however, is more illusory than real, since it was mainly the result of clearing new areas in tropical and

<sup>15</sup> The *organic intellectual*, according to Gramsci, 'emerges from the primary ground of an essential function in the world of economic production. Organically and simultaneously, one or more layers of intellectuals are created, who provide it with the homogeneity and consciousness appropriate to their function, not only in the economic sphere but also in the social and the political' (1974, 389). These organic intellectuals, 'while emerging into history from a previous structure and as an expression of its development, have found . . . pre-existing intellectual categories that even appeared to represent an uninterrupted historical continuity, despite the most complex and radical changes in social and political forms' (1974, 389).

<sup>16</sup> Gramsci himself emphasized the importance of contacts and interconnections with external agents in the constitution of organic intellectuals (1974, 392–3). In the Ecuadorian case, both Catholic promoters and FEI activists established organizational links with indigenous communities in the *haciendas*, developed relationships with leaders and existing organizations on the estates, supported the densely woven fabric of domestic and community relations, and promoted the consolidation of organic intellectuals, often by means of traditional leaders.

<sup>17</sup> See Chiriboga (1987), Barsky (1988) and Bretón (1997).

Table 1. Evolution of the agrarian structure of Ecuador, 1954–2000

<i>Size of units</i>	<i>1954 units</i>	<i>1974 units</i>	<i>2000 units</i>	<i>1954 %</i>	<i>1974 %</i>	<i>2000 %</i>
Less than 5 ha	251,686	346,877	535,309	73.11	66.82	63.51
From 5 to 20 ha	57,650	96,360	176,726	16.75	18.56	20.97
From 20 to 100 ha	27,742	64,813	111,290	8.06	12.48	13.20
More than 100 ha	7,156	11,091	19,557	2.08	2.14	2.32
Total	354,234	519,141	842,882	100.00	100.00	100.00

  

<i>Size of units</i>	<i>1954 hectares</i>	<i>1974 hectares</i>	<i>2000 hectares</i>	<i>1954 %</i>	<i>1974 %</i>	<i>2000 %</i>
Less than 5 ha	432,200	538,700	774,225	7.20	6.78	6.27
From 5 to 20 ha	565,800	935,300	1,706,794	9.43	11.77	13.81
From 20 to 100 ha	1,138,700	2,664,700	4,614,436	18.98	33.52	37.35
More than 100 ha	3,863,000	3,810,800	5,260,375	64.39	47.94	42.57
Total	5,999,700	7,949,500	12,355,830	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Agrarian Censuses of 1954, 1974 and 2000.

subtropical lowlands for cultivation. In fact, the Ecuadorian Institute of Land Reform and Colonization (IERAC) demobilized the peasantry by fostering colonization and granting the *precaristas* ownership of the parcels of land they worked on the *haciendas*. It accelerated the break up and later redistribution of the traditional *haciendas* that had difficulties in adapting to the modernizing requirements imposed by developmentalism, but it guaranteed, above all, the rationalization of the best lands and those susceptible to be turned into capitalized units of production oriented towards the domestic urban market or export trade.

From the indigenous-peasant perspective, the reform brought about an important reduction in labour demand once the peasants' connection to the surviving *haciendas* (often heavily mechanized) was severed. It also prevented access to other resources (and other ecological niches) on the old estates and intensified already existing forms of inequality among the *huasipungueros*. Often only the worst estate lands – hilly, subject to erosion, and unsuitable for cultivation – were redistributed. As the years passed, these lands were slowly but steadily fragmented into smaller and smaller holdings, creating a looming crisis for the next generation of ex-*huasipungueros*, whose only possibility of access to land was through fragmentation of the plots distributed by the IERAC, or occupation and generalized overexploitation of ecological niches located at much higher altitudes – the bleak plateaus (the *páramos*, in Spanish) – which today are heavily deteriorated.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Between 1954 and 1974 (Table 1), the number of peasant units (which in the census appear as smaller than 20 hectares) increased by 133,901. During this period, 66 per cent consisted of parcels smaller than 5 hectares, while the remaining 34 per cent, with an average of 11.81 hectares per unit, initiated a process of capitalization.

In general terms, land reform permitted the expansion of arable land (two million hectares in only 20 years) and the falsification of statistics on the real distribution of wealth. It also led to the transformation of potentially viable large estates into truly viable ones, and greater social and economic mobility for an increasingly heterogeneous indigenous peasantry. This last aspect is central to an understanding of how the indigenous movement came into being in a post-reformist context in which the demise of the *hacienda* system severed the link joining the Indian and the *hacienda* and brought peasant economies into large-scale commercial networks and the regional and national labour markets. This was the context in which the seasonal migration of small indigenous peasants intensified as a result of demographic pressure on the land and the hopes raised by the oil boom of the 1970s. These comings and goings enabled migrants to retain their affective, social, symbolic and economic ties with their communities of origin. This, in turn, enhanced the local allegiances out of which a new collective pan-indigenous identity could be constructed.

The way in which reform was carried out in the Andes entailed, in the middle term, a growing deterioration of the living standards of a significant part of the indigenous peasantry. The crisis and recession of the 1980s short-circuited the possibilities that mobility opened up in a context of economic expansion based on oil, de-legitimizing the state and condemning a significant part of the highlands' indigenous population to a marginal existence (Guerrero 2001, 207). At the same time, a certain minority enjoying different comparative advantages were able to capitalize and commoditize their economies, either because they had had access to better and larger parcels of land (sometimes as a result of their privileged position within the power structure of the old *haciendas*), or because they were the direct beneficiaries of rural development projects, or because they had better access to education or training.<sup>19</sup> The beneficiaries of this process were the exclusive group of the indigenous organic intellectuals.<sup>20</sup> However, as a result of the

<sup>19</sup> As mediators between the state and the development apparatus that emerged after the landlords' removal, indigenous leaders gained new and invaluable knowledge of the outside world, knowledge they never had during the *hacienda* period. Hence they began to demand control over the planning and implementation of rural development programmes (Pallares 2002, 41). In fact, 'an important segment of the leaders, at some stage in their careers worked as promoters, facilitators, or managers of development projects in state, church or private agencies'; that is, 'they were trained by and collaborated in those institutions before which, from their positions in the parishes, the provinces, or the capital of the Republic, they then had to argue the case for ethnic difference, oppression and autonomy' (Guerrero 1995, 11).

