



**Conference**  
**ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?**  
**PARADIGM REVIEW BY CSOs AS**  
**DEVELOPMENT ACTORS**

Prague, Czech Republic, 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

**Thematic working group with Chico Whitaker**

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Development in South America

Paulo Freire began a process of understanding education differently: learning is a mutual process. The idea is that people make the change. This idea of horizontal relations spread.

In Brazil: Catholic Church has a vital role to build small groups who are active and this gave rise to movements where people can stand up and fight for their rights. Some movements developed into parties. But electing a president does not bring democracy – Latin America is just learning this.

Now family stipendium (2\$/day) was introduced: it is changing the life of the very poor but it isn't changing the system: the bank system is still earning a lot & peasants don't have the possibility to cultivate their lands. The richest and the lowest did and will elect Lula in the future too but the middle class only partly supports him.

Every country in Latin America is different, but from a global point of view, their politicians were elected so there is no dictatorship any more. BUT they are not able to change. It is only the civil society that can change the paradigm, it has to be independent and autonomous from the government.

The Lula government is not like other left governments in Latin America (Chavez, Morales). In order to grow, lots of neoliberal policies have been introduced. So to change the model of development is really difficult (energy, agriculture for export, biofuels, public services, etc.).

Lula: giving little pieces to people to calm them down. Chavez is the opposite: nationalising everything, giving people good salaries. There are interesting questions to be answered here: has the little pieces calmed the Brazilian civil society down? Is the Chavez model a good model for development?

There is no model. The civil society must be autonomous and should not receive much help from the government. Our biggest movement in Brazil is divided due to the government. Generally, the civil society declined after Lula was elected. Leaders of social movements left

for parties. Before the 2<sup>nd</sup> election some movements said ‘no’ to this and decided to go against him but as there is no history of that and the movement won’t be able to grow, he is probably going to be elected again. Executive & legislative bodies were always (the power is with the congress not with the president) connected. In order to govern you have to have majority. They buy people (deputies, etc.) to have the majority. It is a big question: why we aren’t happy with Lula in Brazil? Change of the law is taking place now in order not to be able to get elected as a politician if you have a criminal record (now it’s very easy to bribe them).

### Questions & Chico’s answers:

- Power spoils people. Is the way forward to maintain civil society and development agenda will come out from the civil society? Have we just become the tail end of donor governments to maintain the status quo?
  - What I am saying is to do this and that. You need a relation with the government and you have to put more and more strength to the other leg. We are inside the system of greed so there is a long way to go.
- What can we learn from the example of Brazil in Europe?
  - You have much more possibility to mobilise the civil society. You can find ways to be autonomous. You must network and you need to be linked. EU finances lots of NGO work. The criteria of the EU changed the network. You are imprisoned in this system. That is why fighting for autonomy is vital. Not fighting against government. They give money for concrete things but not for thinking. Results and indicators count according to their agenda. They are „new governmental organisations.”
- I am very critical of development organizations in Europe (maintain their jobs, etc.), whereas Brazilian movement is making a change in themselves. You talked about wealth earlier: paper, goals, etc. Wealth doesn’t mean people, just, etc. in Europe. We should focus on this in Europe, too.
  - Making a change in ourselves is hard. It is building wisdom. The question is how to change?
- *Comment from the audience:* We are not representing movements. NGOs, especially in Eastern Europe are different from Latin American movements – there is going to be a different conference here about that.
- There is a rift between the labour movement and environmental groups. How to change that? Another rift: people who want to grab power even by violent means and change the world with revolution vs. those type of people who want a change that they are advocating: small steps, thinking about alternatives.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> rift: in the World Social Forum we have two rules: no violence and no neo-liberalism. These are the only principles. Everybody else can come. So they are involved. Consensus is the goal, no votes. It is difficult because acceptance is in the core. Voting is about leaving. Consensus is about staying. Voting is to identify errors. It is not about fighting, it is about hearing. Sometimes decisions are postponed for months. 1<sup>st</sup> question: labour strikes: fighting for richness, they are unionists, not fighting to change the system. Environmentalists fight to change the system, the model. With capitalism there is no solution for the



environmentalists. If unionists fight to change the way of production, that is different and it is becoming possible. I am looking forward to seeing unions to have a strike to change the way of production.

- *Comment from the audience:* We are learning how to have a different connection with decision-makers in Europe, too; climate change is bringing another opportunity to learn. Being proactive, involved in immigration, climate change debate, building movements.
- Is human rights only a rhetoric for you?
  - In Brazil it was very important in dictatorship. We organized many groups to fight against torture. Development is about everybody having their rights. Human rights fought a long way to spread, they are trying to enlarge what we mean by it but it is difficult because in people's mind they only mean political human rights.
- You are saying that climate change is something that you cannot deal with in a capitalist system but the system is already trying to deal with it; so why are you saying that it is impossible?
  - What is happening is more or less greenwashing. It doesn't change the system and way of thinking to minimize energy consumption.
- You are talking about changing the minds of the people. How to do this? This is, I feel, a bit against human nature, so are you talking about new human beings?
  - You must enter in a process where more people have links with each other, where you have many small supportive communities. You cannot be alone in it. It is a process, a social process.
- It is easy to build up a movement when you are fighting against something but it is much more difficult to do this for something. I like the idea of consensus and that there is no one truth and a leader. The question is how to forget about the "one model"?
  - Now there is a new enemy: logics of capitalism and the man that works according to that. Experience with transparency can spread. Transparency can spread and it is very vital in this process.

Thanks for strengthening our hopes.

*Minutes: Réka Hunyadi, Védegyűlés*