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What is liberation today?

A critical analysis of the term liberation
in Ivan Petrella's project and the Brazilian context.

Kristin Skjøtskift

Supervisor

Professor Kjetil Fretheim

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Pra não dizer que não falei das flores

Walking and singing and following the song
We are all equals, joined hands or not
At the schools, the streets, fields,
constructions
Walking and singing and following the song

*Chorus: Come, let's go away
Because waiting is not knowing
Those who know make the time
They don't wait for it to happen*

Through the fields there is hunger, in big
plantations
Through the streets marching, indecisive
rows
Still make the flower their strongest chorus
And believe in the flowers defeating the
cannon

There are armed soldiers, loved or not
Almost all lost with guns in their hands
At the barracks they teach them an old
lesson
Of dying for the homeland and living
without reason

Chorus

At the schools, the streets, fields,
constructions
We are all soldiers, armed or not
Walking and singing and following the song
We are all equals, joined hands or not

The loves in our minds, the flowers on the
ground
The certainty ahead, the history in our hands
Walking and singing and following the song
Learning and teaching a new lesson

I first heard this song at a seminar about the 1963 military coup in Brazil. The same song was sung when we gathered to show our disgust after a young boy was killed because of his sexual orientation, and when we took to the streets to gather votes for the popular referendum. The song is called «Pra não dizer que não falei das flores» («So that it may not be said that I did not speak about the flowers»), and was written by Geraldo Vandré as a critique of the dictatorship. I decided to translate the lyrics to English and include them here, as a preface for a more academic discussion on terms, social structures and theories, and a reminder of the fight for and path towards liberation happening in the streets. When conducting a work like these thesis, it has been important for me to be reminded that liberation is a process of changing lives, real lives, of people fighting here and now. Doing liberation theology is to engage in these peoples' fight and walk together with them.

1: Introduction

«Only a theology that is at the same time politics can really be a theology today»

(Gibellini, 1996: 139, my translation).

Liberation theology is a political movement that grew out of the Catholic church and the wider Latin American context in the 1960s. It has been described as a moral reaction to poverty and oppression, rooted in ordinary people's lives and experience of poverty, and expressed in a commitment to change social and political conditions. It is a call to action, a promise of liberating people from material deprivation which grew into an international movement, and this movement constructed models of political and economic organization that intended to replace the unjust status quo. Liberation theology is a new way of doing theology that involves a new use of Scripture to (re)interpret their situation, reading the Bible from the perspective of the poor and marginalized. It is a theology with roots in the life of the Church, and «books of the Bible (like the book of Revelation) and parts of the theological tradition, often ignored or despised, become a vehicle of hope and insight in these situations of oppression and deprivation as new hope in God's purposes are discovered» (Rowland, 2008: 1-2). «Liberation theology is above all a new way of *doing* theology rather than being itself a new theology», focusing on doing rather than learning about theology, and considering the «commitment to the poor and marginalised as a determining moment for theology rather than the agenda of detachment and reflection within the academy» (Rowland, 2008: 3-4). The base ecclesial communities (CEBs) became significant components of both the political and the ecclesiastical scene, and Rowland describes the situation in Brazil as one in which it became difficult to separate the popular church from mainstream Catholicism, and where there was a «widespread acceptance of the CEBs and their central role in being the church in contemporary Brazil» (Rowland, 2008: 6).

Liberation theologians argued that in order to liberate the poor and oppressed, interpretations of the Biblical texts and other religious sources had to be done in the context of social theories, thus they made use of elements from various schools of thought, among them

Marxism. This has led many to argue that liberation theology lost its relevance or even died with the fall of the Berlin Wall. They argue that liberation theology was too closely connected to Marxist theory, and that its decline or what has been described as the death of socialism thus has a direct effect on the movement. Rowland writes that there is a «widespread assumption that liberation theology is simply Marxism with a Christian gloss», and an idea that liberation theology cannot exist without Marxism (Rowland, 2008: XIII). Answering to these assumptions, he argues that there are some parallels between liberation theology and Marxism, but that liberation theology was never greatly indebted to Marxism, and that the movement has developed and adapted to the new context after 1989 (Rowland, 2008: XIII).

Argentinean Ivan Petrella, former assistant professor of Religious Studies at the University of Miami, is another scholar arguing for liberation theology's continued relevance. He is a scholar of modern theology, philosophy and social theory, and has done much of his work on the interplay between religion and politics (Miami College, 2013). Now he has returned to Argentina and engaged himself in local politics and as academic director of the think-tank Pensar (Petrella, 2014). In this thesis, I will conduct a literature study focusing on Petrella's work as the main material for my thesis, using the early work of Clodovis Boff, Leonardo Boff, and Gustavo Gutiérrez as a basis for discussing Petrella's project. The reason for choosing Petrella is that he is one of the relatively new voices of liberation theology, and one who claims to be bringing something new to the discipline. I will mainly focus on Petrella's books «Latin American Liberation Theology. The Next Generation» (2005), «The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto» (2006), and «Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic» (2008). In these books Petrella discusses the development of liberation theology as a movement and an academic discipline, and he sets the stage for future liberation theology. The problem with contemporary liberation theology, he argues, is that it has made itself less relevant, that liberation has become nothing but an academic catchphrase (Petrella, 2006: VII). «Contemporary liberation theologians do not take poverty seriously», thus the very term liberation has lost its meaning, and liberation theology fails to deliver what it promises to do (Petrella, 2008: 84). The result of these developments, according to Petrella, is

that liberation theology ends up interpreting oppression and poverty rather than liberating people from it. This is the point of departure for Petrella's project. He emphasizes that his purpose is not criticizing a failing theology, but rather to contribute constructively to reclaiming liberation theology's place and relevance. The argument is that classical liberation theology of the 1960s and 1970s answered questions in a different time and a different context, thus the discipline must reinvent itself to still be relevant. Petrella seeks to refashion liberation theology «for a new century but an old challenge, the liberation of the poor» (Petrella, 2006: VII, 125). One of his main proposals is the development of a new framework that moves away from identity politics to a focus on class as the main category, and a stronger focus on the integration of social science and interdisciplinary work through the (re)invention of the historical project. He also argues that we need to consider poverty and exclusion a global reality, that the social division is a matter of class rather than a geographical north-south divide. He borrows João Biehl's term *Vita*, meaning the spread of zones of social abandonment, to explain the current global material context for doing liberation theology - a context he describes as the poverty of the majority (Petrella, 2008: 10).

