

# LATIN AMERICA: Social Movements Fight Back

A Radical Activist Network Conference, with support from War on Want

1pm	Welcome and Introduction	
1.15pm	<b>Film: Bolivia Not for Sale</b>	
1.50pm	<b>Venezuela: Creating Social Movements from above?</b> With Andy Higginbottom and Jorge Martin Room 3b	<b>Bolivia's Social Movements after Morales' victory</b> With Oscar Olivera and Nick Buxton Upper Hall
3.15pm	Break	
3.45pm	<b>Occupy, Resist, Produce! Brazil's Landless Movement</b> With Sue Branford and Lies Craeynest Room 3b	<b>Mexico: Where now for the Zapatistas?</b> With Paul Chatterton Upper Hall
5.15pm	Break	
5.30pm	<b>Another World is Possible: Social Movements and Left Governments in Latin America</b> With Oscar Olivera and Hilary Wainwright, Upper Hall	
7pm	Close	

## Venezuela: Creating Social Movements from above?

Since Hugo Chavez was elected President of Venezuela in 1998, the country has seen huge advances in education and healthcare and moves to empower the country's poor. Is this process simply being driven from above by the Chavez government? How are social movements involved, and what are the dynamics of the Bolivarian revolution?

## Bolivia's Social Movements after Morales' victory

Evo Morales' recent move to partially take back control of the country's gas reserves and the People's Trade Agreement he signed with Venezuela and Cuba have made Morales seem like an uncompromising radical to the outside world. Yet a fierce debate is going on inside the social movements who were partly responsible for his victory: How far should they support a Morales government in compromises with the country's elite, and at what point do they hit the streets again?

## Occupy, Resist, Produce! Brazil's Landless Movement

The Movimento Sem Terra (MST) is Latin America's largest social movement, organising landless rural workers and urban slum dwellers to occupy and cultivate unused land. It has settled over 580,000 families, runs schools on the settlements, and is now developing ecological agriculture. So how does the MST work, and what can we learn from its innovative and highly effective tactics?

## Mexico: Where now for the Zapatistas?

The 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, an indigenous province in southern Mexico, was a key staging post in the development of the global anti-capitalist movement. Unlike many resistance groups though, the Zapatistas specifically said that they didn't want to take power. More recently the movement has toured Mexico seeking a dialogue with other social movements, NGOs and leftist organisations. What has been the outcome of this process, and have the Zapatistas shown that it's possible to 'change the world without taking power'?

## Another World Is Possible: Social Movements and Left Governments in Latin America

The election of Evo Morales in Bolivia is just one of the indicators of a general shift to the left in Latin American elections. Yet from the occupied factories in Argentina to Bolivia's *cocaleros*, social movements have been a driving force of this 'left turn'. What should the relationship between social movements and left governments be, and what can we learn from Latin America about making 'another world' possible?

## About the Speakers

### Oscar Olivera

Oscar is the executive secretary of the Cochabamba Federation of Factory Workers and spokesperson for the Coalition in Defense of Water and Life, known as La Coordinadora. The Coordinadora was at the forefront of a popular uprising in Cochabamba in 2000 against US multinational Bechtel who had taken over their water systems as an IMF-imposed condition for debt relief. As part of a corruptly-negotiated deal Bechtel not only raised water rates sky-high, but also was able to take over communally-constructed and managed water supplies run for centuries by its people. The Coordinadora demanded that their water system should stay under local public control. Thousand of citizens protested for weeks. The Bolivian army killed one, injured hundreds and arrested several Coalition leaders. Olivera, who had been forced into hiding, emerged to negotiate with the government.

In April 2000, la Coordinadora won its demands when the government turned over control of the city's water system to the organization and cancelled the privatization contract. La Coordinadora achieved the first major victory against the global trend of privatizing water resources sparking off similar struggles including in Uruguay where campaigners inspired by Cochabamba's fight secured a referendum victory that changed the Constitution to say that water was a public right and could not be privatised. The victory also gave new energy to Bolivia's dynamic social movements who in a series of nationwide struggles overthrew two Presidents in 2003 and 2005, and helped secure a resounding victory for Bolivia's first ever indigenous President, Evo Morales in December 2005. However the Coordinadora and many of Bolivia's social movements continue to be fiercely independent of the Government and have vowed to hold it to account if it does not deliver its commitments to reverse neo-liberalism and develop a more inclusive and just nation. Olivera continues also to head La Coordinadora's work to develop a water system that relies neither on corrupt government management nor on transnational corporations. >> [www.boliviasec.org.uk](http://www.boliviasec.org.uk)

### Hilary Wainwright

Hilary is the co-editor of Red Pepper magazine and the Director of the Transnational Institute's New Politics project. She has written extensively about the relationship between social movements and left parties, particularly in Europe and Latin America, and in her book 'Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy', examined the Brazilian Workers Party's involvement in Participatory Budgeting. >> [www.redpepper.org.uk](http://www.redpepper.org.uk)

### Sue Branford

Sue is currently the Chair of the Latin America Bureau and has a long association with War on Want. She is a journalist who specialises in Latin America, and has written for the Guardian, BBC and New Statesman. Her 2002 book 'Cutting the Wire: The story of Brazil's landless movement' (co-authored with Jan Rocha) is a major examination of the history, politics and practice of the Movimento Sem Terra. >> [www.lab.org.uk](http://www.lab.org.uk)

### Lies Craeynest

Lies is Senior Programmes Officer at War on Want, a radical anti-poverty charity whose international programmes focus on solidarity with social movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. >> [www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org)

### Nick Buxton

Nick Buxton is a British activist currently based in La Paz, Bolivia, working alongside social movements in their struggles against water privatisation and free trade agreements. >> [www.boliviasolidarity.org](http://www.boliviasolidarity.org)

### Andy Higginbottom

Andy is the secretary of the Colombia Solidarity Campaign and editor of Frontline Latin America, a quarterly newspaper which focuses on Latin American social movements and their struggles against neo-liberalism and imperialism in the continent. >> [www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk](http://www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk)

### Paul Chatterton

Paul is a member of Kiptik, the Zapatista solidarity organisation in Britain, and recently spent six months living in Chiapas with the autonomous communities. >> [www.kiptik.buz.org](http://www.kiptik.buz.org)

### Jorge Martin

Jorge is the International Secretary of Hands Off Venezuela, an organisation which undertakes international solidarity work with the Bolivarian Revolution. >> [www.handsoffvenezuela.org](http://www.handsoffvenezuela.org)