Out of the Plaza and into the Office:
Social Movement Leaders in the PRD

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Former social movement activists play a key role within the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), yet little is known about the experiences of these social movement activists turned partisans since the party's consolidation and rise to national prominence. This study details how these actors struggle with ideological and strategic questions and the party's relationship with the social movement organizations from which they came. While ideological ambiguities within the party serve as a source of frustration for ex-social movement leaders, the strategic benefits of partisan involvement motivate them to continue with the party.

Los activistas anteriores de movimientos sociales han desempeñado un papel clave dentro del Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) de México, sin embargo poco se sabe de las experiencias de aquellos activistas de movimientos sociales vueltos partidarios desde la consolidación del partido y su ascenso a la prominencia nacional. Este estudio destaca cómo estos actores se enfrentan a cuestiones ideológicas y estratégicas y la relación del partido con los movimientos sociales de los cuales vinieron. Mientras las ambigüedades ideológicas adentro del partido sirven como fuente de frustración para los ex líderes de movimientos sociales, las ventajas estratégicas de participación partidista los motivan a continuar con el partido.

Key words: Mexico, political parties, Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), political participation, social movement, political leadership, left, social movement activists, political activism, democracy.

The tensions between social movements and political parties have been explored by scholars in the past,[1] yet the experiences and under-standings of movement leaders as they transition to partisan politics has gone largely unexplored.[2] Movement leaders who turn to party activism have to learn to navigate the political system while shaping it. This cre-ates challenges as they adapt to a new role while managing the party's relationships with the social movement organizations from which they came. Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) provides an excellent case for examining the experiences of such actors. The PRD is among several parties that are seeking to define a new left in Latin America[3] and about a third of the party's leadership is made up of ex-social-movement leaders. Thus, the experiences and understanding of these key actors have important implications for how the Latin Amer-ican leftist parties define and pursue democratic representation.

The PRD was founded in 1989 from a coalition of social movement organizations, including independent peasant groups, urban popular movement organizations, labor confederations, and leftist parties in ad-dition to the Democratic Current, a breakaway group from the Institu-tional Revolutionary Party (PRI). They gathered under the leadership of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to challenge the long reign of the PRI.[4] By 2006, the PRD became the second largest political party in the National Cham-ber of Deputies, and it now controls many local posts, including Mex-ico City's government. The party's candidate for president, Andres Manuel López Obrador, came very close to winning the 2006 elections,

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1. Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *States, Parties and Social Movements* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Philip D. Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society: The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1995); Manuel Castells, *The City and The Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983).

2. Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society,* 28–29.

3. See David Samuels, "From Socialism to Social Democracy: Party Organization and the Transformation of Workers' Party in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies* 37:9 (2004), 999–1024, about the transformation of the Worker's Party under Lula in Brazil.

4. Many current PRD members believe the FDN (predecessor coalition to the PRD) won the presidency in 1988 only to have it stolen by the PRI. See Jose Barberán, Cuauhté-moc Cárdenas, Adriana López Monjardin, and Jorge Zavala, *Radiografía del fraude* (Mex-ico City: Nuestro Tiempo, 1988).

and many within the party believe that, as in 1988, only fraud and un-lawful campaign practices allowed his opponent, the National Action Party (PAN) candidate Felipe Calderón, to assume office. Thus, the PRD represents one of the most significant of the left parties in Latin Amer-ica and former social-movement leaders hold many of the key decision-making positions within the party, making their views and experiences relevant to understanding the direction of the new Latin American left.

Ever since its founding as a political party, PRD members and lead-ers have been working to define its principles and ideology. This defi-nition has largely been a process of incorporating and consolidating dif-ferent ideas from the smaller left parties and the PRI breakaways within the party. Yet, at the founding of the party, a group of social-movement activists and leaders decided to make the PRD their primary affiliation and the focus of their efforts, rather than remaining with the social-move-ment organizations from which they came. Such individuals now make up a large and influential segment of the party. However, their transition from social-movement to party politics has presented challenges for many of them personally, and how they navigate the issues they confront has important ramifications for the direction of the party as a whole. These actors played a prominent role in the resistance movement following the contested 2006 elections, as they were the leading group behind López Obrador. The events of 2006 have no doubt raised renewed con-cerns about the promise of partisan politics, yet even before the elec-tions, some of these actors were struggling to find their place and to un-derstand the strategic benefits and drawbacks of party involvement.

This article captures the struggles of these activists as they define their role in the political party during a unique period of PRD's develop-ment. It is based upon personal interviews conducted with PRD leaders, focusing on their goals and activities before and after their affiliation with the PRD. The article aims to present an account of their transition from an independent social-movement organization to political party involve-ment. A second goal of this article is to examine how these ex-social-movement leaders understand the party's place in Mexican politics and how they seek to shape the PRD's future.

Twenty-six interviews were conducted with movement leaders turned party activists, nine of which were conducted in June and July 2000 and seventeen of which were conducted in May and July 2005 in Mexico City. Several themes emerged from the interviews, most of which hinge on the strategic and ideological challenges that these activists face in their role within the PRD. Regardless of the ex-activists' current po-sition, be it working in the party organization, working for the Mexico City government, or holding elected office, there is a clear strategic el-ement to their continued involvement in party politics and government

as opposed to returning to social-movement participation. In large part, they feel they have a greater chance of achieving their original goals through the political party organization than through continued social-movement activity. At the same time, many also point to a broadening of their goals beyond the narrow interests they sought to advance during their activist days.

The second theme that emerges is an ideological one. The PRD is a party on the left, yet what this means precisely is ambiguous. The major left parties in Latin America are varied in their ideological positioning. The personal interviews conducted, consistent with other research on the matter,[5] indicate that the PRD is composed of two main currents—those who want the party to move toward a liberal center-left position[6] and those who want the party to remain decidedly left ideologically. While López Obrador's position in the party can be debated, his policies as a mayor place him in the more centrist position. The radical wing of the party was frustrated with the López Obrador government in Mexico City and his candidacy for president. During his campaign, they viewed López Obrador's policies and influence within the party as an abandonment of their ideological commitment and a slide toward the liberal center. Others did not feel that significant goals were being sacrificed in the process of capitalizing on López Obrador's popularity. Contrasting views of López Obrador parallel the ideological struggles that characterize the movement activists now situated within the PRD. These positions, including López Obrador's, have been shifting in the post-2006 election context, nevertheless, the interviews indicate that ideological conflicts reside both between and within these party actors themselves; and they demonstrate the personal struggles experienced by individuals who make the transition from movement activist to party member.

These issues of strategy and ideology come together as party activists consider the appropriate relationship between the PRD and the social movement sector. Those who support the party's move toward a more liberal center-left position also tend to think the party should seek to associate with citizens as individuals. From this perspective, the party

5. Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park, PA: Penn State, 1997); Joseph L. Klesner, "Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico," *Latin American Politics and Society* 47:2 (2005), 103–142; George W. Grayson, "A Guide to the Leadership Elections of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the National Action Party, and the Democratic Revolutionary Party," *Policy Articles on the Americas: Center for Strategic and International Studies* XIII: (2002).