My first encounter with liberation theology was through a study group at MF Norwegian School of Theology. I had just started my master studies in Religion, Society and Global Issues, and participated in a group which read and discussed some of the classical texts of the discipline. My impression was that, at least from a Western point of view, liberation theology was a movement which at some point had great influence but which was now as good as dead. The revolutionary nature seemed to fit better with a time characterized by military coups and dictatorships than the contemporary Latin American society considered to be more developed and democratically ruled. Still, I knew that many Latin American countries are characterized by strong social and economic injustice, and that power relations in society strongly favor some while oppressing others. In Ivan Petrella's work I found the argument that liberation theology never died, and he set out to reinvent the discipline. This made me curious to examine his project, and I had the chance to do this while being in Brazil for two semesters. My stay have provided me with new and interesting insights in the structures of Brazilian society, and I decided to use these to contextualize and analyze Petrella's project. Staying in

Brazil has provided me with material that I would not have had access to in Norway, and as I have been learning Portuguese I've been able to read books and articles that are not available in Norwegian or English. The library at Faculdades EST has an extended department on Latin America, Latin American scholars and theories that are not digitized or available online, and access to these sources has been important for my work. In addition to the written material, I've had the opportunity to talk to people who live in the context that I've attempted to describe and discuss in this thesis. I've been attending classes, events and conferences, read newspapers, watched TV, and had the privilege of getting to know many interesting people that have helped me get a better idea of the complexity of Brazilian society and how one can understand liberation in this context. In analyzing the Brazilian context, I will make use of both Brazilian authors and others. Large parts of my analysis build on the books «Brazil on the Rise. The story of a country transformed» (2012) by the American journalist Larry Rother, Brazilian political scientist César Benjamin's «A opção brasileira» (2000) and Norwegian social geographer Torkjell Leira's «Brasil. Kjempen våkner.» (2014). I will also follow Petrella in using João Biehl's «Vita» (2005) to describe the current context for doing liberation theology, and I attempt to describe the Brazilian context by combining his analysis with Brazilian anthropologist Roberto da Matta's categorization of Brazil as a hierarchical society which separates persons and individuals.

During my stay in Brazil I have become more aware of how everything we do, our choices, the way we read and interpret a text, and our very perspective on the world is affected by our worldview. My academic background is from social science, not theology or economy, and this has given me both resources and limitations in conducting my work. My point of view when discussing the Brazilian situation and the meaning of liberation in this context will always be that of an outsider, and it has been important for me to be aware of my own history and my own perspective and how these affect me while working on the thesis. The process of writing it has improved my understanding of research as the constant search for observations and interpretations, and why it is crucial to recognize subjectivity as neutral or objective research does not exist (Eggert, 2003: 14, 19). Thus I recognize that the presentation of Brazil given in this thesis is the result of choices that I've made along the way. Other perspectives

could have been included, as for example in my presentation of central actors in Brazilian society, and it is my prioritization that has made my thesis what it has become.

1.1: Religion and politics, moths and flames

Liberation theology emerged in the experiences of oppression, vulnerability and marginalization, and «the concern with human well-being and an understanding of the Church's mission which includes practical measures for human betterment have embraced theologians as co-workers in practical expressions of Christian commitment» (Rowland, 2008: XV). Rowland argues that even if the agenda emphasises dialogue between Christian tradition, social theory and the perspective of the poor on their own situation, liberation theology is not only of interest to theologians. Liberation theology concerns the role of religion in contemporary society, and «the emphasis on the political dimension of the Church's mission within situations of extreme poverty has made it the most compelling example of political theology in the late twentieth century» (Rowland, 2008: XV). Thus liberation theology can be contextualized in the larger discussion on the relation between religion and politics. These discussions have a long history: Greek philosophy tried to establish a metaphysical worldview and system of cooperative morality, Romans used force to establish their authority over the Jews, Christianity spread and became a popular political movement, and Islamic faith united Arab tribes, spread Arab language, laws and culture (Stewart, 2006). Many scholars have engaged in the discussions, and one of these is Nicholas J. Demerath describes the relationship with the metaphor of a moth circling a flame. The moth is drawn to the warmth and light of the flame, and seeks to fly close enough to receive the benefits of the heat without getting burned, but as the optimal distance or proximity is difficult to calculate, increasing benefits entail increasing risks. Demerath writes that «when religion keeps its distance, it maintains purity at the risk of a precious but often irrelevant marginality; when religion approaches the flame, it experiences relevance at the risk of being consumed» (Demerath, 2003: 1). He argues that since most religions have a social agenda including the larger society and not only members, approaching and engaging in politics is natural and necessary. Confronting the sin of the world, converting pagans and saving souls

requires engagement in «the world beyond their sanctuaries», thus the religious moth seeks the flame of political power (Demerath, 2003: 3). At the same time there are political moths seeking the religious flame. This can be explained by a desire to exploit the ability of religion to provide legitimacy and moral influence, and there are various risks involved in engaging in this kind of close relationship (Demerath, 2003: 5).

Liberation theology includes both theological and political elements, and Petrella's attempt to (re)invent the historical project is an example of how to combine the two. The Latin American context is one in which the Catholic Church, as we will see, clearly had and still has a political role, but the relation between state and church is constantly changing as the context around it changes. Power relations are constantly constructed and reconstructed, thus the discussions on religion and politics continue. But the discussion in Latin America differs from the European and North-American, as the North-Atlantic discourse has focused largely on secularization as a natural stage of the development of modern states, and has often operated with a strict divide between sacred and secular. Discussions have concerned the place religion in secular states, and what makes the context for doing theology in Latin America different from the European or Western, is that the challenge does not come from the non-believer but from the non-person. The non-person does not mainly question the religious world but the economic, social, political, and cultural, and thus the focus changes from announcing God in what Gutiérrez calls a grown up world, to announcing Him as Father in a non-human world and telling the non-person that he or she is a child of God (Gibellini, 1996: 358-359). The new hermeneutics are developed as liberation theology does not interpret Scripture and traditional sources of Christianity in an abstract way, but from a determined political and social situation, with awareness of the context from which it emerges (Gibellini, 1996: 355).