<sup>20</sup> A good example is the *Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas del Norte de Cotopaxi* (UNOCANC) in the parish of Toacazo (Latacunga canton, Cotopaxi province), an OSG with a remarkable capacity for mobilization from which key leaders of the indigenous movement have emerged (the best known is Leonidas Iza, ex-president of CONAIE). My research on that federation has allowed me to observe that it has always been directly or indirectly under the control of the local peasant elites: those for whom land reform was most beneficial and those who, after three decades of massive intervention in the area by NGOs, gained the most from development-oriented international co-operation (in terms of training, technology transfer and political support). The OSG power structures are the result of a process of internal differentiation that began during the *hacienda* period and was intensified by external agents. This brings us back to a consideration of the formation of organic intellectuals in a context of rapid structural change in the world of the Andean peasantry.

economic dislocation brought about by land reform, the majority of the peasant-indigenous population were forced to look outside the domestic sphere for the resources they needed to guarantee their survival:

As many peasants were dismissed from hacienda duties and were confronted by new economic hardships, they increasingly sought economic opportunities in both distant cities and adjoining towns. But Indians had a tense coexistence with mestizo market intermediaries, authorities, educators, and vendors. They were excluded from many employment opportunities, as towns and cities institutionalized a labor-partitioning system that assigned them the most menial and underpaid tasks. (Pallares 2002, 42–3)

As Amalia Pallares has pointed out, the demise of the *huasipungo* and the end of the *hacienda* system did not prevent the redefinition of racial hierarchies. The new relations of production did not minimize but re-organised the racialization of subaltern groups: ‘For most Indians, agrarian modernization marked the transition from one form of racial subordination to another’ (2002, 37). Of relevance here are Carola Lentz’s thoughts on the effects of Chimborazo indigenes’ seasonal migration to the sugar cane plantations on the coast at harvest time, wherein the constitution of a collective indigenous subject subsumes all local allegiances (1997, 305–6), because all indigenous migrants suffered equally from discrimination irrespective of the parish or canton they came from. Land reform thus marked a shift in the social transformation of the Ecuadorian Andes. To the extent that it accelerated the indigenous communities’ integration into the market and the state, ‘the consciousness of belonging to a “we” group, which initially was defined in the local sphere’, became ‘a feeling of belonging to a large indigenous community’ (Lentz 2000, 226). In this way, the ethnic boundary was remade while at the same time the foundation was laid for a common identity (and project) that included all indigenous nationalities. With the transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, to paraphrase Guerrero, the old system for the government of indigenous populations came apart. The Indians of the old fragmented local powers ‘became a sort of community capable of imagining itself as a social group, its members joined by shared symbolic and historical bonds reinvented through political rituals such as uprisings; by the common experience of emigration and participation in the ways of life, forms of sociability and social networks that emerged in the cities’ (Guerrero 1998, 118).

Another factor to be taken into account is that, after the land reform, migration by rural indigenous populations was less permanent than that of the white-*mestizo* population; thus several Andean parishes went through a process of indianization that provided fertile ground for the ethnic mobilization that spread from north to south throughout the Andean region.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the proliferation of

<sup>21</sup> From 1962 to 1990, the rural population of predominantly indigenous regions increased by one third, raising the total growth rate of the highlands population, which only increased by one quarter (Zamosc 1995, 25). In addition, Hernán Carrasco (1993) observed in the 1974, 1982 and 1990 censuses that the proliferation of Quichua organizations coincided with a sharp drop in the *mestizo* population of the parish seats.

ethnically-based demands in the 1980s and 1990s can be seen to some extent as a response by (re)indianized areas to the disappointing economic results of land reform. As Tania Korovkin has pointed out, land reform did not meet the peasants' expectations. The result was the emergence of 'a tendency toward the development of autonomous organisations quite apart from the organisational network under the control of the government and, furthermore, a proliferation of conflicts between state-sponsored organisations and their supposed benefactors' (1993, 5). That tendency was strengthened by another side-effect of the dissolution of the *haciendas*: the proliferation of grassroots organizations with legal standing (especially communes and co-operatives), which enabled them to benefit from minimal services provided by the state (such as schools).<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the erosion of power and the gradual and partial loss of social control by the white-*mestizo* rural elites put an end to the existing vertical integration – in terms of domination and dependence – between towns (parish seats) and surrounding communities, 'bringing about a new kind of configuration with the development of a horizontal integration, economic and political in character, linking indigenous communities' (Pallares 2000, 298). This development supported the organizational process underlying the final assault on the local powers led by the indigenous movement since the second half of the 1990s.

A final thought concerning the magnitude of the land reforms. I think that the foregoing makes it very clear that their limitations in the Ecuadorian case – in terms of a real and effective redistribution of the most productive lands (from an economic perspective) – should not prevent us from acknowledging the sweeping transformation they brought about in the rural Andes. The reforms demolished an agrarian structure dating from the second half of the seventeenth century: we are talking about generation after generation of landowners who expected their power and position to continue unchallenged, and generation after generation of *huasipunguero* Indians whose lifeworld was circumscribed by the boundaries of the *hacienda*. From a historical perspective, therefore, the change the land reforms brought about was enormous. In a way – following Rodrigo Montoya's (1992) argument for the Peruvian case – it is as if the reforms had broken a huge dam (that of the landlords' age-old power) unleashing a flood with all sorts of repercussions – not only economic, but political, cultural, social and symbolic – whose magnitude and complexity we have yet to fully comprehend. The emergence, in remote corners of the rural world, of organizations such as CONAIE can hardly be understood without taking into account the deep significance of land reform and the changes it led to in the relationship between the state and the peasants (Petras and Veltmeyer 2003). In the Ecuadorian Andes, the end of the old *hacienda* system marked a turning point that served as the basis for the consolidation of a robust organizational structure

<sup>22</sup> Of all the communes and co-operatives founded in the highlands between 1911 and 1992, 39.4 per cent and 74.14 per cent, respectively, came into being in less than 20 years, between 1965 and 1984 (Zamosc 1995, 90–4).

rooted in the struggle for land, and later reinforced in the 1980s and 1990s by state, private and multilateral development agencies.

#### THE TRIUMPH OF NEOLIBERALISM: THE PRIVATIZATION, DISPERSION AND ETHNICIZATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In matters concerning rural areas and the agricultural sector, neoliberalism in Latin America developed through three main political processes: deregulation of the product and input markets as a result of trade opening and the associated theory of comparative advantage; liberalization of land markets<sup>23</sup> and the definitive replacement of the land reform paradigm by that of integral rural development (IRD) in the 1980s; and, in general, a reliance on a variety of limited-scale projects as the sole means of intervention. This is why rural development in the Ecuadorian Andes in the last two decades of the twentieth century was characterized by the end of the reformist cycle, the proliferation of NGOs (and their associated models of development) as the state and its public policy institutions withdrew, a tendency to frame agendas and priorities in ethnic terms, and parallel increases in land re-concentration and exclusion gaps.