6. Some interviewees who held this perspective referred to themselves as "social democratic," "moderate," or the "New Left." In the rest of this article, I will refer to this current as the liberal center left.

should not forge official ties with social movement organizations. These interviewees expressed it as a fear of duplicating the PRI's corporatist relationship pattern with social movements, which they view as akin to clientelist cooptation.[7] The counterpoint to this position is offered by the radical left, frustrated with the party for forgetting its social-movement roots, which they view as the very people they came to power to represent. According to these critics, as the party seeks to address the needs of citizens as individuals, they lose touch with their original goals, which are best advanced by institutionalizing ties with organized movements.

These are the central issues that ex-movement leaders and activists face as they adapt to their role as party actors. While the developments associated with the contested 2006 elections likely heightened doubts about the prospects of partisan politics, the basic dilemmas remain the same. And these struggles are not unique in current Latin American politics. The external and internal conflicts of these ex-social-movement leaders in the PRD parallel the broader ideological and political struggles that currently characterize the left in Latin America.[8] The perspectives and experiences of these subjects provide insight into the thinking of some important actors in Latin American politics, which must be considered in analyzing the region's political trajectory.

In the next section, I provide a framework for examining the personal struggles faced by ex-movement activists by looking at the factors that led them to party involvement in the first place. This provides a basis for predicting these individual's experiences given the new political context. In the third section, the interviews are presented and analyzed in detail in relation to the proposed framework.

The PRD and Social Movement Activists:
Why Stay with the Party?

The National Democratic Front (FDN), a loose coalition of different leftist groups and those who had split from the PRI, challenged the PRI's

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7. This article aims to reflect on the activists' perceptions. While a very important question, it is beyond the scope of the article to establish empirically the level of clientelism pervasive in the PRD.

8. See all related articles in the special issue of *Science & Society* 69:2, (2005), including Steve Ellner, "Revolutionary and Non-Revolutionary Paths of Radical Populism: Directions of the Chavista Movement in Venezuela," 160–190; Raúl Zibechi, "New Challenges for Radical Social Movements," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 38:5 (2005), 14–22; Jorge Casteñeda, "Latin America's Left Turn," *Foreign Affairs* 85:3 (2006), 28; Kirk A. Hawkins and David R. Hansen, "Dependent Civil Society: The *Círculos Bolivarianos* in Venezuela," *Latin American Research Review* 41:1 (2006), 102–132.

long reign in 1988 by jointly nominating candidates, including Cárdenas for the presidency. This coalition formalized as a party, the PRD, on May 5, 1989, with a great majority of the activists who participated in the FDN. When the coalition became a political party, the social-movement leaders had to choose whether to work with the party in some formal capacity (to run for office on the party line, to assume a paid staff position, or to be an unpaid party activist) or, alternatively, to return to their social-movement activity.

In this section, the reasons why the ex-social-movement leaders decided to work within the party are analyzed. One of the most comprehensive studies on the PRD was conducted by Kathleen Bruhn[9] during the party's early days. Therefore, this article first revisits the part of the Bruhn study focusing on what initially motivated activists to become involved in partisan politics and to shift their affiliation to the PRD. Whereas Bruhn studied all people who affiliated with the party in general, her propositions apply to movement leaders who faced the same decision regarding how to direct their efforts. She used a framework in which there were four possible explanations or "linkages" for how activists were recruited into party activity: personal linkage, social linkage, strategic linkage, and ideological linkage.[10] After reviewing Bruhn's thorough assessment of the initial decisions faced by movement activists at the party's founding, I use her framework to examine these decisions in the new strategic and ideological context in which the ex-movement activists now operate.[11] In my analysis, these strategic and ideological issues are bridged by the individual's perception of the party's position in relation to the social movements.

The first explanation that Bruhn offers for movement-activist conversion to party work is "personal linkage" or the private gain individuals may receive. Ex-social-movement activists could expect personal advancement by formally affiliating with an established party. But, in the early years, the PRD had little to offer personally to its members and activists. Activists, who lacked partisan experience, were at a disadvantage relative to the PRI breakaway *perredistas* in terms of securing opportunities to run for office. In addition, a prohibition on holding the same office twice made it highly unlikely that party activists coming from social movements would actually gain personally from their attachment to the party. This was compounded by the fact that, at least initially, people

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9. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath.*

10. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 199–203.

11. The goal here is not a retesting of Bruhn's hypothesis; rather, the thorough framework offered by Bruhn is used to analyze how ex-movement activists, after sixteen years, interpret their role in the party and why they stayed with the party.

had to spend money out of pocket to build the party organization. In addition, the lives of PRD activists were threatened, as up to 250 activists were reported murdered between 1988 and 1994.[12] Thus, Bruhn assesses that ex-social-movement leaders did not join with the PRD in order to advance their personal interests. One might argue that as the party became more powerful through gaining legislative positions, activists could expect to benefit personally from their involvement, thus this question may take on greater significance in the new context. However, other research indicates that activists are rarely motivated by personal gain, thus material self interest is an unlikely explanation for why activists would affiliate with a political party initially as well as why they would maintain that affiliation later.[13]

Social linkage is the second reason offered by Bruhn to explain why party activists attached themselves to the PRD. Movement scholars place great emphasis on the role of social ties in recruiting activists into movement activity.[14] Bruhn explores whether the committees created at the party's grassroots level served as a social network that drew in activists. She finds this potential in the *comites de base;* however, she argues that the recruitment potential of these entities was never fully realized.[15] Although ordinary party activists may be drawn into the party through "social linkage," among the ex-social-movement leaders, we can assume multiple social forces competed to recruit them, including their primary movement affiliation, which was established and entrenched. In this context, that the party could offer a more compelling social linkage was unlikely.

Of course, social linkage not only draws people into organizational affiliation but also keeps them there. It is possible that the connections activists have established during their sixteen years of service to the party are likely to keep them socially bound to it. Yet these are also individuals who have dedicated their life to advancing social change. By affiliating with the party, they have demonstrated a willingness to alter their social position based upon the goals they are seeking to achieve. Social ties may still play some role in understanding their behavior and alle-

12. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 201–202.

13. Dieter Rucht, "Linking Organization and Mobilization: Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy Reconsidered," *Mobilization: An International Journal* 4:2 (1999), 151–169; Paul Sabatier and Susan McLaughlin, "Belief Congruence Between Interest Group Leaders and Members: An Empirical Analysis of Three Theories and a Suggested Synthesis," *Journal of Politics* 5:2 (1990), 914–935.

14. Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema, "Potentials, Networks, Motivations and Barriers: Steps Toward Participation in Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987), 519–532.

15. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 204.

giances, but as with Bruhn's analysis, it is expected that social bonds are not a primary factor in understanding activists' affiliation or their behavior within the party organization.

This leads to Bruhn's third hypothesis, that "strategic motives attract activists to the PRD as the party most likely to hurt the PRI."[16] She concludes that although strategic linkage might have played a role in the rise of the Cárdenas coalition, which almost defeated the PRI in 1988, it does not explain the "consolidation of activism" in the party given Cárdenas's defeat.[17] While getting behind the failed 1988 political effort for reasons of strategic gain might not make sense, in the current political context, strategic issues may take on new importance. Initially, the strategic linkage question was about unseating PRI officeholders throughout the country, an effort that largely failed early on, suggesting strategic considerations did not draw activists to the party. But subsequently the PRD did achieve some electoral success. At the time of the interviews, the PRD had been successful in many electoral competitions, including the crucially important Mexico City mayoral election, which suggests that party activists should have more realistic hopes and expectations of the party coming to power nationally. Therefore, although Bruhn may be correct in that strategic considerations were not central to understanding the activist conversion to party affiliation in the early years, developments since that time might have increased the significance of strategic calculations for activists who remain with the party.