1.2: Liberation theology's relation to public and contextual theologies

Liberation theology is often considered part the wider category contextual theology, «a term now widely used to designate theological reflection which explicitly explores the dialogue

between social context and Scripture and tradition» (Rowland, 2007: XV-XVI). The problem with this term is that it suggests that there exists a form of theology outside of context, that there exists a non-contextual or neutral form of theology while all other forms are contextual variations of this. Petrella argues that labelling «a liberation theology as contextual is to reduce it to the category of a particular theology in dialogue with other strands of modern theology», and that this is wrong as liberation theology is much more (Petrella, 2008: 133). It is a fundamentally different theological discourse, as it understands itself as critically oriented science which is interested in the making of transcendence and not just interpretation the meaning of it. The discipline did not emerge just a new way of doing theology, but «sought and seek a new understanding of theology itself» (Petrella, 2008: 134). Liberation theology represents an epistemological break building on the realization that «theology has traditionally been done from a standpoint of privilege» and that Western theology is «the product of a minority of humankind living in a state of affluent exception end enjoying gender, sexual, and racial dominance» (Petrella, 2008: 134). The epistemological break results in liberation theology offering an alternative way of doing theology and a different reading of the contemporary context. «It is not just that liberation theologies have a different *content*, they are more profoundly different in that they have a different *methodology*» (West, 2007: 159, his emphasis). The discipline presupposes a political, ethical and evangelical option in favor of the poor, and the theologian is situated in a determined social place, on the side of the oppressed, and finds motivation in the Bible (Gibellini, 1996: 354). The emphasis is placed on the meaning the text has for the reader rather than on the meaning of the text in itself. Critics have argued that this exercise is dangerous as it opens up for every human being to do their own interpretation, but Rowland argues that reading meaning into the text is always at work in the process of interpretation, and stresses that the biblical texts themselves are interpretations (Rowland, 2007: 8). Petrella argues that as liberation theology is grounded in the broadest context available, the context of the spread of zones of social abandonment, it comes as close as possible to being the first truly global theology (Petrella, 2008: 135). Arguably this awareness of context is an advantage:

The overtly committed reading from liberation theologians at least has the merit of being more clear about where they are approaching the text from and posing a

challenge to those of us who are more ideologically complacent. The apparent absence of partiality in 'Northern' academic readings should not lead us to suppose that there may be no interest at stake. All of us involved in mainstream academic theology need to examine our consciences and ask ourselves how far our theology breathes a spirit of detachment and objectivity (Rowland, 2007: 10).

The development of Latin American liberation theology and European political or public theology can be seen as parallel political turns in theology, but they are born in different contexts, and they face different challenges (Gibellini, 1996: 361). Sebastian Kim argues that public theology has some common characteristics with liberation theology, but that it «establishes its own distinctive ways to engage in public issues» (Kim, 2011: 3). The term public theology was introduced by Martin Marty who suggested that doing public theology or being public church meant attempting to interpret people's lives in the light of a transcendent reference, relating private faith to public order (Kim, 2011: 3-4). It can be defined as «Christians engaging in dialogue with those outside church circles on various issues of common interest» and Kim argues that one of the features that separates public theology from liberation theology is that «the attitude towards existing systems is not that they are necessarily evil or entirely wrong. Public theology takes a reforming position rather than a revolutionary one (...) seeks for a more fair and open society by employing advocacy, critical dialogue and debate» (Kim, 2011: 3, 22). Thus public theology does not first and foremost seek to replace the system and liberate the non-person from oppressive structures, but rather being a critical voice from inside the system. Kim argues that while liberation theology's main issues are poverty, injustice, the relation between state and church, and the idea of revolution, public theology is concerned with inequality, policy-making, privatization of religion, monopoly of states, market, media, globalization, and civil society. Liberation theology is revolutionary and challenges the socio-political and economic status of a system it seeks to radically change, while public theology, on the other hand, is reforming, and seeks gradual reform through advocacy and debate (Kim, 2011: 23-24). The characteristics he mentions constitute part of my argument when I, in analyzing Petrella's project, claim that his work is more a public theology project than liberation theology.

1.3: Conceptual clarifications

My main objective is analyzing the term liberation. I understand liberation as a process, having both theological and socio-economic implications. Liberation is a call to walk together with the poor, engaging in the development by which the non-person, the one excluded from the ruling system of the capitalist market, goes from being an individual to being a person through the process of humanization. It is a process for constructing a just and society, emphasizing «that human beings transform themselves by conquering their liberty throughout their existence and their history» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XVI). It is a political process, and at the same time it is the salvation from sin, «delivering the captive to liberty» (Boff, 1984: 15). This is a working definition which will be extended and further developed throughout the thesis.

I want to emphasize something that might seem obvious, namely that the Latin American and Brazilian contexts are in some ways very different from the Norwegian. This is important for various reasons. When discussing «the Church» in this thesis, I refer to the Catholic Church, and more specifically the Latin American Catholic Church. I want to clarify this because it is important to understand that when the Church was brought to Latin America from Europe it represented something alien to the people. The Church and the faith it represented was forced upon the people, and the whole religious system was new and foreign. The new religion never completely eradicated the faith and traditions of the Latin American people, and the result of a long process of coexistence, mission, rivalry and conflict is a unique form of syncretism. The Latin American Catholic Church is not completely the same as the Catholic Church of the Vatican, neither is Afro-Brazilian religion the same as the religions once brought by the slaves that were sold from Africa. The whole religious sphere in Latin America is characterized by syncretism and what some choose to call contextualized religion, and in this context the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which in Norway has been the church of the majority, is a minority church. In Brazil, for example, only one million in a population of two hundred

million people are Lutherans. What also separates the religious sphere in Latin America from the Norwegian is the enormous expansion of Evangelical churches the last decades. I will elaborate on this when discussing central actors in Brazilian society. The political context is also different from the Norwegian, as Brazil has been both a colony, a republic, and a military dictatorship, and has a relatively short history as a modern democracy. The power relations at play vary from the ones in Norwegian society, as does the very structures society builds on. I will return to a deeper discussion and a more thorough account of this in chapter 3 - Liberation in the Brazilian context.

In this thesis I make use of different terms and categories when discussing those who are in need of liberation. Boff uses terms as «the poor», «the captive», and «the excluded», and the latter is also used by Biehl when he describes the state of Vita. Gutiérrez discusses liberation of «the poor» and «the exploited», and Petrella uses the category «non-person». When analyzing the hierarchical structures of Brazilian society da Matta separates between «individual» and «person», a categorization in which a person is an acting subject and the dominant category, while an individual is one of many in the faceless majority, categories which resembles Gutiérrez' idea of liberation as a humanization process or the becoming of a new human being. Throughout this thesis I will make use of all these terms and categories as I understand them all to represent those who should be liberated, those who need liberation. As capitalism is the ruling world order and a system which is in its very nature oppressive, I understand these categories to include all of us.

I have chosen to use the term liberation theology in singular form rather than plural. I recognize that there are various liberation theologies, emerging from different parts of the world and having different understandings of who's in need of liberation, but for the sake of this thesis I have chosen to discuss the movement as a whole, focusing on Latin American liberation theology. When suggesting the use of feminist theology's methodology in analyzing power relations and imagining an alternative system, I understand this discipline to be part of, and not on the side of the wider term liberation theology.