##### *IRD and the End of the Reformist Cycle*

By the end of the 1970s, IRD was widely accepted as an alternative to land reform. This meant that piecemeal policies limited to particular groups of producers replaced the idea of a thorough transformation of the rural sector (Grindle 1986; Cloke and Little 1990), while at the same time, it opened the door to the privatization of interventions. In fact, because IRD entailed giving up the utopia of structural change in favour of projects with immediate and narrowly focused effects, it was, by its very nature, compatible with the framework of new institutional economics. In Ecuador, this spirit had been heralded by the *Ley de Fomento y Desarrollo Agropecuario* (Agricultural Support and Development Act) of 1979, an initial step back from the reformist process begun in 1964. This law gave rise to the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan) (1980–84), for which IRD became the key model (Barsky 1988, 282). The plan included 17 projects and created the *Subsistema de Desarrollo Rural Integral* (Integral Rural Development Subsystem): the *Secretaría de Desarrollo Rural Integral* (Department of Integral Rural Development) (SEDRI) and the corresponding executive units that would be responsible for getting everything under way (SEDRI 1983, 11–12). The overall results were rather meagre, as has been shown in various studies. Tania Korovkin emphasizes the way in which FODERUMA (*Fondo de Desarrollo Rural Marginal* [Marginal Rural Development

<sup>23</sup> That was, for instance, the spirit of the new agrarian legislation in Mexico (1992), Peru (1993), Ecuador (1994) and Bolivia (1996), which was promoted by neoliberal regimes in order to attract private investment to the agrarian sector, even at the cost of widening the gaps of exclusion experienced by the small peasants.

Fund]) was conceived as a technocratic surrogate for land reform. Theoretically, FODERUMA attempted to provide financial assistance to the poorest sectors of the peasantry; in practice, however, its funding restrictions made the whole exercise impracticable on a large scale (Korovkin 1997, 38). Research by Luciano Martínez and Alex Barril (1995) on PRONADER's (*Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural* [Rural Development National Programme]) more than twelve years into its operation shows similar results. Martínez Valle reached some devastating conclusions in relation to IRD projects in Ecuador:

Rural development becomes, in fact, an elitist policy that could make the middle classes and even the rural bourgeoisie feel quite at home in a context supposedly meant for the peasants. . . . The new legal framework that accompanies this process is similarly oriented.<sup>24</sup> The path towards agrarian capitalism has been rid of obstacles such as land reform, which did not allow market laws to work properly. Now with clear rules and, above all, guarantees for private property, it is possible to be not only efficient and competitive, but also 'democratic'. . . . But not everything has a happy ending in the heterogeneous rural world. There is . . . a huge mass of rural producers who will not participate in this proposal since they are consciously excluded from it: the rural poor. (1995, 128)

In any case, what I wish to underline here is not so much the tangible results of IRD projects as the undeniable fact that they became an alibi for dropping the question of land distribution, which had been a priority until the 1980s but still remains far from resolved now. In the name of rural development, and with the tacit assumption that the reformist cycle was over, practically all interventions avoided the land reform question. IRD projects, pioneers in the new economic conjuncture, did not even mention it, since it was regarded, either implicitly or explicitly, as out-dated, as out of keeping with the times. If we add to this the crisis of the 1980s and the state's reduced funding ability, it is easy to explain how these public projects were displaced as promoters of rural development by NGOs and financial institutions, which have proliferated and expanded under the umbrella of an economic adjustment that has progressively limited the state's power.

#### *The Privatization of Intervention in Rural Areas*

These proliferating agencies thus began to fill the gap left by the state: they became a connecting link in the 'aid chain' and helped consolidate new forms of co-optation and patronage (Sogge 2004). In this way, the late twentieth-century model of international co-operation, based to a great extent on NGO activity, emerged as the neoliberal reaction to the social policies of many Latin American countries (Picas 2001, 180). It is true that NGOs have been in the region for quite a long time, and in Ecuador some of the main ones were already there at the time

<sup>24</sup> He refers to the Agrarian Act of 1994, which sanctioned and liberalized property rights. See footnote 3.

of the land struggle. What is new is the massive presence of these organizations since the early 1980s. Data published by Jorge León (1998) are illustrative: almost three quarters (72.5 per cent) of all NGOs that were active in Ecuador in the twentieth century (up to 1995) appeared in the fifteen years between 1981 and 1994, which was parallel to the adjustment policies implemented since 1982. An element that has contributed to this development has been the recruitment of numerous local intellectuals and professionals who, in view of the collapse of the public sector and the impoverishment of the middle classes, found themselves obliged to search for jobs in the world of NGOs and international co-operation. In this way, NGOs have acted as a huge but subtle buffer against the effects of economic adjustment: in the case of those excluded from the model, by standing in for the state and undermining their revolutionary potential by turning them into recipients of aid;<sup>25</sup> in the case of experts and professionals, by providing a shelter from the storms occasioned by adjustment policies.

This sudden change of context also affected the old NGOs: they had to cope with a more or less traumatic process of redefinition of their priorities, their methods and the role they had to play on the regional stage. It should be noted, however, that this process could take place in spite of the code of ethics of the managers of local NGOs: international development agencies and international financial institutions normally define the main issues, terms, politically-correct orientations of the projects to be implemented, and even forms of supervision (when they are not themselves the supervisors). In this way, the political economy of neoliberalism required the old NGOs to rethink and redesign their relationships with the state, the market and the beneficiaries. This gave rise to a crisis of identity, legitimacy and institutional continuity (Chiriboga 1995; Bebbington 1997a, 1997b).<sup>26</sup> At present, to the extent that they prefer to attack the symptoms of poverty – with *ad hoc* and insufficient measures – rather than its structural causes, most of the private agencies in operation in Ecuador (and throughout Latin America in general) receive the largest part of their incomes from governmental and/or multilateral organizations from the North interested in the analgesic social effects of their interventions.

#### *Fragmentation of the Development Apparatus and Proliferation of Development Models*

The intervention paradigm represented by the NGO model is, paradoxically, an *anti-paradigm* of sorts or, if you prefer, a *non-paradigm*. In actual fact, there are as

<sup>25</sup> In the Andes, it is usual to come across important infrastructural projects such as irrigation channels that, through local NGOs, are a legacy of the developmentalist state and the IRDs of the first half of the 1980s. Their resumption by NGOs prevents the *horror vacui* that could have resulted from the withdrawal of the state, while at the same time new bonds between peasants and private promoters are being created. A good example of this are the irrigation projects of Patococha in Cañar (Martínez Valle 2002, 2003) and of Licto in Chimborazo (Bretón 2001, 182–97), both of which were taken over by CESA, an NGO.