Bruhn ultimately found her fourth hypothesis most convincing; ideological linkage was the most important factor drawing movement activists to the party. But ironically, according to her analysis, activists aligned with the party not because its goals and principles explicitly matched their own ideological convictions, but rather because of its ideological *vagueness,* "which made the party available as an instrument for a variety of political causes."[18] In this ambiguous ideological context, social movement leaders could identify with and attach to different currents within the party or build their own factions and currents.

Today, the party's ideological ambiguity persists, although views appear to be gravitating toward two broad currents.[19] The first includes those who want the party to be what some refer to as the *social democratic left* or *liberal center left.* This, in the broader context of Latin America, is reflective of the Chilean Socialists or Brazil under Lula. The sec-

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16. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 202.
17. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 204.
18. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 196 and 199.
19. Although there may be more than two currents in the party, the major debate seems to have divided into two by summer 2005. See Grayson, "A Guide to the Leadership," for more information on different currents in the party.

ond current is made up of those who want the party to move to a more radical populist left. This current is associated with the leftist politics of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or Bolivia under Evo Morales. Although this type of leftist ideological commitment better characterizes the party's social movement roots, political strategy associated with electoral prospects tends to shape ideological outlooks, in this case favoring a more moderate, broader appeal. As Klesner explains the "movement within the parties to behave like catch-all parties has not come without internal tensions, but electoral dynamics prove powerful inducements to catch-all behavior."[20] Thus, centrist, social democratic, and liberal impulses within the party are likely to become more predominant.[21]

Given the lack of ideological certainty within the party, one might expect movement activists will still view the party as open to their ideological perspective and as a viable vehicle for advancing that ideology. What may have been an attractive potential within the party at its founding sixteen years ago, however, could also be a source of frustration in its present context. These activists have dedicated several years to the party, and they came with the belief that the party would in some way reflect their ideological orientation. With vagueness now giving way to clearer conflicting currents, ex-movement activists will likely express concerns regarding the ideological positioning of the party in which they had placed their hope for social transformation.

To sum, in the current context, personal or social linkages are not expected to be important factors in understanding the views of activists turned partisans today. Yet, after several years of electoral experience with the party and governance in Mexico City and at the state level, the strategic and ideological issues faced by these political actors must be considered in this new context.

While taking into account how former activists working within the PRD grapple with these strategic and ideological issues, special consideration must be given to the PRI's historic role in Mexican politics and its relationship to civil society. The PRD was founded in order to challenge the PRI's rule, thus much of what the PRD does, strategically and ideologically, must be considered in relation to the party they were formed to counter.[22] Under the PRI, the use of clientelism through cor-

20. Klesner, "Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico," 103.

21. Kathleen Bruhn, "The Making of the President, 2000: Parties, Candidate, and Campaign Strategy," in Jorge Dominguez and Chappell Lawson, eds., *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Campaign Effects and Presidential Race of 2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

22. See Jorge J. Dominguez and James A. McCann, "Shaping Mexico's Electoral Arena: The Construction of Partisan Cleavages in the 1988 and 1991 National Elections," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995), 34–48; Jeffrey Weldon, "Political Sources of *Pre-*

poratist linkage to the party and the state diminished the effectiveness of an independent civil society.[23] In their relation to civil society, PRD actors are expected to seek a different approach that does not resemble the corporatist ties constructed by the PRI.[24] Yet, the structuring of relations with the social movement sector of civil society presents strategic and ideological challenges for former movement activists. They clearly support movement goals and at least, at one point, had strong personal ties with movement organizations. Yet, parties and movements do not have identical goals.[25] Although both "agree on the value of satisfying popular demands, winning elections, and encouraging democracy," the parties have national electoral aspirations, whereas movements tend to want to meet the needs of the people in the short term.[26] As a result, parties tend to focus on national problems, and they seek to appeal to broad populations in order to win elections.[27] Social movement activists, on the other hand, are focused more narrowly on issues and geography; they typically place particularistic demands on the government. Whether ex-activists now in the PRD retain the narrow strategic focus as advanced by social movement organizations or adopt a broader national approach is a central question in understanding how these actors have adapted to their new role.

The question of the broadening of goals has strategic and ideological implications for ex-movement activists, but this question is also rel-

sidencialismo in Mexico" in Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart, eds., *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 227.

23. Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexico in Crises,* 2nd Edition (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988); Susan Eckstein, ed., "Epilogue: Where Have All the Movements Gone? Latin American Social Movements at the New Millennium," in *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001); Joseph S. Tulchin and Andrew D. Selee, *Mexico's Politics and Society in Transition* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 2003), 8–9.

24. For more on PRI's corporatist/clientelist structure see, Ann L. Craig and Wayne A. Cornelius, "Houses Divided: Parties and Political Reform in Mexico," in Mainwaring and Scully, eds., *Building Democratic Institutions;* Jonathan Fox, "The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship: Lessons from Mexico," *World Politics* 46: 2 (1994), 151–184; Beatriz Magaloni, Frederico Estevez, and Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, "Federalism, Redistributive Politics and Poverty Relief Spending: The *Programa Nacional de Solidaridad* in Mexico (1989–1994)," presented at the meeting of the *American Political Science Association* (2000).

25. Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society.*

26. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 224.

27. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., "Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America," in *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1995), 1–34.

evant to their view on how to structure the party internally and whether this structure should maintain official ties with movement organizations. Regarding internal party structure, another area seen as problematic within the PRI, the PRD originally held conventions rather than primaries. The conventions gave more power to groups that organized internally within the party and diluted popular participation.[28] Those who came from the PRI breakaway group had an advantage in this regard because they were experienced in partisan maneuvering. Those coming from the social movement sector were less experienced in this regard, placing them at a disadvantage in this process. Thus, the party's early structure did not allow the ex-social-movement leaders to greatly influence the party conventions.