1.4: Analyzing the term liberation

The objective of this research is analyzing the term liberation. I will conduct a literature study, analyzing the term in early and contemporary liberation theology, and use these sources of liberation theology as resources for analyzing the work of Ivan Petrella. This thesis starts by outlining the historical background of liberation theology based on both the religious and the sociopolitical context from which it originated. Separating the two may seem strict and constructed as one might argue that religion constitutes part of the sociopolitical sphere and thus cannot be treated separately. I will follow Petrella's method of treating the two separately as it thus becomes easier to see how both external and internal factors changed the position and the very being of the Catholic church in Latin America, while at the same time changing the entire society. This chapter analyzes the development of the Church and the wider Latin American context in the period after 1930, and the Western development programs that made the continent dependent on external powers. It discusses the conferences held by the Catholic Church and the following up of these in the CELAM meeting, and how these together with other developments and movements in society laid the ground for what came to be known as liberation theology. The chapter also includes an analysis of the term liberation in the work of two early liberation theologians, Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutiérrez. The reason I include these scholars, is that many of their terms and definitions are central also to contemporary liberation theology, and that the context they describe has many similarities with the current context for doing liberation theology. Their work will be used as both a background and a contrast for outlining and discussing Petrella's work, and for analyzing what liberation means today.

In chapter 3 I discuss the term liberation in contemporary liberation theology. The chapter outlines Petrella's liberation theology project and analyses it as a basis for discussing the term liberation in the contemporary Brazilian context in chapter 4. Vita, understood as a manifestation of the spread of zones of social abandonment, is presented as the context for

liberation theology today, and Petrella argues that liberation theologians are unable to respond to this context. The chapter gives an overview of contemporary liberation theologians' attempt to answer to the new context by reasserting the core ideas of the discipline, revising basic categories, and critiquing idolatry. Petrella criticizes these strategies for being insufficient as they are missing a concept once central to liberation theology, the historical project, and explains why a restricted understanding of theology and the role of social science results in failed attempts to understand and to do liberation theology. He proposes an alternative approach for reinventing the discipline, a model of alternative pluralism, and emphasizes the importance of incorporating social sciences in the construction of new social structures, not only in when criticizing the existing ones. He argues that Boff's separation of social sciences and theology, and the non-theological delimitation of the former, ends up negating liberation theology's focus on liberation. Petrella encourages a higher degree of interdisciplinary work, and applies the work of Robert Unger as an attempt not to consider capitalism a monolithic whole, but rather a social construction that can be changed.

In chapter 4, I seek to discuss whether Petrella's reinvention of liberation theology through the construction of a new historical project can contribute to changing a Brazilian society which is, and has always been, characterized by strong hierarchical structures with a minority elite. These structures reach back to the period before Brazil even became Brazil, when the land was inhabited by indian tribes. My outlining of Brazil's history and current situation is extended as I seek to give an introduction of a huge and complex country also to those who do not know this context. It starts with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500, and I recognize that it is problematic to outline Brazilian history only from this point, knowing that the Portuguese did not discover an empty land where the resources they found were theirs to take freely. The reason why I still choose this starting point is that this presentation is given to explain the structures of modern Brazil. The country has an amazing and complicated history where rich natural resources and growth have occurred in parallel with exploitation, suppression and unjust distribution, and I attempt to understand how the country became what it is today. In 2014 it has been 50 years since the military coup in Brazil, and many of the structures and power relations established in the period of the dictatorship are still present in Brazilian

society. At the same time, the social, political and religious context has changed, and the country has experienced enormous development in the last decades. 2014 is also the year in which the world cup will be held in Brazil, and the year of presidential elections. In the context of the relatively young democratic state, there are many battles to be fought as large parts of the Brazilian population are still poor and oppressed. Benjamin argues that globalization has led to a situation in Brazil where the hierarchical structures have been strengthened at the same time as much power is left to external agents, that the lack of instances expressing citizenship leaves human relations to be defined by market relations (Benjamin, 2000: 69-71). This implies that citizenship is deemed universal only for the rich minority while it is denied to the poor majority (Biehl, 2005: 47). By analyzing relations of power among central actors and the structures of Brazilian society, I seek to discuss the term liberation, and to figure out whether Petrella's alternative pluralist model is liberating in a Brazilian context.

This analysis constitutes, together with the first chapters of the thesis, the background for discussing Petrella's project in chapter 5. I draw on the work of political scientist Ellen Wood, and use her discussions about the capitalist system as a basis for evaluating whether Petrella's project is a liberation theology project or a project seeking to include the excluded in the existing system rather than replacing it. My argument is that he ends up doing the latter. His proposed model consists of two elements; changing the existing system and democratizing access to it, and this is a transformation rather than liberation theology's original project of replacing the system. According to Wood, capitalism is in itself oppressive and thus incompatible with democracy, and following this argument a revolutionary reform, as Petrella proposes, will not be enough to liberate the oppressed (Wood, 1995: 259). Petrella's analysis of the context for contemporary liberation theology is good, but he seems to fall victim to his own criticism as he conducts highly academic discussion, one that does not propose concrete solutions to constructing a new historical project but rather constitutes another analysis of the current situation. I will also argue that Petrella, by focusing almost exclusively on social sciences, loses a radical factor that characterized early liberation theology, namely the use of the term theology and the implications this had. It was this new use of the term that forced the

Church to deal with the new movement, it was the use of the term theology that «bothered the Vatican [as] it implied the possibility of a counter-doctrine to that of the formal church» (Doughty, 2007).

In the last chapter, I suggest what should be done for reasserting liberation theology and ensuring that it deals with liberation that actually liberates. My argument is that liberation theologians must return to Boff's definition of liberation as changing the structures of society, that they need to analyze and criticize power relations in society, and return to liberation theology's radical nature. Liberation theology must seek to go beyond reforming the structures, and to do so it must rebel against itself. Chapter 6 looks at how the huge demonstrations held in Brazil is the expression of a demand from a people who does not feel represented by those who govern their country, a demand that a modern democracy must be both representative and participatory. The chapter presents liberation as considering who makes history, as the process of humanization in which individuals become persons, in which the oppressed and excluded becomes a subject. If the capitalist system is in its nature oppressive, there is a need not for reforming and improving this system but rather replacing it. I propose a three step model for the process of constructing an alternative system and making liberation reality, a process which includes a rereading of reality, the ability to imagine a new system, and the political will to change status quo. Entering in dialogue with Petrella, and through a discussion on the need for liberation in contemporary Brazil, I will argue that liberation must again be understood as a revolutionary concept, as a process humanizing the non-person, seeking to construct a radically different system. Liberation theology must rebel against those claiming it dead or irrelevant, against those considering it just another contextual theology, and against itself, so it can become more than an academic discourse. I will argue that the revolutionary concept of liberation should be understood along the lines of classic liberation theology and contemporary feminist approaches.