<sup>26</sup> A good example of this is FEPP (see footnote 11), which finally succumbed to neoliberal globalization (Bretón 2003).



many rural intervention models as there are development agencies, and it is not difficult to come across peasant communities with an astonishing number of these agencies operating simultaneously. Apart from the resulting juxtaposition of so many tiny administrative bureaucracies, this has led to the overburdening of those peasants communities with different projects often conceived and implemented from opposing perspectives (agro-ecology, green revolution, organizational reinforcement, business empowerment and many others currently in fashion).<sup>27</sup> Such heterogeneity has made co-operation difficult, if only because of programmatic incompatibility. It also helped to put NGOs on the same level as any other service industry, since they have to compete in a market (that of international co-operation) in which financial resources are scarce in relation to the huge needs of the industry (development as conventionally understood); hence the intense competition between them for access to available resources, and the resulting rivalries (Nieto 2002). We should not forget the requirements of financial institutions, which generally impose efficiency criteria typical of capitalist enterprise on organizations originally oriented towards strictly social aims.

This fragmentation of the system and of interventionist approaches offers the depressing picture 'of a mirror broken in a thousand pieces that reflect, each from its own shape, the same disrupted image of development' (Paniagua 1992, 209). Because these organizations generally lack a holistic view of social reality, the world of NGOs resembles a multitudinous choir singing several melodies at once under the direction of many different conductors: a curious symphony (or cacophony) advancing in fits and starts with no clear aim and unable to converge into a common score that at least might allow them properly to assess their partial results in light of the whole. In the midst of this apparent heterogeneity there is what might be called a hidden agenda, promoted by the highest levels of the development system (basically, though not exclusively, the World Bank),<sup>28</sup> which is moving toward the ethnicization of rural development and its disassociation from any proposal that might question the basic mechanisms of neoliberal capitalist accumulation (land re-concentration among them). It is like a pendulum movement that has swung, in just a few years, from enthusiasm for

<sup>27</sup> Taking the Chimborazo province as a representative example, technicians of the CESA (1997, 86) recorded 35 such organizations between 1985 and 1996 in a single canton (Guamote). Similarly, in Cacha, a parish with an indigenous majority, FEPP staff identified 29 NGOs in operation by the end of 1989 (Bretón 2001, 168). However, the most remarkable case is the Riobamba canton, where CESA detected the presence of 60 NGOs in San Juan parish alone by that time (Bebbington et al. 1992, 194).

<sup>28</sup> In an outstanding study of the Kuna of Panama, Mónica Martínez looks at the way in which the entire institutional network surrounding the United Nations has successfully produced an official discourse based on the ethnicization and environmentalization of Indian demands. Furthermore, her work shows how, for the Kuna case, indigenous mediators have had to translate their demands into the audible and prefabricated language of the development system, and not the other way around (Martínez Mauri 2007). The similarities to the relationship between the World Bank and Quichua intellectuals from the Ecuadorian Andes are quite remarkable, as will be seen in the last part of this essay.

land reform at one extreme to postulations on essentialized identity at the other, always partial and taken up by indigenous organizations themselves. This movement has been consolidated thanks to a sort of two-pronged strategy in which the everyday practices of the majority of NGOs broke the ground and, having seen the results, the World Bank then turned it into a new model for dealing with rural poverty in the Andes, where the indigenous population is growing more and more impoverished and sub-proletarianized, and their organizational structures are – to a large extent as a consequence of this outside intervention – suffering from a serious crisis of representation.

### *The Ethnicization of Rural Development*

Since the 1980s, both the state (through IRD) and NGOs have actively recruited OSGs as partners in their projects. In the final analysis, the reason for this has to do with the fact that these organizations constitute manageable structures – neither very small (and irrelevant in terms of their impact) nor very large (which would dilute their results) – apparently well co-ordinated with the local grassroots organizations of which they are composed, and, judging by their leaders' rhetoric, exhibit all the virtues of the communitarianism stereotypically attributed to Andean peasants by well-meaning idealists.

In a previous study of the relationships between NGOs and indigenous organizations, based on a sample of 170 interventionist agencies with 405 active rural development projects at the end of the 1990s (Bretón 2001, 2002), I was able to corroborate the existence of a marked tendency to concentrate projects and investments in the most indigenous parishes of the sierra. Although rural poverty was widespread throughout the inter-Andean region (PNUD 1999), it looked as if, with some exceptions, the mostly Quichua areas were the main beneficiaries of development-oriented international co-operation. Understandably, therefore, the areas most often visited by NGOs were those with the largest indigenous population and the highest concentration of OSGs, in terms of both numbers and power. This study left no doubt about the causal nature of this relationship: the magnet-like effect of ethnicity on NGOs, which led to their concentration in predominantly Quichua areas, helped to reinforce rural organizations. We should not forget that this process was a result of the way development agencies worked, and led some World Bank researchers to conclude that one of the characteristics of indigenous peasantry was its wealth of social capital and, therefore, one of the Bank's priorities should be to foster it in order to empower and improve the living standards of an ethnically differentiated rural population (Bebbington and Carroll 2000; Carroll 2002, 2003).

Reality, however, is rather different from this rosy image of OSGs. We need more ethnographic research on the nature of these federations, on the complex network of relationships linking their leaders to the grass roots, and on the mechanisms of communication between those mediator-leaders and development agencies. For the moment, on the strength of my own fieldwork experience (Bretón 2001, 2005) and that of Luciano Martínez Valle (2006), we are in a

position to assert that: (1) a great many OSGs have come into being thanks to the active promotion and support by foreign institutions linked to development programmes, which means that the reasons for their existence are external and range from the implementation of productive projects to religious proselytism; (2) each OSG competes with other OSGs to retain and increase its 'clientele' (the grass roots), and this gives rise to struggles, disagreements, ruptures, schisms and conflicts; (3) their functional dependence on resources from the development apparatus has entailed the gradual replacement of a militant and politicized indigenous leadership by a different and much more technocratic leadership with no resemblance to the old organic intellectuals of the 1960s and the 1970s. In accordance with the style of their patrons, these new leaders have been transformed into professional mediators more interested in the type and scale of the projects to be implemented in their respective areas than in questioning the project-based model or the state's abdication of its social responsibilities. It is in this context, I believe, that we should situate the World Bank strategy to implement a macro-project in Ecuador based on a particular meaning of the notion of social capital that would channel the indigenous movement's demands towards objectives acceptable within the terms of the model.<sup>29</sup>