Yet there was also recognition that giving organized groups control over party delegates could lead to a PRI-type clientelist system where elite leaders of factions would control issue debates as well as nomination processes. Additionally, a disconnect with the party's electoral base could occur by allowing these elite factions within the party to control the conventions. Fear that the party would not be able to build membership without some form of institutionally democratic electoral process for nominations also existed. In response to this, the PRD introduced closed primaries in 1996. The primaries were seen as a way to build local committees and foster local participation by grassroots members. According to Hélène Combes,

The leaders of the social movement organizations who represent 27 percent of the PRD's leadership were in favor of primaries and internal elections . . . A large part of them emerged from housing organizations that gained importance after the 1985 earthquake. PRD leaders coming from social movement organizations viewed internal elections as the means of maintaining a link between the PRD and their own social movement organizations . . . From the very foundation of the PRD, its leaders dreamt of a mass party allied with social movements.[29]

But the introduction of primaries did not mean the party would officially affiliate with social movement organizations, despite the fact that many ex-movement leaders saw these primaries as a good solution for maintaining links with movement activists who were also party members without institutionalizing the relationship. In 2004, the party introduced open primaries where all citizens could vote in the selection of candidates. It has been argued that open primaries enable leaders with strong

28. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath,* 175–176.
29. Hélène Combes, "Primaries, Internal Elections and Democratic Transition: The Case of the Democratic Revolution Party in Mexico (1989–2001)," *Annual Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association* (2004), 4.

patronage ties to the community to get out the vote and get nominated.[30] Thus, some ex-movement activists may still feel the need for a more structural representation of the social movements in the party rather than simply holding open primaries. Given that the PRD's primary concern was about avoiding the PRI's corporatist structure, for now, the party does not allow corporatist representation of movement groups; the dominant idea is that movements and the party should remain separate. But clear differences of opinion on this issue exist, and the party's relationship with social movements is expected to be a matter of concern for the ex-movement leaders who populate the party.

Of the four "linkages" that Bruhn examines in her original assessment of reasons for PRD affiliation, the strategic and ideological factors are most relevant in terms of considering ex-movement activists' current perspectives on their party involvement. Although the relevance of personal and social linkages are considered when analyzing the interview data, primary attention will focus on the strategic and ideological dimensions of the interview subjects' perspectives. Additionally, given the explicit rejection of the PRI's clientelist ties with civil society organizations, the nature of the relationship between the PRD and movement organizations is another salient issue. In the following section, I analyze the interview data to demonstrate how these issues are considered by a number of ex-movement activists within the PRD.

Activists Turned Partisans: Strategy, Ideology, and Organizational Structure

All interviews for this research were conducted in Mexico City (see appendix 1 for a profile of interviewees). The initial nine interviews were conducted in 2000. This first set of interviews conducted with ex-social-movement activists linked to the PRD was part of another research project, but the data raised many issues that now serve as the focus of this article. The additional seventeen in-depth interviews conducted in 2005 serve as the primary data source for much of this analysis. Four interviewees from 2000 were used as a base to create a snowball sample of ex-movement activists working in Mexico City for the PRD. Although the interviewees cannot be considered a representative sample, the subjects have been active in different types of social movement organizations, including the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the urban popular movement, the independent union movement, and the

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30. Stephen T. Wuhs, "Democratization and the Dynamics of Candidate Selection Rule Change in Mexico, 1991–2003," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 22:1: (2006), 33–55.

debtor victims movement resulting from the bank scandal of the 1990s. Several of them were a part of the national coordination effort among social movement organizations in the 1980s.[31] A majority of the interviewees were active starting in the 1960s and all were active during the 1980s. They were founding members of the PRD and, at the time of the interviews, were serving in some party capacity as activists, employees, civil servants in the PRD government, or elected representatives. The interviewees were asked eleven open-ended questions regarding their past movement activity, their role within the PRD, and their assessment of the PRD's activities in light of their movements goals (see appendix 2 for questions). Relevant issues arising during the course of answering those questions were further explored. Interviews lasted anywhere from twenty minutes to two hours, averaging about fifty minutes. In the following three sections, the interviews are analyzed based on the three themes that emerged as most relevant to the ex-activists' assessment of their role within the party: strategic assessments, ideological considerations, and the appropriate relationship between the party and the movement organization in which the activist got his or her start.

Choosing Party Affiliation and Staying with the Party
for Strategic Reasons[32]

Among the interviewees, very few statements were made to indicate a personal linkage between them and the party (see Table 1 for a summary of findings). None indicated any expectation of individual gain from

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31. Pedro Moctezuma, "Las luchas urbano-populares en la conyuntura actual," *Teoría y Política* 2:5: (1981), 101–124; Jorge Alanso, *Los movimientos sociales en el Valle de México* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1986); Jorge Alanso, *Los movimientos sociales en el Valle de México* (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1988). See Jorge Cadena-Roa, "State Pacts, Elites, and Social Movements in Mexico's Transition to Democracy," in Jack Goldstone, ed., *States, Parties and Social Movements,* about social movements in transition to democracy. See Vivienne Bennett, "The Evolution of Urban Popular Movements in Mexico Between 1968 and 1988," in Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), about National Coordinator of Urban Popular Movements (CONAMUP). See Susan Street, *Maestros en movimiento: Transformaciones en la burocracia estatal (1978–1982),* (Guadalajara, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropologia Social, 1992), about the opposition labor movement; and see Jorge Alonzo and Juan Manuel Ramirez Saiz, eds., *La Democracia de los de abajo en México* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 1997), about national opposition coordination.

32. All quotes in the rest of the paper are direct quotes based on the interviews described in the previous section unless indicated otherwise. While the names of the interviewees are not provided here, their current and past positions are identified when relevant.

Table 1: *Why Activists Turn to the Party**

	1992 (Bruhn findings)		2005 (based on personal interviews)		Challenges in the New Political Context
Personal Reasons	No	Involvement in the party was dangerous in the beginning, little promise of personal gain.	No	Not expressed as a reason to stay in the party.	As the party succeeds, the potential for personal gain grows; evidence of this already concerns some party activists.
Social Reasons	No	The party does not realize the *comites de base*, social movements possibly a stronger link.	No	Some express feelings of alienation rather than social linkage to the party.	
Strategic Reasons	No	Defeat of Cárdenas in 1988 and no other substantial electoral victory suggests little strategic gain through party action.	Yes	Able to accomplish original movement goals: improve education, labor conditions, unemployment, human rights, etc.; some have broadened goals from the days of social movement activism: civic participation, environment, etc.	Strategic approach toward social movements: • Ideologically liberal center-left wing of the party prefers to separate party and social movements. Party should relate to constituency as individual citizens. • Radical left would like to associate with social movements more closely and systematically. Party should focus on its core constituency.
Ideological Reasons	Yes	Vagueness of party ideology makes it open to competing ideas and attractive to those who see the party as a vehicle for their ideology.	No	Ideological vagueness continues; struggle between a liberal center-left ideology versus a radical-left ideology.	

* Because of the small sample size, drawing any conclusions on whether the type of past activism or current position held by leader makes a difference in their strategic and ideological positions today is difficult.

their involvement with the party.[33] This is not surprising given very few politicians will ever admit to being involved in politics for personal reasons over the public good. However, as described previously, most research indicates that movement activists rarely gain personally from their activities and that there is no evidence to indicate that activist political involvement is significantly motivated by material self interest. As for social linkage, the interview data did not indicate that social ties created within the party were significant factors in maintaining party affiliation. On the contrary, a few interviewees expressed that they found working in the party somewhat more alienating relative to the social bonds they had established through their past movement activity. But, on the whole, no indications of personal or social linkage being a major consideration in deciding to stay with the party as opposed to going back to movement activity were made.

Although social and personal factors do not appear to be salient features in the minds of these subjects, based on an interview assessment, strategic considerations are clearly of great importance to these former movement activists. Many believe that their work within the party has allowed them to advance their long-sought goals. Following, I discuss the interviews not only that suggest strategic considerations brought these activists into the party years earlier, but also that they see their work within the party as the best means of furthering their original aim. Almost all of the ex-movement leaders interviewed indicated a strategic element in their involvement with the PRD regardless of their current position in the party or past involvement in social movements.