2: Liberation in early liberation theology

Liberation theology is a movement that grew out of the Latin American Catholic Church in a context that was severely challenged in the period after 1930. After three centuries of colonization Latin American countries achieved their independence, and for the church, which had been established and later maintained under the control of the Spanish crown, independence caused a crisis (Kim, 2008: 154). The Church faced challenges both internally and externally, one of the major internal challenges being the Church's fragmented organizational structures. Weak infrastructure and communication made some of the churches partly or completely isolated, and there was little exchange of ideas between them. At the same time, as the power of the Church was mainly focused in Rome, the entire structure and organization was very ineffective (Smith, 1991: 71, 82). The external context was also changing as Latin American had growing urbanization and a decline in agriculture which severely transformed society. People living in rural areas experienced both push and pull effects; poverty, lack of education, lack of land, and lack of opportunities pushed them out of the countryside, while the prospects of a better life pulled them towards the growing urban areas. In addition to internal migration, urbanization was caused by European immigration. At the same time there was a rapid growth of congregations outside the Catholic church, especially Protestant churches, seminaries and Bible schools, as Protestant missionaries were very successful among the new urban populations. There was a significant development of secular movements as well, especially in the cities, with a growing amount of labour units, socialist organizations, and communist parties. The new society saw expansion of political opportunity and with it increasing possibility of realizing one's own will in a context characterized by oppressing structures and centralized powers (Smith, 1991: 72, 75-76).

The changing Latin American context were noticed outside the continent. When The United Nations declared the first decade of development, US president Kennedy committed the United States to overcome poverty in Latin America through an economic plan of enormous investments, industrial growth and creation of jobs. The goal was to change the Latin American countries from commodity suppliers to modern industrial states. There were great expectations towards the new political leadership in Latin American countries, and Kennedy

was among those who wanted to support the regimes he considered to be progressive in democratic ideals and practices, preferably the regimes not too far on the left side of politics. But it would not take long before the entire situation changed and the initiative failed: the expected triple-down effect of the economic initiatives stalled, and many Latin American countries experienced military coups which turned them into brutal dictatorships (Nordstokke, 1987: 15-21). Armed forces took control in Brazil in 1964. President Goulart had moved further and further to the left, and his plans of nationalizing privately owned oil companies and convoking an assembly to write a new constitution led his opponents to respond with huge demonstrations in the city of São Paulo. Goulart fled to Uruguay, declaring the president vacant, congress left control to the military. The Brazilian political left has always claimed that the US not only welcomed but also directed the coup, and over the next years Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Argentina would all become right-wing military dictatorships.

American support for the coup of 1964 provided a template for an era in which political liberties and efforts to reduce social inequality and economic exploitation would be snuffed out all over Latin America in the name of national security and combating the Communist threat (Rother, 2012: 26-28).

Failed economic plans of liberalism undermined the very term development, which were considered to only include economic factors, leaving little space for the political, social and cultural aspects. As the promise of interest-free loans from industrialized countries were converted into creditworthiness, Latin American economy were left in a state of increasing dependence upon others, mainly the United States. Analyzing this situation, some social scientists have concluded that there was a correlation between the development of capitalism in Western Europe and the US on the one side, and lack of development in other parts of the world on the other. The economic system and ruling order resulted in oppression and marginalization, and the poor were those mostly affected. These conditions led some to replace peaceful means with outright revolt, and several guerrilla groups were established. Even though most of these were defeated rather quickly, there was a growing tendency of

social activism, resulting in a new strategy of mobilization through interest organizations, unions and other base groups (Nordstokke, 1987: 27-28).

The Church in Latin America has been «both a political contestant and a political arena, both a state ally and a state victim» (Demerath, 2003:13). Brazil serves as an example of a country where religion has been part of the cultural struggle and where it has been burned by the political flame. The position of the Church has changed with the formal disestablishment from official state religion and the rise of liberation theology, and the 1964 military coup and the dictatorship that followed it represented both a crisis and an opportunity for Brazilian Catholicism: It shredded the Church's traditional beneficiary status as a state ally, while at the same time making the Church the only available arena for expressing discontent and opposition. It gave «new substance and a higher profile to the political dimension of Liberation Theology» as the Church became identified with the social agenda of the left (Demerath, 2003: 20-21).

2.1: 1960s and 1970s - The Church in the modern world

The changing context in the Latin American countries challenged the Church's religious monopoly and political influence. The emergence of a new social critical and Christian-oriented political consciousness worried the Church, especially since some of the groups that were created were led by young, radical priests. These priests clearly had a political role, and the central powers of the Church, especially the Vatican, paid close attention to them. Some were excommunicated, others expelled or silenced by the Church authorities for criticizing theology and praxis (von Sinner, 2012: 105). These central powers were not particularly concerned with the military taking power, and in Brazil most of the bishops welcomed the 1964 coup (Nordstokke, 1987: 52-54). Discussions about the choices made and actions taken by the Church are still debated in Brazil. Much of what happened during the period of the dictatorship is still unknown to the Brazilian public, and many now demand that the state, the military and other authorities put their cards on the table so that justice can be brought to the

people that suffered. Truth commissions have been established, conferences and meetings held, but many parts of the puzzle are still missing as large parts of the documentation and material from this period remains hidden and out of reach for the public.

In 1962, leaders of the Catholic church met to discuss the challenges posed by the modern world. Where the First Vatican Council had concentrated on protecting the authority and property of the Church, Vatican II focused on rebuilding the Church's credibility and adopting the Church to the new reality, as it opened the door for a fundamental rethinking of the relation between Christian faith and the world, and for greater freedom in contextualizing church teachings (Petrella, 2003: 201) Several new key principles were established, as the ideas of «[a] more positive, accepting attitude of the Church toward the world», and «the Church as the People of God» (Smith, 1991: 94-96). The former includes a change towards a more humble, servant image of the Church, while the latter presents it as a community of equals instead of the traditional hierarchy (Smith, 1991: 96). Applying these new principles, Vatican II legitimated the work of progressive forces within the Church that were already involved in social work. From being on the side of what was considered the real mission of the Church, progressive pastoral strategies and social activities now became the focus (Smith, 1991: 99, 101). After the council, many Latin American bishops started paying more attention to the oppressive social order in their home countries and how the Church contributed to obtain it (Williams, 2007). Their experiences from the council led to a strong sense of common identity, and it forced the Latin American church to reevaluate its own situation. A rise in number and importance of staff advisers affected the Church's organizational structures as the authority of the bishops was coupled with the ideas of a new generation theologians and social scientists (Smith, 1991: 97-100).