#### ETHNODEVELOPMENT AND ETHNOPHAGY: THE WORLD BANK AND THE PRODEPINE EXPERIMENT

Since the first half of the 1990s, the World Bank, alert to the impact of such events as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Rigoberta Menchú in 1992, has been paying renewed attention to indigenous populations.<sup>30</sup> It was within this framework of (apparent) respect for the development potential of indigenous cultures that the *Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador* (Development Project for Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Peoples) (PRODEPINE) came into being. It was publicized by the Bank as one of its most innovative initiatives for strengthening local organizations (social capital) and development with identity

<sup>29</sup> Beyond the theoretical debate on the concept of social capital, which I leave aside, it is worth pointing out that the Bank has supported a reductionist view of the concept, which is limited to the presence of organizations capable of co-ordinating collective action by grassroots organizations action in defence of their common interests. Support for these organizational forms – *structural social capital*, in the specialist literature – is seen as indispensable in order for the rural poor to have a leading role in processes of change. In conformity with the post-Washington Consensus philosophy, this conceptualization was chosen as an innovative paradigm in relation to development (Grootaert and Van Bastelaer 2001), setting the style and accounting for its broad acceptance at the end of the 1990s by all the important agencies, public and private. A positive interpretation of this process can be found in Bebbington et al. (2006). For a devastating critique, see Fine (2001a, 2001b).

<sup>30</sup> It is important not to lose sight of the trajectory of countries with deep indigenist roots, such as Mexico, which, under the influence of neoliberal models, went through an early re-adjustment of its official policies on this matter. Martínez Novo (2006) shows the origins of this transition – during the presidency of Salinas de Gortari – from indigenist approaches rooted in the old integrationist paradigms towards a neoliberal 'neo-indigenism' of sorts interested in the reinforcement of identity politics in a context in which ethnic difference entails discrimination.

(ethnodevelopment). Before looking at the dark side of its trajectory, we need to find answers to the two questions posed earlier: Why was the World Bank sensitive to a part – but only a part – of the Indians' demands? And why did it choose Ecuador as the site for the most innovative of its 'cultural otherness' development projects?

First of all, openness and sensitivity to ethnic demands constitutes a reaction to the vitality demonstrated by peasant-indigenous organizations at the beginning of the 1990s, a vitality grounded in their ability to bring together broad sectors of the population dissatisfied with and distrustful of traditional political parties in a context of economic adjustments and high social costs (Van Cott 2005). Deborah Yashar (2005) has called attention to the factors that, both in the Andes and in Mesoamerica, have shaped the politicization of ethnicity, stressing changes in citizenship regimes. From this perspective, ethnic movements emerged as political actors to a great extent as a result of the transition from a corporatist to a neoliberal regime, a regime that seriously threatened the enclaves of local autonomy achieved thanks to the interventionist state.<sup>31</sup> Although this is a necessary condition, it does not explain why we find these organizational structures in some countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico) but not in others (Peru). In addition, we need to analyse the interaction of two other variables, as we have shown for the Ecuadorian case: the existence of a political associational space capable of providing a real opportunity for organization, and the existence of trans-community networks whose reach extends beyond the local sphere.<sup>32</sup> The combined effect of these factors can explain, according to Yashar (2005), the ability of each movement to channel popular unrest in response to adjustment policies and to challenge political power.

At the continental level, there are at least two events that illustrate how powerful ethnic movements have become. One is the second big uprising under the auspices of CONAIE in 1994, which obliged the President of the Republic himself (at that time, Durán-Ballén) to negotiate the content of the new Agrarian Law with indigenous leaders, a key element of the neoliberal legal machinery (see footnote 3). The other is the neo-Zapatist insurrection in Chiapas (Mexico), which exposed the limits and contradictions of IMF orthodoxy. In both cases it became very clear how variables treated as mere *externalities* in neoliberal dogma – social costs – could become *internalities* capable of disrupting the 'free market'.

<sup>31</sup> We should remember that, despite its ambivalent results, land reform provided a degree of autonomy for peasant-indigenous communities. The neoliberal regime, by contrast, reduced that autonomy, limiting access to state resources and dismantling the protectionist apparatus (Yashar 2005, 60–8).

<sup>32</sup> These two factors shed light on the Peruvian Andes, where, unlike Ecuador and Bolivia, there is no politically mature indigenous movement. In Peru, authoritarianism and civil war constituted major obstacles to the formation of peasant and indigenous organizations: 'The violent civil war, in particular, closed off avenues for freedom of organization and expression. Moreover, it destroyed existing organizations and obstructed the formation of trans-community networks that have proved so important elsewhere. In this context, sustained regional and national indigenous organizing has proved elusive in all but some isolated locations in the Peruvian Amazon' (Yashar 2005, 79).

Some of the loose ends of the model had to be rethought so that grassroots demands could be properly neutralized and re-channelled. Quite plausibly, Ecuador looked like an ideal laboratory, a small country of great geopolitical importance for the United States (which was about to initiate the Colombia Plan) that had, in those days, one of the most powerful Indian movements in the region, a potentially destabilizing element that, furthermore, stood in the way of full implementation of economic adjustments with high social costs.

A crucial issue in evaluating PRODEPINE's political bias is its chronology: it was in operation between 1998 and 2004, but it was in 1995 (the year after the events described above) that it began to emerge as an experimental response of sorts from the neoliberal financial establishment to the threat posed by indigenous populations. It was an answer framed in terms of what has been defined by some as *neoliberal multiculturalism* (Díaz-Polanco 2006),<sup>33</sup> a recurrent three-way pattern of interaction between neoliberal regimes and indianist movements: (1) acceptance and support – sometimes through constitutional reform – of certain cultural demands (the right of peoples and nationalities to recognition and visualization of their difference);<sup>34</sup> (2) leaving aside (or simply ignoring) policies that might question the logic of the accumulation model; and (3) simultaneously developing the assistance model of intervention in indigenous communities. This approach, prevalent in recent decades, has the apparent virtue of softening the social costs of neoliberalism while at the same time directing the carefully manipulated expectations of indigenous leaders (and those they represent) towards the only possible space for negotiation – the number of projects to be implemented and the amount of resources to be distributed – and addressing the previously neglected issue of indigenous cultural rights. The paradox in this acceptance of multiculturalism is that, on the one hand, it acknowledges and institutionalizes cultural otherness while, on the other, it glosses over anything that might challenge the hegemony of orthodox neoliberalism, thus configuring what Charles Hale (2004) has aptly defined as the ideal of the 'indio permitido': the accepted Indian.

The big novelty of PRODEPINE was its preference for self-management. It limited its role to consulting and funding, allowing OSGs to supervise and control activities on the ground. The purpose was to make those organizations capable of determining the priorities of their affiliated communities, of setting-up action profiles and even hiring experts, always in consultation with the project's bureaucratic-administrative infrastructure. This infrastructure had been constituted with the aim of providing the OSGs with the necessary resources to implement local development plans (210 in all, normally at the parish level) based on preliminary participatory needs assessments (Larreameydy and Uquillas

<sup>33</sup> On the neoliberal cultural project and its use of identity politics in Latin America, see Assies (2000), Díaz-Polanco (2005), Hale (2002) and Martínez Novo (2006) among others.