Several of the interviewees cited movement goals that they were able to fulfill through their party work. For example, a deputy in the National Congress felt that, as he served on two important committees of the National Chamber of Deputies, he was accomplishing goals that he had set out from the early days of his activism. This deputy was a student activist in his formative years. In those days, he and his fellow activists targeted the government secretariats to change policies; thus being in government, even as he was in the minority, gave him a sense of being in a position where he could participate in making relevant decisions. The deputy served on the powerful Housing Commission and Budget Commission and he was involved with the investigation of the Bank rescue issue. This work paralleled his activist agenda in *el Barzón* movement, an organization that arose in reaction to the neo-liberal financial poli-

33. About three interviewees alluded to the internal party struggles for positions or misuse of party for personal gain, but these were critical comments directed at others. One interviewee talked about her personal satisfaction in serving her community in her party position, but this type of statement was not common and it addressed personal satisfaction, not material gain.

cies of the PRI government for the protection of the debtors who were negatively affected by these policies.

A second deputy in the National Congress expressed that the *Asamblea de Barrios* (AB), an urban movement organization in Mexico City formed after the 1985 earthquake to fight for housing rights, got on board with the FDN movement for strategic reasons. He saw both the party and the social movement as political instruments necessary for advancing social change. He argued that the AB had a vision for change, but that their tactics placed them at the political margins. They pushed legal limits in order to achieve their immediate goals, such as the actions they took to prevent evictions. In the PRD government, however, he had a role in shaping the policies designed to address the problems he had worked on as an activist. He cited the example of the Housing Institute (*Instituto de Vivienda*) created by the party, which works to provide affordable housing. He argued that this was how the PRD had helped to achieve activist goals through government action.

Overall, this deputy believed that he was best able to accomplish the goals he set out to accomplish in AB through party involvement. For example, he believed he was fighting unemployment as the presiding officer of the Commission on Promotion of Economic and Social Cooperatives. He was proud that the commission helped link him to the "real cooperative movement of the nation of Mexico and the social and economic solidarity of the peasants, organic coffee growers, *tianguis* (farmers' markets) people and much of the informal economy." He felt that through the work of the commission he was creating employment opportunities for many people. He had this to say about his accomplishments:

Let me give some data. The economically active population of the country is about 44 million–45 million Mexicans. Half of them, about 22 million, are in informal sectors, precarious works, illegal jobs. You have this world where a socialized economy is fundamental for Mexico and that is why I am involved in this, to provide favorable work conditions linked to support of organized cooperative sectors so that there is access to finances, credits, what we call seed capital to embark on some socialized businesses.

He also believed his experience in the neighborhood organizations, although not legally and formally, were similar to the cooperative concept he was now working on in the legislature.

Both of these deputies, coming from very different organizational backgrounds, felt they were accomplishing many of their original goals from their activist days in their current positions. They viewed the shift to party politics as a strategic move that allowed them to be more effective.

Ex-movement leaders now acting as civil servants working with the PRD government also indicated the importance of their strategic linkage to the party. A civil servant working for the Housing Institute of Mexico City (INVI) had been involved with the PRD since its founding, but before that he was in the AB as well. He believed disputing the PRI's reign was very important and that the PRD had been successful in doing so. Once this objective had been fulfilled in Mexico City, he recognized that the PRD needed to deliver on the issues that motivated his activism, and he felt that he was helping to do this. In the government of López Obrador, he participated in providing more than 40,000 credits for housing renovations. He expressed pride in his involvement in the development of this program, given that never before were housing betterment credits available for the poor in Mexico City. Pointing to his link with the party, he said,[34] "All those long discussions that we had about democracy, welfare, etc. are today concretized with the social policy that has been developed. To me this is most important success."

One of the PRD government officials interviewed came from the National Education Workers Union, where he participated in the struggle to obtain better salaries and achieve union democracy. At the time of the interviews, he was an active party member serving on the party's Executive Committee on unions and education as well as working in the Mexico City PRD government's Finance Secretariat in the division of collection of taxes and allocation of expenses. He explained that he became involved in the party because it was not enough to make demands; he felt budget allocations needed to change to make the demands come true, a role that he believes the PRD can play:

The demands for salaries are not possibly obtained without the influence of the parliament and without a modification of public policy. In government we supported the application of approaches that demonstrate it is possible to have a different social policy than the ones developed by *priísta* and *panista* governments.

All these people, working in the PRD government or working in the legislature representing their constituencies and the PRD, felt that they were accomplishing the original goals they had set out to accomplish as movement activists. The conditions at the time of their transition from activists to political party advocates were such that they saw strategic advantages to this shift, and today they see their success in shaping policy as evidence of that strategic gain.

34. This civil servant was working iin the Mexico City office of the PRD in 2000 when he was first interviewed. He is still a party member, but he cannot have an active position in the party as a civil servant because it is prohibited.

There were also those ex-social-movement leaders who claimed they had always sought to capture state power. They viewed the party as a way to advance popular goals in a more permanent and institutionalized way relative to the ebbs and flows of movement activity. They also saw state power achieved through electoral success as a means to devise policies that got at the root of the social problems that movements develop to respond to. One party activist who was a PRD representative as a *consejero* on the national and state levels, explained his activist history this way:

We always thought that social work and social movements had their limits. They were nothing more than a medium to capture the sympathies of the people and to drive them politically toward the changes that we want. But never did we think it is true success even if a strike succeeds in getting a huge salary increase, succeeds in getting better places for resting for retired people, or succeed on the part of the union a series of pressures, etc. we called that *economismo*. They are partial successes. We wanted to change the entire regime, so that there would be another system of government and politics.

Similarly, another ex-activist, a civil servant who worked in one of the PRD-led delegations in Mexico City as a director of Cultural Recreation and Sports, argued that since her early days of activism she had seen the strategic importance of party politics. She had participated in party politics even before the PRD's formation. Referring to her early involvement with the Socialist Workers Party (*Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores*),

I am convinced that the party allowed me to have a much broader view than what social struggle has given me. An isolated social struggle without a political strategy remains just that . . . Well, what is the problem? The problem was in our case to have land tenure. This is not just my problem, but problem of hundreds of thousands, millions of people in this country.

She went on to explain how her movement activism gave rise to an awareness of the need for partisan struggle to achieve democracy:

We had obtained scraps. This is how we started for my country. At that time we were not talking about democracy, we were talking about participation, self-help, etc. But, in time we came to understand the importance of democracy. Therefore, we started to participate politically.

In addition to the strategic thinking evident in many ex-activists' explanation for party involvement, there was also evidence that many activists had broadened their goals since affiliating with the party. They saw that not only could their particular movement's goals be strategically advanced through the attainment of state power via the party, but also expressed that their original goals were relatively narrow compared to the changes they now saw as possible.