Vatican II allowed for a «rethinking of the relation between Christian faith and the world by asserting the value of secular historical progress as part of God's work» (Petrella, 2006: 1). The sociopolitical context in Latin America changed even more as political and economical views radicalized, and «priests, workers and students organized in militant revolutionary

groups that espoused socialism» (Petrella, 2006: 1). This situation was further analyzed in the meetings of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), and the concept of liberation was presented as an alternative or addition to the concept of development. The goal was to liberate the poor and oppressed from the conditions of dependency and oppression that characterized the continent, and the poor themselves were seen as the primary agents of social change. Liberation theologians operated with a clear distinction between revolution and reformist political action, understanding politics as the struggle over state power, and a sharp dichotomy between socialism and capitalism, the former considered able to remedy the injustice of the latter (Petrella, 2006: 1). All of these factors are parts of the context in which the first liberation theologians conducted their work.

The first CELAM meeting was held in Medellín, and is often considered the place where liberation theology was first officially accepted, even though it would take years before it emerged as a larger theological movement. In the documents produced at the meeting, the term liberation is used many times, arguably with a double meaning. On the one hand, it is understood as liberation from sin, seeing salvation «as a process of liberation from situations that contradict God's salvific design, for situations that gradually conform to that design» (Boff, 1984:18). On the other hand, the term is intertwined with the term development, and there is a tendency to present the former as an alternative to the latter (Petrella, 2003: 202). Liberation was used to criticize the concept of development, and its connection with political and economical dependency leading to oppression and poverty (Nordstokke, 1987: 61). It becomes clear from this double meaning that liberation is both a religious and a political term, emerging from a context in which the problem of the moth and the flame was highly relevant. The concept of liberation is complex and dynamic, and after Medellín the focus changed towards the process of historical liberation, exploring even further the interrelationship of the political and the religious (Boff, 1984: 21). The Vatican was forced to respond to the liberation theology movement, and in his address to the second CELAM meeting in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, pope John Paul II promoted two important features of the Catholic Church. The first was the recognition of a duty to involve itself in solving major social problems, and the second was an ecumenical commitment to open dialogue (Rush,

1979: 54). The Puebla documents operate with a concept of integral liberation, meaning «liberation from all the forms of bondage and liberation for progressive growth in being» (Boff, 1984: 38). Integral liberation consists of an interior and personal aspect on the one side, and a historical aspect on the other, combining liberation from sin with the concept of liberation from the current economic, social, political and cultural situation described as a social sin (Gibellini, 1996: 349). This affects what is considered the task of the Church and how it should be conducted.

The mission of evangelization is summed up in liberating nonpersons and making them persons by delivering them from injustice, advancing human beings in all their dimensions (integral advancement) and divinizing human beings to the full actuality of their status as children of God (Boff, 1984: 39).

2.2: The concept of liberation

Among the most important productions in liberation theology from this early period we find the works of two theologians, Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutiérrez. They are both considered founding fathers of the discipline, and their theories, concepts and definitions have been and still are central to liberation theology. Two of these are the terms «non-persons» and «preferential option for the poor». The former refers to the «human beings not considered human by the dominant social order» (Petrella, 2005: 148). The latter is a concept implying that preference is given to the well-being of the poor, marginalized and oppressed in society, and refers to God's special concern and compassion for oppressed people, expressed in the life and actions of his son, Jesus Christ. This concern and compassion is considered the duty of the Christian church (Cardorette, 1992: 298). It is a principle that calls «attention to those who are the first (...) with whom we shall be in solidarity. [Option] emphasize the freedom and commitment expressed in a decision (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXV-XXVII). Besides these

terms, Boff and Gutiérrez' conception of liberation is essential in the formulation of liberation theology's theoretical basis.

Liberation theology is based on the gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation of the oppressed and exploited (Gutiérrez, 1988: XIII). Gutiérrez sites the description that Latin American bishops gave of the new context in 1968:

Latin America is obviously under the sign of transformation and development; a transformation that, besides taking place with extraordinary speed, has come to touch and influence every level of human activity, from the economic to the religious. This indicates that we are on the threshold of a new epoch in this history of Latin America. It appears to be a time of zeal full emancipation, of liberation from every form of servitude, of personal maturity and of collective integration (Introduction from Medellín, cited in Gutiérrez, 1988: XVII).

He describes this context as creating «a new challenge to those who are trying to draw inspiration for their lives from him who «dwelt among us» [and a perspective that] should help us see what is at stake in the present stage of history», expressing both the historical situation and the perspective of faith for interpreting it (Gutiérrez, 1988: XVII-XVIII). Liberation theology emerges from this context, and builds on an understanding of this new historical stage «as a call from the Lord to preach the gospel in a way that befits the new situation» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XVIII). The term liberation has both a socio-economic and a theological aspect, and liberation theology is a movement which concerns

human well-being and an understanding of the Church's mission which includes practical measures for human betterment [emphasizing] the dialogue between Christian tradition, social theory and the insight of the poor and marginalised into their situation, leading to action for change (Rowland, 2008: XV).

2.2.1: Leonardo Boff: Liberation as changing social conditions

The Brazilian theologian and writer Leonardo Boff claims that liberation theology was born when faith confronted the injustice done to the poor, and describes liberation theology as reading reality from the perspective of the poor, from the perspective of the nonpersons who are socially and historically oppressed (Boff, 1984: 4). Boff mainly discusses the category poor as the group of captives that should be liberated, arguing that socioeconomic poverty can be explained in three different ways. First through the empirical explanation which sees poverty as vice, implying that poverty is caused by laziness, ignorance and human wickedness. In this approach, giving aid is considered the best solution to the challenge posed by poverty. The second explanation is functional, and poverty is seen as backwardness and a collective problem. Functionalists seek to improve the poor's conditions within already existing social relationships, and poverty is to be eliminated through reforms promoting economic growth, foreign investment and technology rather than aid. Boff criticizes these two positions for treating the poor as mere objects of charity, arguing that giving aid only increases the poor's dependency on others. He only embraces the third, dialectical approach, where poverty is considered collective and conflictive. Boff argues that the only way of eradicating poverty is by understanding liberation as revolution, as a strategy to change social conditions and bring along alternative systems (Boff, 1984: 4-5, 26-27).