<sup>34</sup> A good comparative synthesis of the progress in this area in countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela can be found in Van Cott (2004).

2001; PROPEDINE 2002). In the Andes, that meant the start of 379 specific subprojects run by 121 indigenous organizations (Table 2).<sup>35</sup>

Beyond the figures, however, a detailed analysis of the way in which investments were channelled allows us to understand the real significance of PRODEPINE in terms of its four main characteristics: its day-to-day practice was more conformist than innovative; its managers and evaluators never questioned the quality of the 'social capital' it generated; its implementation contributed to intensified division and fragmentation of the Andean peasantry on the basis of identity criteria; and lastly, it was an effective conveyor-belt for the assistance model, with all the social and political limitations and disadvantages this entails.

*PRODEPINE was More Conformist than Innovative*

PRODEPINE grew out of the rich soil of the massive presence of development institutions in the indigenous-peasant sphere over decades, feeding on their accumulated experience. Its purpose was to perpetuate the prevailing model of donor–recipient relationships, even though it tried to minimize the role of intermediaries (such as NGOs) and centralize decision-making power in the hands of a small nucleus of qualified indigenous leaders, who were in charge of the national management of the project. PRODEPINE tended to concentrate on the places that had previously been more frequently visited by public and, especially, private development agencies. The reason for this, as noted above, is that many of these agencies had focused their priorities on the consolidation of an organizational framework. Even though the results achieved by these agencies in raising the living standards of the rural population and the efficacy of the projects were rather meagre – hence the persistence of peasant-indigenous poverty and indigence (Larrea and Montenegro 2006) – strenuous efforts were made to build up organizational structures that would play the role of partner and interlocutor in development actions. For more than 25 years, OSGs were the privileged interlocutors from the NGOs' perspective and, therefore, PRODEPINE found more and better partners in the regions that had already been the NGOs' 'beneficiaries'.

If the relational model between OSGs and NGOs can be characterized as neo-indigenist – since it was the result of a power relationship that cemented certain organizational schemes in place despite the intentions of many agencies – PRODEPINE's involvement only intensified this tendency, making local leaders responsible for interventions on the ground and prominent indigenous intellectuals for national management. What is really surprising, however, is that PRODEPINE served to demonstrate that it is possible to operate in this fashion while

<sup>35</sup> In 1999 their resources included US\$25 million contributed by the World Bank and US\$15 million by the International Fund for Agrarian Development (both payments were made at the expense of the Ecuadorian foreign debt), plus US\$10 million paid by the state and, to a much lesser extent, community labour provided by the recipient indigenous organizations for construction projects (Uquillas 2002).

Table 2. Rural population, NGO projects and PRODEPINE subprojects in the Andean provinces

Province	Rural population 2001 census					NGO 1999		PRODEPINE implementation 1998–2003		
	Total population	Indigenous population	% Indigenous	Total poor population*	% poor	Projects	%	Organizations	Sub-projects	Total investment (US\$)
Azuay	286,952	16,731	5.8	234,629	81.8	55	13.6	3	8	150,972
Bolívar	126,102	38,088	30.2	114,418	90.7	31	7.7	14	32	528,618
Cañar	131,380	31,285	23.8	111,305	84.7	24	5.9	10	33	457,766
Carchi	80,787	2,937	3.6	65,302	80.8	15	3.7	3	9	191,976
Chimborazo	245,852	145,729	59.3	227,910	92.7	119	29.4	37	120	2,185,846
Cotopaxi	255,965	81,187	31.7	231,573	90.5	23	5.7	16	45	940,297
Imbabura	171,830	75,296	43.8	141,080	82.1	34	8.4	14	44	1,138,513
Loja	221,522	11,086	5.0	204,179	92.2	64	15.8	2	9	113,911
Pichincha	674,502	47,418	7.0	414,067	61.4	24	5.9	8	40	881,147
Tungurahua	252,707	60,120	23.8	217,392	86.0	16	4.0	14	39	723,825
Total	2,447,599	509,877	20.8	1,961,855	80.2	405	100.0	121	379	7,312,871

\* Rural population with unmet basic needs (see SIISE 2003).

Source: SIISE (2003), Fundación Alternativa (1999) and data provided by PRODEPINE Archives.

bypassing NGOs completely, establishing direct relationships between the executive infrastructure created by the World Bank in the country and the middle tier of the indigenous organizational structure (OSGs), treated not as passive recipients but as active participants and decision-makers.<sup>36</sup>

Table 2 offers some provincial data on the indigenous population, rural population with unmet basic needs, rural development projects launched by NGOs and concentration of PRODEPINE activities. As expected, given PRODEPINE's ethnicist orientation, there is a high correlation between the amount of resources invested in subprojects, their number, the number of executive entities (organizations) and the proportion of indigenous population. This aspect is particularly prominent in Chimborazo, Cotopaxi and Imbabura, the three leading provinces in terms of the total number of OSGs, of organizations and of subprojects.<sup>37</sup> When we look at rural poverty, however, the picture changes. The paradigmatic case is that of Chimborazo, the leading province in terms of investments, subprojects, partner organizations and NGO presence, but fourth in the percentage of the population with unmet basic needs. Something similar happens in Imbabura, which occupies a position between second and fourth place in all categories except that of poverty, where it is in seventh place. Pichincha, with relatively few executive entities, is the fourth in investments and subprojects, fifth in indigenous population and first in the absolute number of poor inhabitants, and yet NGOs have not been very generous there, leaving it in a rather modest seventh place. The situation in Carchi looks more coherent. It is the province with the lowest absolute number and smallest percentage of indigenous population, the lowest level of rural poverty, and the fewest NGOs, and it is one of the least favoured by PRODEPINE. By contrast, the provinces of Azuay and Loja have the worst results in terms of PRODEPINE investment and it has few executive entities, and yet Azuay is the second province in terms of unmet basic needs and the third in NGO interventions.