Another PRD government civil servant indicated that a majority of the activists in the Urban Popular Movements (MUP) in the Federal District and in the union and public sectors decided to join the PRD because of the strategic advantages it would provide for advancing their movement goals. They saw it as an opportunity to integrate their social causes into a political party. Yet, another civil servant agreed that although the party and social movements share common goals, he also noted the party has broader goals than the union with which he had been affiliated. He characterized union achievements as short-term compromises compared to the long-term victories that could be achieved through party participation:

Social movements arise from *la coyuntura* that is very concrete. They do not have the capacity to present a long-term agenda or a strategy. When one part of them is linked to a political party, those social movements that have maintained their demands that are immediate have been co-opted by the government and have been dismembered. Some met their demands partially and disappeared. What is needed in social movements is that they link with a vision of the organization of the country and for that one of the ways is parties . . . By just maintaining their immediate needs, they vote for the party and disappear. They may partially win their needs but in long term they are not solving the root causes of their problems.

Thus, in many cases, there was an explicit broadening of goals among social movement activists who have joined the party. Strategic considerations may have brought these activists into the party, but through their party involvement, their perceptions of what can and should be achieved extended well beyond the relatively narrow goals they held as movement activists. They viewed the party as a vehicle for achieving broader transformations beyond the single-issue activism that had occupied them previously. In this sense, strategic linkages fostered not only party affiliation, but also, in a self-reinforcing process, a broadening of goals that could only be achieved through a partisan strategy.

Although strategic considerations clearly bolstered ex-activist commitment to party involvement, regardless of background in social movements and current position in the party, other factors appear to present them with personal dilemmas and conflict. The other two themes that emerged out of the interviews, ideological considerations and party-movement relations, both presented ex-movement activists with challenges. Their struggles with these issues take place in the shadow of the PRI. As the PRD enjoys success and comes to govern more areas, these party participants express concern that the PRD not adopt the same corrupt practices of the party they formed to combat it. In this context, the first issue I consider below is this fear of "being like the PRI" and what that means for the-ex movement leaders.

Government-Party Relations: How not to be Like the PRI

The PRD was founded to unseat the PRI first and then to work to meet the goal of the party in bringing a politically, economically, and socially just government to Mexico.[35] The goal of unseating the PRI was mainly accomplished in 2000 when Vicente Fox, a PAN candidate, won the presidential elections and ended the PRI's seventy-one year reign. Thus, the PRD found itself operating in a new political context, one in which they could reasonably compete for state power. But now that the party had control over several local and state governments around the country, party activists struggled with how to be a party that could govern without resorting to what they considered the corrupt and undemocratic practices of the PRI in relation to their constituencies.[36] Indications that the PRD might be making some of the same mistakes that the PRI made was a source of frustration and concern among the interviewees, but as of yet, these concerns are not so great as to turn them away from party involvement.

These frustrations among the ex-movement activists may also be a result of an internal party structure dominated by a caudillo-style leadership under López Obrador, which parallels many of the clientelist practices of the PRI as expressed in some of the interviews. A former party activist and current civil servant expressed a concern echoed by several of the interviewees, that the PRD risked becoming undemocratic and corrupt as power became concentrated in the hands of a small leadership cadre.

A few can't continue to make all the decisions for a great majority. Because at times they are wrong. In or out of power, you can't sustain rule by a few. People make fewer mistakes when they consult . . . Therefore, this seems to me what democracy is: that we all participate, each person in the party. It seems to me that this has been lost. There are a few people who have decided to direct the party . . . We are told what the Chamber of Deputies will do, what the government will do . . . Thirty-five years of hard struggle . . . the principle objective was to do away with the single state party of seventy years, but we can't repeat those schemes and we are repeating those schemes. I would say, it is not only because of the people that came from the PRI; this is not the problem. It is the culture, where you come from, the attitude with the laws; the partisan conduct that you apply. There are many *compañeros* came to eat off the PRD and to continue to conduct themselves in a manner that is totally not suitable; they lack principles. How is it possible that a Rosario Robles and René Bejarano appear in a leftist party, and what is more is that they continue to be a part of the left?

35. See Electoral Platform of Cárdenas for President (2000–2006), *Con México a la Victoria, Alianza por México*.

36. After the elections of 2006, I expect them to add PAN to this rhetoric.

The situation is the lack of leadership in the party; there is a compromised leadership in the party, the leadership that stopped to serve and forgot much of its principles. This does not only worry us, but also takes up our time and all we want to do is go back to the party.

The concerns about the party being dominated by a small cadre of leaders were deeply connected with PRD's Mexico City government under López Obrador. Since obtaining power in Mexico City, the PRD has been struggling with learning the appropriate relationship between party and government. As the PRI was the "party of the state," distinguishing between the party and the government that was run by the PRI was difficult. Thus, PRI's seventy-one years of governance in Mexico fused party and state without distinction.[37] PRD has a stronghold in Mexico City where it has built hegemony. Now that the PRD has a role in government, they are not sure how to be a party in government.

Based on these concerns, some interviewees expressed fear and frustration about the party's subordination to Mexico City's government. These points were raised by individuals in several different positions, whether they were party activists or civil servants. Nevertheless, all expressed the same concern from their own vantage point in their current position. Civil servants were frustrated with the party for not knowing how to act like a party that is responsive to and representative of the people. On the other hand, those who worked exclusively in the party or as party activists complained about being subordinated to the PRD-run Mexico City government. Thus, there was a split between those who worked for the Mexico City government run by PRD and those who worked exclusively in the party.

One party activist pointed out that the PRD was trying to learn to be a party in government and that this was hard because of the PRI legacy as the "party of the state." He mentioned the difficulty in trying to figure out how to have a government that represented all but without abandoning the party's core constituencies. He argued that some of the legislation that the government supported in Mexico City was contrary to the party's beliefs and platform and that this was done in the name of governing independently from the party. As an example, he argued that the Law of Civic Culture castigated the indigent people like those who clean windshields on street corners. Another party activist argued that López Obrador's city government refused to take direction from the party and "the leaders of the party do not have the weight that the government functionaries of DF and therefore the government takes over duties of the party and the government take some actions that do not have to do with the understandings of the party." This, said the party activist,

37. Craig and Cornelius, "Houses Divided," 254.

was unacceptable. Thus, the centralized decision-making under the López Obrador government was a source of frustration among the leaders working for the party offices and even among some who worked within his government.

The feelings were strong among the people working for the government. The civil servants working in the López Obrador government and for delegations in Mexico City felt that they had successfully learned how to work in the PRD government whereas the PRD had not learned to be a party in government. One civil servant thought the party behaved very primitively. He pointed to several problems the party faced, including how the riches from the state started to generate internal disputes about personal interests. He argued that the struggle over the control of resources where some people take advantage of the party led to corruption. According to this civil servant, the party was the source of the problem, not the government. Others defended the government equally. One civil servant felt that the PRD government was able to govern differently than the PRI governments before because the PRD and the government of Mexico City remained separate entities. This separation, she thought, is a sign of a noncorrupt government. Another civil servant brought up this very separation of government and party as a positive asset. She served in the government and saw her role as a public official separate from her role as party activist. In her government responsibilities, she said, she has to "serve all people equally without making distinction of their creed, religion, party."