Boff writes that the term liberation means «action delivering a captive to liberty and calling for a humanistic commitment», and argues that this understanding of the term is reflected in the Portuguese word *liberação* which consists of the two components free and action (Boff, 1984: 10, 15). He understands argues that the term liberation consists of both a theological and a political part, that it is «the powerful and irresistible aspiration of the poor» that is «delivering a captive to liberty», as a process of liberation from marginalization and exploitation to a freedom in a new society with different social conditions (Boff, 1984: 2, 15, 90). «Behind liberation theology there is a prophetic and inclusive option with life, the cause and the struggles of those millions of humiliated and oppressed in order to overcome this

historical-social iniquity» (Boff, 1985: 13-14, my translation). Liberation theology presupposes a compassion and a protest towards the current situation on three levels. On the social level where there is oppression, exclusion, and marginalization; on the humanist level where there is injustice and negation of human dignity; and on the religious level where there is the social sin, a situation that is contrary to God's plan for humankind (Boff, 1985: 13).

Boff understands liberation and the living commitment to it as a preliminary or pre-theological step, and that liberation theology's method consists of three steps. (Boff, 1989: 22). The first is what Boff calls seeing. This step is the analysis of reality, seeing what is really going on and what the situation is. Then, «in the light of faith», one judges the situation, before determining the routes of (pastoral) action (Boff, 1989: 36). This is the model for doing liberation theology: see - judge - act. Supportive service for the oppressed is fighting together with them against the injustice. Boff criticizes strategies for helping the poor that end up considering them «those who don't have», making them charity objects instead of subject in his or her own liberation (Boff, 1985: 15). Treating the poor as subjects, the liberation movement construct strategies that unite the poor, and «they discover the causes of their oppression, organize in movements and act in an articulated form» (Boff, 1985: 16, my translation). This point of treating the poor as subjects rather than objects is central to liberation theology, as the process of transformation is understood as suffering with and walking together with the oppressed. The Gospel addresses the non-person, and liberation theology means reflection emerging from praxis, searching inspirations in faith and in the Gospel for commitment against poverty in favour of integral liberation of the whole human being. According to Boff, engaging in the process of liberation is crucial for Christians, as the only way of being Christians in a miserable and unjust world is being supportive of the poor and living the Gospel of liberation (Boff, 1985: 18-19).

2.2.2: Gustavo Gutiérrez: Liberation as the struggle for a just society

In his book «A theology of liberation» the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez defines liberation as the struggle to construct a just and fraternal society where people can live with dignity and be agents of their own destiny (Gutiérrez, 1988: 49). Gutiérrez describes a society of broken relations, both between human beings and between them and God. These broken relationships are the results of sin, which he describes as a social and historical fact, and the absence of fellowship and love in relationships among persons. They lead to uneven power relations in society in which some are exploiting others, and where some rich while others are poor. The poor are those oppressed and margined in society, those having to fight for the most basic rights. Gutiérrez stresses that this uneven society is not the result of coincidences (Gutiérrez, 1988: 102, 301):

[The poor] does not exist as an inescapable fact of destiny. His or her existence is not politically neutral, and it is not ethically innocent. The poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible. They are marginalized by our social and cultural world. They are the oppressed, exploited proletariat, robbed of the fruit of their labor and despoiled of their humanity. Hence the poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order (Gutiérrez, 2004: 44-45).

Liberation is a process which requires active participation of both the privileged oppressors and the oppressed themselves, and is one in which man transforms himself by conquering this liberty throughout his existence and his history (Gutiérrez, 1988: X, 113). This process starts with those considered non-human or non-persons, and is a «continuous creation of a new way to be a man, a permanent cultural revolution» (Gutiérrez, 1988: 32). «[Liberation] emphasizes that human beings transform themselves by conquering their liberty throughout their existence and their history» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XIV). This process has three levels of meaning. The first level is political liberation through a social revolution, a radical move to break the dependence of some upon others that would make it possible to construct a new society. Gutiérrez argues that the term liberation is more accurate than the term development in this context as the latter focuses on bringing changes within the existing system while the former

promotes changing the very system and applies social sciences in this strive (Gutiérrez, 1988: 26-27, 81). The second level is human liberation throughout history; liberation as humanization or the creation of new human beings within the society which is qualitatively more human. This is a society of new social relations, made possible by and through a cultural revolution. The third level is liberation from sin and admission to communion with God and others, mediated in the Word of God and through theology. Liberation is linked to the biblical term salvation as the work of Christ is presented as the work of liberation, and so the theological meaning of liberation is «a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the Church» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XI). Both processes are mutually dependent, and salvation is understood as the communion of men with God and the communion of men among themselves, in other words restoration of the broken relationships that Gutiérrez detected in Latin American society (Gutiérrez, 1988: 151).

Gutiérrez stresses that the term poor is complex: «Being poor is a way of living, thinking, loving, praying, believing, and hoping, spending leisure time, and struggling for livelihood», but it also means «being involved in the struggle for justice and peace, defending one's life and freedom, seeking a more democratic participation in the decisions made by society» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXI-XXII). The term has a social and economic dimension, but this aspect is not all-inclusive as the predominant characteristics of the term poor «are, on the one hand, its unimportance in the eyes of the great powers that rule today's wider world and, on the other, its vast human, cultural, and religious wealth, and especially its capacity for creating new forms of solidarity in these areas» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXIII). Furthermore, it is not enough to describe the situation of poverty, its causes must be determined and analyzed, and thus there is a need for refining analytical tools and to develop new ones. «We need to make an unruffled but critical use of mediations that can help us to understand better where and how the Lord is challenging us as we face the life (and death) of our brothers and sisters» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXIII-XXV). The theological task is «a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God», and this praxis is one «of solidarity in the interests of liberation» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXIX-XXX). The theological work exists in three phases. The first is the lived faith expressed in prayer and praxis. It is a commitment «to

transform history in the light of the reign of God» which accepts the reign now, knowing that it will be fulfilled only at the end of time, and Gutiérrez emphasizes that «if there is no friendship with [the poor and exploited] and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXX-XXXI).