#### *PRODEPINE Never Questions the Quality of the Social Capital Generated*

It is certainly true that PRODEPINE helped to improve OSGs, but we should not forget that many of these organizations are under the control of local indigenous elites able to redistribute resources among their client communities,

<sup>36</sup> In terms of the internal logic of the model, it is important to dispense with the intermediary role of NGOs. We should not forget that, beyond the limits and contradictions characteristic of the work done by these development organizations, in the wake of the crisis of traditional forms of political representation, NGOs have absorbed a substantial part of the left. These militant sectors strongly supported the training of leaders whose ideology, though moderated by the passage of time, continues to be a feature of many indigenous and peasant organizations. The guiding principle behind development practices such as those fostered by PRODEPINE, which create ad-hoc structures to facilitate the direct transfer of resources from the centres of power (in this case, the World Bank) to beneficiary organizations, appears to be taking advantage of the demobilizing effects of the assistance model while simultaneously neutralizing what little remains of the left.

<sup>37</sup> These relationships are more evident at the cantonal level. For an exhaustive analysis, see Bretón (2005).



at their own discretion. In any case, what is clear is that PRODEPINE helped to strengthen the second-tier federations, whatever their characteristics, in the name of a hypothetical concentration of social capital. The data show that PRODEPINE was a stimulus for the creation of OSGs in the sierra provinces – from 141 in 1998 to 164 in 2002 (Coronel 1998; Larrea et al. 2002) – and consequently for the privileging of a mediating role for this type of organization in relationships with the development apparatus. From the indigenous point of view, the proliferation of OSGs should be seen as a strategy for coming to terms with the rules of a game in which the local population has no power and is played out in a macro-context detrimental to peasant economies: the only possibility left for gaining access to foreign resources is the constitution of second-tier organizations and, all too often, the fragmentation of those already in existence.

These OSGs are, as noted above, heterogeneous and controversial in nature. Patron–client relationships between the leadership and the grass roots are quite common. It is important to remember that most of the leaders come from the most privileged strata of the Quichua peasantry: those who were able to reap the benefits of land reform, and the IRD projects of the 1980s, and have gained the most from interventions by NGO and multilateral finance institutions since the 1980s. These are the sectors of Quichua society best positioned to be successful interlocutors of development agencies. They control the levers of power and make the decisions in the OSGs, and have profited handsomely from PRODEPINE interventions, which placed the management of substantial resources in their hands.

#### *PRODEPINE Intensifies the Fragmentation of the Andean Peasantry*

PRODEPINE contributed to the division between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, indigenes and *mestizos*, and made it difficult to bridge these differences. This took place in a context of ongoing economic crisis in rural areas, which intensified competition and discord. Let us think for a moment about the consequences for the already poverty-stricken Andean peasant economies of an Ecuadorian national economy pegged to the US dollar since 2000. It is not difficult to imagine the effects of this situation on peasant family farms, under pressure to sell cheaper and cheaper, to buy dearer and dearer, and finding it difficult even to sell some of their labour power on a part-time basis in low-wage labour markets. Consequently, the World Bank strategy has been to fragment social actors according to their ethnic identity: indigenes could enjoy the benefits of PRODEPINE, while the non-indigenous rural population could take shelter under the protective umbrella of PROLOCAL (*Proyecto de Desarrollo Local Sostenido*, [Sustained Local Development Project]), an initiative in operation since 2001 (Donoso-Clark 2003). Throughout the Andean parishes there was a proliferation of rural development initiatives operating in isolation from each other, as if it were not possible to develop a common agenda for the peasantry of the highlands, irrespective of their collective identities, in order to deal with the complex conjuncture of the turn of the century.

This situation is all the more contradictory because the fragmented actors carry out their activities in the same territory: indigenes, dispersed in the higher plots of land, and the others (white-*mestizo* peasants), near the main parishes and cantonal centres. As a result, it is possible to find a situation in which a management plan for a section of a valley or a micro-basin takes the form of numerous small projects unconnected to interventions focused on other sectors of the same agro-ecosystem since, in accordance with this paradigm, hypothetical class allies should be grouped together following essentialized culturalist parameters.<sup>38</sup>

*PRODEPINE is an Effective Conveyor Belt for the Assistance Model*

PRODEPINE set the limits for the indigenous organizations' demands in relation to the number and cost of subprojects, and became a key tool in a neo-indigenist and ethnophagous strategy of a neo-colonial character.<sup>39</sup> From an economic point of view, the viability of the assistance model should be questioned in a context in which it cannot affect macro-level policies of a structural nature. And let us not forget that, like so many other experiments in rural development, the subprojects tended to take an unrealistic view of the conditions of production and reproduction on small-scale holdings, favouring an exclusively agrarian image of the Andean milieu that has very little to do with the 'new rurality' that has been taking shape over the last few decades (Martínez Valle 2003, 2004). Furthermore, local initiatives (underwritten in part by community labour) were often, in the end, appropriated by peasant elites with management skills and the ability to take on debt (Bretón 2005, 80).

In my view, however, what is most worthy of note is the political effect of the assistance model, which is the kind of political anaesthesia it produces. For quite some time, PRODEPINE has succeeded in relocating the battlefield of the indigenous movement to the number, cost and nature of the subprojects to be implemented, thus limiting any long-term political transformation. It contributed to the neutralization of their potential for transformation through the de-ideologization and institutionalization of the leadership. The assistance model thus became the only negotiating tool available to impoverished and internally

<sup>38</sup> I am aware that this is a rather crude description. Although it reflects what usually happens, it should be taken as an illustration of a complex reality that challenges the strategy of fragmenting producers according to their ethnic identity. We need more systematic studies of PROLOCAL, its areas of intervention and the results it has produced to offer an improved level of analytical nuance.

<sup>39</sup> Díaz-Polanco (1997) makes use of the expression 'ethnophagous indigenism' for the Mexican case. Since in Latin America the term 'indigenism' is closely related to policies oriented toward indigenous populations during the developmentalist period, I prefer to speak of *ethnophagous neo-indigenism* to refer to the situation resulting from neoliberalism: the articulation of a mechanism for intervention in which, by contrast with the former context, the leaders of ethnic groups often come to form part of the development apparatus and manage an important part of the resources intended for their communities. Given the nature of PROPEDINE, it seems appropriate to describe it as neo-colonial: a project largely conceived in World Bank terms, supported by foreign debt, an icon of the World Bank's development policies for indigenous populations, implemented with the approval and participation of ethnic organizations' local and national elites, evaluated by the World Bank, and outside the state's control.

disorganized indigenous communities with meagre future prospects. And that is the real reason why the World Bank's panegyrists see PRODEPINE as an unequivocal success (Uquillas and Van Nieuwkoop 2006).

## FINAL THOUGHTS

In these pages I have attempted to show how the ethnicization of rural development emerged in the Ecuadorian Andes. In little more than three decades, this neoliberal process has led to: (a) the neglect of structural issues, (b) a complete privatization (via NGOs) and/or externalization (via the World Bank) of interventions, and (c) a near-exclusive focus on the indigenous population. Let me conclude with four open-ended thoughts on some of the implications of these processes.