As the PRD is learning to become a party in government, many ex-social-movement leaders in the party feel frustrated. These frustrations were divided between those who work in the PRD government and those who work in the party organization. Those in the party were especially frustrated with the López Obrador government's practices, which were decided by a centralized force void of party involvement. Those in the civil service were frustrated with the party's inability to represent constituents. This division indicates how the ex-social-movement leaders assumed their new roles and moved further away from their old identities in the movement. At the time of the interviews, the party had high hopes for the presidential election; therefore, there was a sense of urgency about resolving the differences between the party and the government. These fears were expressed not only in the abstract, but also in the context of the ideological and strategic issues that the party members have to contend with. Strategic issues were discussed in the previous section, and this article now turns to the continued ideological struggles in the party and whether the ideological linkage has an affect on the ex-movement leaders' decision to stay with the party.

Ideological Principles of the Party

As described earlier, whereas the PRD's ideological positioning was ambiguous at its founding, two main currents were identifiable at the time of the interviews. As López Obrador was the presidential candidate at the time, the disagreements manifested themselves as disputes over his leadership. Most of the former activists interviewed in this study seemed to support López Obrador's presidential candidacy and his ideological direction. Yet there were three interviewees who openly expressed concern that López Obrador was pulling the party too far away from the leftist sentiments that they have held since their activist days.

Those of a more radical-left persuasion believed that when the party wins positions of power in government, the state should then be used to advance the interests of those the party represents, namely the social movement sector and the poor who populate it. One national deputy expressed frustration with the party under López Obrador's leadership toward this end. He argued that the PRD should offer more support to causes such as that of the Zapatistas. He was also critical of policies that he believed did not adequately address the needs of the poor, such as housing and transportation. He charged that López Obrador's policies in Mexico City undermined the city's Metro, which was used primarily by the poor, in favor of private roads used by the rich. He also felt that López Obrador had surrounded himself with "corrupt right wing ex *priístas*" who were not capable of understanding the people's problems.

Those who have adopted a more liberal center-left ideology believed that once in government the party was obligated to advance the interests of society as a whole. They viewed López Obrador's policies as effective governance, and they stressed an approach that accommodated broader constituencies, including the middle and business classes. This was evidenced in the phrases that many López Obrador supporters used, which came up repeatedly in several of the interviews, such as "We need to think about business profits as well, given that we need investment," or "our essential point of view tends toward equity, and not to equality, because each person has their individuality, and all we can aspire for is equity. It would be dangerous to say, 'we are all equal'."

One deputy in the National Congress supportive of López Obrador was explicit in his ideological orientation and about the differences within the party:

We are of a left that puts the accent fundamentally to agreements and reforms, practice of democratic values. We are closer to the liberal politics including in terms of democracy and we are the current that is reformist in the PRD and in

the PRD there are more radical currents as well. We are more reformist. I con-
sider myself a social democrat.

He believed that the party had a good relationship with the social move-
ment sector, and he tried to represent them in the National Chamber
of Deputies. But he also insisted that consistent policy was necessary
in proper democratic governance. He opposed groups that operated
illegally in the informal economy, such as the taxi drivers without per-
mits and unlicensed street vendors. But this perspective was what made
radical-left party members feel that the party was losing touch with the
poor and with the party's own movement roots.

Ideological differences were evident within the party with ex-move-
ment leaders falling on either side of this divide. As of yet, this has not
served as a deterrent for these activists to continue with the party. Al-
though some ex-movement leaders might not have been happy with the
ideological direction of the party and government, they seemed to rec-
ognize that they were more capable of advancing their original goals
working through the party rather than through the social movements.
This perception might have changed after the 2006 elections when the
party was able to mobilize large groups of people to come out to protest
in support of López Obrador and the PRD—and the crowds were largely
made up of groups that López Obrador had neglected through his poli-
cies, according to the radical left of the party. But this type of event-based
protest does not reflect a long-term ongoing relationship between the
movements and parties, which I take up in the next section.

Structure of the Party in Relation to Social Movements

In the interviews, the ideological division in the party was clearly pro-
nounced, where one sector wanted to go in the direction of the radical
left with redistributive programs and the liberal center-left faction seek-
ing to establish universal programs. This ideological division manifested
itself in many ways, but nowhere did this become more obvious than in
the party's structural approach to social movements. The central ques-
tion was whether the party should have some kind of formal affiliation
with social movement organizations. The interviewees were split on the
issue along a divide that was similar to their ideological divide: those who
wanted no official ties with social movements, a position that tended to
correlate with the liberal centrist wing, and those who wanted greater
social movement representation within the party, a view commonly ex-
pressed by those with a more radical-left ideology.

In the party, the liberal center-left-leaning group has had its way on
this issue. The party statute states clearly how the party is to deal with
movement organizations. Article 2(6) of the PRD party statute asks the

members of the party to reject all means of corporative political control in order to prevent clientelism. This statute additionally says that party members should prevent limitations on the freedom of movements and on decision making for organizations. It also calls for the elimination of any state control over the members of the party or the movements.

The ex-movement leaders with a liberal center-left view interpreted the statute to mean that the party does not associate officially with social movements. Associating with the social movements caused a twofold concern for these ex-movement leaders. First, they were reacting to the PRI's relations with organized groups. The second issue was that this faction believed the party should serve broad universal interests, rather than the narrow interests of social movement organizations. There was a strategic element to this in that some believed this universal appeal would ensure national electoral victory. Thus, these party activists on several levels felt that a structural party association with the social movement organizations would go against the kind of party they were trying to build: one that was not like the PRI, one that was strategically competitive, and one that served all Mexicans universally when in government.

While the position of the party in relation to social movements has been clarified through the statute, it is not without its critics. The radical left wing of the party did not want to lose ties with their social movement roots, although they also shared fears of reproducing the clientelist relationships that characterized the PRI. When asked about party's ties with movements, one working member of the party offered this response:

In a strict sense . . .the party abandoned the policy of working together with these social groups. Yes, there are many social leaders that are in the party, but this does not mean there is a pre-established relationship . . . The PRD has to, as a party, discuss issues with social groups, because in many cases, where there are legislative projects, there are groups that are in opposition. Therefore, we say the party has to be a guarantor, an instrument of the society, and this is what we are; trying to recuperate this strategic relation, but not a relation that seeks to corporatize, that seeks to make them into clients. No, so that we debate, about what types of legislation this city needs, about housing issues, about urban development about environment, therefore I can say . . . I don't believe there is a relationship. This is something unresolved in PRD, not to forget about all the social groups, especially those of the urban popular movement, above all those who are living in this city.

The dilemma of giving social movements independence and abandoning social movements has been unresolved for the party and for the ex-movement leaders within it. This issue was likely to become even more salient after the 2006 election as the party sought more support from these movements to carry out their opposition campaign following the election.

One civil servant articulated the dilemmas that ex-movement leaders faced in this regard very eloquently: "The crises is that a social movement can become a government but not the other way around."[38] Before, as a part of the social movement, they expected the government to solve their problem. But now, as the government, it is their responsibility to solve the problems. He said many are struggling to figure out their identity in the government with some retaining their social movement identity: "It used to be, 'How do we pressure the government to pay attention to this issue or that?' Now it is, 'How do we open channels to pay attention to people?' We need a level of consciousness, responsibility, preparation and a firm commitment to continue to maintain social struggle."