First, the ethnicization of the land question led the development apparatus to concentrate effort and resources in the Andean area. This is understandable, since most of the land struggle took place there during the reformist cycle, and after land reform more effort was expended there to launch projects with the aim of making peasant-indigenous communities viable in the context of a more open and interconnected national economy. However, this emphasis on ethnic demands has eclipsed processes taking place simultaneously in other regions of the country. Especially after the 1994 Agrarian Law, and perhaps in response to the dollarization of the Ecuadorian economy in 2000, land re-concentration and peasant expropriation have accelerated rapidly and in ways imperceptible to co-operation agencies.<sup>40</sup> Although the concentration of wealth and the sub-proletarianization of the indigenous population are especially serious in the floricultural enclaves of the sierra, this is not where the highest land concentration indexes can be found. The new oligarchs are not attracted to the highlands, which are heavily overexploited and suffering from serious problems of erosion and land degradation, and a permanent potential target of the development apparatus. The real land question has been silently moved from the foot of the Andes to the tropical plains of the coast, to the unlimited expansion of banana companies and the enlargement of the agro-export business empires where the order of the day is job insecurity, repression of any attempt to unionize workers, widespread use of child labour and the formation of a real *lumpen proletariat* (often with class consciousness but labouring under a brutal regime of flexible production and arbitrary hiring and firing). This is taking place in the complete absence of NGOs or multilateral development organizations, and with the tacit consent of the authorities. Luciano Martínez Valle's pioneering research on this

<sup>40</sup> In 2000, as Table 1 shows, 2.32 per cent of units (those with more than 100 hectares) accounted for almost 42.6 per cent of arable land. At the same time, small land holdings have been even further fragmented. The number of units smaller than 5 hectares has increased by 188,432, and their average size has been reduced from 1.55 hectares in 1974 to 1.44 hectares in 2000. In 2000, the agrarian structures still had a Gini index of 0.8, practically the same as in 1974 (Martínez Valle 2006, 108).

topic (2003, 2007)<sup>41</sup> depicts a level of exploitation and insecurity at least as extreme as the conditions that justified the land reform, which put an end to the outrages perpetrated by the *hacienda* system in the Andes.

Second, the ethnicization of the indigenous movement has prioritized culture and identity politics at the expense of the class-based peasant agenda still very much alive in the mid-1990s, thus hindering the formation of alliances between indigenous groups and other sectors of society. The struggle for ethnic citizenship – which, needless to say, is absolutely legitimate – has overshadowed attempts to bring about structural change, while at the same time the assistance model has been gathering momentum and limiting the scope of the indigenous movement. Little by little, thanks to the glittering array of development projects offered by the international co-operation agencies, the old indigenous organic intellectuals formed in the rough-and-tumble of the land struggle were replaced by, or turned into, real professional mediators; in a way, they have exchanged militant politics for access to the power mechanisms of neoliberal neo-indigenism. To this we should add another perverse consequence of the assistance model: the fragmentation of the indigenist organizational structure and the proliferation of local leaderships and patron–client relations, with their well-known effects. These effects include the increasingly rapid internal differentiation between a minority of indigenous technocrats and intellectuals settled in the cities and bureaucratic-managerial centres of the neo-indigenist apparatus (more or less well entrenched in the local power structures or in the second-tier organizations, waiting to move further up whenever they see an opportunity), and a marginalized majority whose aspirations have less and less to do with the rhetoric of their (alleged) leaders and representatives. I believe that the indigenous candidates' meagre electoral results of 2006 and the massive support received by the populist Gutiérrez in the predominantly Quichua parishes should be interpreted in this light (Báez and Bretón 2006). A plausible result is the emergence, sooner or later, of class tensions within the heterogeneous mix included in the reductionist category of 'the indigenous'.

Third, it is surprising to see how many points of contact there are between the paradigms currently embraced by the development apparatus, exquisitely respectful of indigenous cultures as a potential source of empowerment, and the old modernization theories in vogue until the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> The fundamental difference is that, in the modernization paradigm, their 'culture' (always framed as 'traditional') was seen as the obstacle that blocked the way towards 'modernity', while in the contemporary version of this argument, the cultural particularities of indigenous societies are seen as comparative advantages that allow these societies to participate successfully in neoliberal globalization: high levels of social capital and the possibilities of ethnodevelopment as a springboard for takeoff. Other considerations aside, whether we see 'indigenous culture' (whatever

<sup>41</sup> See also Striffler's detailed monograph (2002) on the struggle to organize of the United Fruit Company workers during the period from 1900 to 1995.

<sup>42</sup> See the comparative study of Ecuador and Bolivia by Andolina et al. (2005).

that means) as an obstacle or as a springboard, both of these essentialist and static perspectives have a common denominator: they do not deal with the structural problems that account for the persistence of rural poverty in Latin America.<sup>43</sup> Classical modernization theories espoused a pre-reformist (even anti-reformist) paradigm that attempted to bring the benefits of development to the rural population without a transformation of the agrarian and power structures. In the current framework of organizational reinforcement, social capital and ethnodevelopment, what we have are post-reformist recipes insensitive to the process of land re-concentration and the marginalization to which neoliberalism has condemned small producers.

Fourth, it was a cause for hope that in June 2005, by a narrow margin of votes following a tumultuous meeting, CONAIE refused to continue with the second phase of PRODEPINE. A short-lived relief, perhaps, if the deeper issues that could rescue peasant areas from their bleak future are not properly confronted. On this, it would be advisable to address the need for new and updated land reform; equally, the role of the state and public policies should be redefined, and supranational integration strategically supported.<sup>44</sup> It is important to break with the assistance model imposed on the rural development agenda. Rural development should have never been an end in itself, it should have been presented for what it really is and can accomplish: a partial cure, insufficient but necessary perhaps for the time being, at least as long as the substantive issues of the rural Andes remain unresolved. It is immoral to allow the agony of the highlands domestic economies to continue unabated while not far from there, in the subtropical zone, landlords amass fortunes, support presidential campaigns (or become candidates themselves), and shamelessly indulge in flag-waving populist discourse.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> On this issue, see the insightful article by Kay (2006).

<sup>44</sup> Rethinking land reform today means, obviously, imagining it in terms of parameters very different from those of the 1960s and 1970s. It might be the case that, for instance, access to land – a key question in the original debate over land reform – is no more important than access to credit, markets and efficient and sustainable technologies. Similarly, we should think carefully about the possibility (and desirability) of creating spaces of regional integration capable of ensuring market niches for small producers. Insight into these issues can be found in a recent interview with Cristóbal Kay (Bretón 2007).

<sup>45</sup> See De la Torre (2006).

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