This unresolved struggle to figure out how the party should deal with the social movements took the form, on the one hand, of serving all while in government and, on the other hand, figuring out how the party should represent different groups that make up the base of the party that was, at the time, completely subordinated to the government of López Obrador. Again one of the radical left deputies felt that López Obrador had not been able to find a consensus within the party on this issue.

Today we are now what we fought against . . . I believe that a democratic government is built by a democratic society . . . a democratic society is an organized society. In thousands and thousands of neighborhood organizations, professional, union organizations, students, women, and others . . . that is how a social democratic society conjures. And a democratic government has to support the independent organizations of civil society and respond to the appeals of the civil society. This does not exist . . . The party PRD that is government has a heavy weight over the people, but did not fulfill its obligation to educate and inform people politically like an active militant of the party, to be participative. We have not done that and this gives me grief, gives me concern. We did not even fulfill what a political party has to be . . . we are supposed to be a social or political actor in the city or the nation that has a proposal. What is the proposal? It is very muddled.

This deputy feared the party was becoming disconnected from the people because of the disconnection between the social movements and the party.

Another interviewee, who was later at the forefront of organizing the post-2006 elections protests, expressed agreement with this view. He said he was hired by the party to bring social movements and the party closer together, but he felt the government of Mexico City was re-

38. It is ironic that the PRD declared a parallel government under the leadership of Obrador after losing the 2006 elections. This is precisely a movement declaring itself a government.

moved from the needs of different social classes, especially the workers. He claimed the party followed the same trajectory as the government. While some people in the party, like himself, were still active with social movements, he felt that this was done on an individual level and that ties to the party itself were not being maintained. He said that the party was being very cautious in relation to social movements and felt the government had made many policies that left out organized groups like the unions. This individual argued that as a party of the left, the PRD had to have a greater commitment to social struggle. He suggested that social movement leaders should be included in party discussions and be included on the lists to take positions in the Congress. He argued that social movement leaders were the ones who knew the issues best.

This was obviously an important issue for the party and one that divided ex-movement leaders in interesting ways. There were those who believed the party's structural divorce from social movements was a good strategic choice because it brought the party to the ideological mainstream of Mexican politics. Although the just quoted individuals were not happy with the way the López Obrador government (and the party subordinated to it) had or had not dealt with the social movements, there were those who brought up the fact that the party had to move away from "radicalism." One party activist supportive of López Obrador argued that the reason why Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas lost in 1994 was because the PRD was pinned as the radical party that represented all elements of social movements, including the armed rebellious groups like the Zapatistas. This contributed to the PRI's success over the PRD, even though the PRI was going through a crisis itself. He asserted the party moved toward individual representation and civil liberties as opposed to group representation and rights, which was a very important change in the PRD that permitted the party to win the city's mayoral elections in 1997. He believed that while they still support the struggles of the social movements, the party had moved on from the base.

The structural relations between the party and social movements combine the strategic and ideological concerns that occupy the ex-social movement leaders within the PRD. The differences can be brought to the fore by changes in the political context, such as those of the 2006 presidential loss. Given this defeat, some interpreted the mainstreaming of the party as a failure. This appears to have empowered and mobilized those advocating for closer relations with social movements. The attempt to form a parallel government to Calderon's resonated with the more radical-left groups within the party. Yet, despite the ideological disagreements that reflect on how to deal with social movements institutionally, thus far, many ex-movement activists still see the PRD as the best available vehicle for advancing their long-sought movement goals.

Conclusion

The PRD managed to survive as a political party despite the fact that it was formed by a disparate array of movement organizations. Ex-social movement leaders, who make up about a third of the party, have stuck with it from the beginning. Initially Bruhn[39] had found that the party's ideological vagueness was what made it attractive to activists in general. As the party has grown into a real contender for national political power, the ex-social-movement leaders, accustomed to being on the political margins, must now address many crucial issues regarding their role and that of the party. The interviews analyzed here provide many insights into the thinking of these key actors. First, strategic considerations appear to provide a strong impetus for ex-movement leaders to stick with the party. Despite their concerns about the party's direction or structure, all still feel that party involvement is the most viable means of bringing about the social changes they seek. None regretted their shift from movement to party activism.

Although the party's ideological direction is still not perfectly clear, this ambiguity no longer serves as an asset, drawing these movement activists to an entity that they see as open to their ideas. Instead, it seems to serve as a source of frustration. But despite these unresolved ideological issues, the strategic benefits of party involvement tie these movement actors to the party even as they work to shape the party's ideological position to their liking.

All of this is considered in the shadow of the PRI's reign. In the minds of Mexicans, including the ex-movement leaders, the PRI's overwhelming political presence for decades is still hard to overcome. Many of these party members' strategic, ideological, and structural struggles relate to finding a way to govern that is not like the PRI. As former members of social movements, they agonize over how to represent the demands of the social movements as a party and party in government without reproducing the co-optive corporatist structure of the PRI. Similarly, many are striving to be a party in government that represents the interest of all citizens, not simply those that affiliate with them. At the same time, however, some ex-social-movement leaders in the PRD wonder what it means to be a party that represents the interests of all, when they were founded by and for those who were too often left out—the poor, the indigent, the ones who formed social movements, and eventually a party to advance their interests.

While in this article I focus on the group of ex-social-movement leaders turned party activists, these activists and the party's experience can

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39. Bruhn, *Taking on the Goliath.*

be placed in the broader Latin American political context. The Latin American democracies have been going through a transition since early 2000 as they move toward the left in many countries. This move toward the left has diverged among Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil where the liberal left is in power and Venezuela and Bolivia where a more radical populist left has gained prominence. We can observe a similar split in the forces that exist in the PRD. These interviews point to a split in ideological and policy directions sought for the party by the ex-social-movement activists currently acting in the party or the Mexico City government of the PRD. Although they all recognize the strategic benefits of party involvement, ideological differences and conflicting perspectives regarding the party's relationship with social movement organizations divide them. Given the number of ex-movement activists within the party and their former affiliation with the grassroots base, these actors represent a politically important group to examine and understand. Their perspectives and experiences provide insight into the general personal transitions associated with a shift from movement to party activism; in addition, this particular group could play a decisive role in the direction of the PRD and of Mexican politics in general.

Appendix 1

Profile of Interviewees

Position	Interviews
Federal or local deputies	5
Local government, civil service	9
Party activist	7
Party with employment	3
Other (non-PRD)	2

Interviewees identified the following movements with what they were active in the past:

Urban Popular Movement	16
Labor	3
Civic participation	3
Student Movement	5
Other	2

(Numbers exceed the number of interviews because many interviewees identified with more than one movement.)

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions

1) What social movement organizations were you active with in the past?

2) What were the goals of your organization?

3) How did you try to achieve these goals? Who did you target in order to make your demands?

4) When did you become involved in the PRD?

5) Why did you become involved in the PRD rather than continuing your work with (*name of social movement organization*)?

6) What are your major responsibilities in the party now? Who do you target in order to meet the goals of the party?

7) Is your experience in working for the social movement organization different than working in the PRD? How?

8) Have your goals changed regarding the issue that your organization tried to advocate for relative to your party goals?

9) Do you think it is more effective to pursue goals through the party organization as opposed to the social movement organization? Why or why not?

10) Can you share some concrete examples of your achievements in the social movement organization?

11) Can you share some concrete examples of your achievement in the party organization?