The second phase is reflection in the light of faith, a task which makes it urgent to acquire a better understanding of history, and the third is providing a language to speak about God. Our theological language «must display the inflections given it by those who formulate it and those to whom it is directed» as it «takes its coloring from our peoples, cultures, and racial groupings, and yet we use it in an attempt to proclaim the universality of God's love (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXXIV-XXXV). Liberation theology challenges this notion of universality in theology, and this will be further discussed when analyzing the feminist approach in chapter 6. Liberation theologians stressed the understanding of faith as rooted in «the particularity of a given situation», implying that even though any theology is discourse about a universal message «each type of theological thinking cannot, and ought not, be applied mechanically to situations different from that in which they arose» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXXVI). Gutiérrez understands the authentic universality of theology not as consisting in speaking the same language but «in achieving a full understanding within the setting of each language» (Gutiérrez, 1988: XXXVI).

2.3: Summary

Latin American liberation theology grew out of a context of changing conditions both in society and for the Catholic church, and these challenged the role of Church. Vatican II represents the Church's attempt to adapt to this new context, and Latin American bishops and church leaders held their own meetings to discuss the implications for the Church in their continent. Liberation emerged as an alternative to the development idea promoted by the United States and international organizations, as the poor were identified as those excluded

from the ruling logics of the capitalist market. Liberation theology challenged the traditional relationship between the Church and the poor, and called Christians to active participation in the liberation process. The movement promoted a rereading of the Bible and the Christian tradition, and this new way of interpreting Scripture was to be done from the perspective of the poor. Liberation theology's method was seeing, judging and acting; identifying the non-persons and their situation, judging their situation on the basis of the new reading, and developing strategies for taking action. The goal of the liberation process was the construction of a new society with a different social order, and the liberation of the poor through a process of humanization. As part of the liberation process, liberation theologians also sought to develop a new theological language rooted in a specific situation to get a better understanding of it (Gutiérrez, 1983: XXXVI, 32, 104). The task of liberation theology was understood as suffering with the poor and oppressed, not acting on their behalf, but treating them as active subjects in a process of liberating themselves (Boff, 1984: 90).

3: Liberation in contemporary liberation theology

The call to action in this early period of liberation theology came «from the indignation at the appalling poverty to which millions of people in Latin America and beyond are subjected (...) A situation of oppression from which liberation was needed» (von Sinner, 2012: 103-104). Liberation became both a core concept, a goal and a central hermeneutical category, and it became the lens through which the traditional concepts and religious texts were read. Liberation theologians refused to separate the secular history from the history of salvation, arguing that history is one, and that liberation thus had to do with both life here and now, and in the Kingdom of God

which occurs historically *in* liberation, insofar as liberation means a greater human fulfillment. Liberation is a precondition for the new society, but this is not all it is. While liberation is implemented in liberating historical events, it also denounces their limitations and ambiguities (...) Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of human oppression and exploitation without the coming of the Kingdom, which is above all a gift (Gutiérrez, 1988: 104, his emphasis).

The event of 1989 arguably resulted in perplexity among liberation theologians. Both in Brazil and elsewhere «the utopian vision of an imminent new social order was thoroughly frustrated. Lula was, by a narrow margin, not elected to the presidency in Brazil, [and] the socialist alternative broke down with the Berlin Wall» (von Sinner, 2012: 106). Critics have argued that after this breakdown liberation theology is no longer relevant, that the demise of socialism resulted in inability of the movement to construct a new historical project. Petrella is one of the scholars that seek to prove these critics wrong, arguing that liberation theology is not dead, even though the context have changed. One of the main arguments is that poverty is still the reality for many people, even though the concept poverty may have changed as the

poor have become more specifically identified and are no longer considered a homogeneous category. Arguing that poverty persists, as does oppression and exclusion, a theology of liberation is still highly relevant (von Sinner, 2012: 107). Large parts of the human populations still live in poverty, no matter how one chooses to measure it, and the term poor has been extended to not only include the materially poor but also those that by other means are excluded from society and the ruling world order. New subjects, like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) persons are struggling to be recognized among liberation theologians, as are persons with disabilities (von Sinner, 2012: 107-108). This means that the term liberation continues to be in a process of change, becoming ever wider and more including.

3.1: The context: Zones of social abandonment

In describing the contemporary context, Petrella separates the theological from the social and economic context in which liberation theologians work. The social and economic context describes a world where capitalism is the dominant system, where a person's worth is measured by his or her capacity to contribute to the global economy; those who do not or cannot contribute, are excluded or even considered as worthless. Petrella wants to reconstruct liberation theology to better fit this new context, and argues that the contemporary context for liberation theology is one of global expansion of areas or zones of social abandonment (Petrella, 2007: 279). This term is found in Brazilian anthropologist João Biehl's book «Vita» where Biehl describes the situation and reality of a woman named Catarina who lives in an asylum in the town of Porto Alegre in the southern Brazil. Catarina is a wife and a mother which is taken to the asylum by her husband who accuses her of being mad. Her concrete medical condition remains unknown both to Biehl and the reader, but throughout the book we get to know parts of her story. Catarina becomes an example of someone who is depersonalized and distanced from her own domestic world. She is excluded from the wider society, and her struggle is described as the «reentrance into the worlds of family, medicine, and citizenship» as she «[refuses] to be reduced to her physical condition and faith» (Biehl, 2005: 11, 13-14). The people left at Vita, either by their own family or by some institution that

were meant to help them, are described as and made into animals that because of their lack of money are not worthy of affection and care. They are excluded from society, they are the poor and oppressed, categorized as non-citizens and ex-humans whose lives are deemed good for nothing in the encounter with «institutions meant to confirm and advance humanness», and «their supposed inhumanness» is important in justifying the abandonment they suffer (Biehl, 2005: 39, 47, 52).

Biehl argues that zones of social abandonment make visible the «realities that exist through and beyond formal governance and that determine the life course of an increasing number of poor people that are not part of mapped populations» (Biehl, 2005: 4). These zones are found all over the world, as are the poor and oppressed, and Vita is described not only as a concrete place but a social destiny (Biehl, 2005: 50). The spread of these zones is not a process that is happening by itself, rather it is the result of the ruling logic of «profit, not life» being incarnated in large international institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and WTO. These institutions govern the global economy, and they heavily favor the richest countries. Still, Petrella stresses that the frontier between those excluded and those included in the global economy «is not merely a geographic rich–poor polarisation, it is also a *social* rich–poor divide», and this is making Vita a global phenomenon (Petrella, 2007: 280-283, his emphasis). The context of Vita is the starting point for Petrella’s description and discussion of contemporary liberation theology. It is in the context of the global spread of zones of social abandonment that the term liberation must be given new meaning if it is still to be relevant for the lives of the oppressed and excluded. The context is characterized by the poverty of the majority, and Petrella emphasizes that «the social and economic context within which liberation theologians must work is only marginally better than it was at the time of liberation theology’s inception» (Petrella, 2007: 279). The current order is one in which the global map is shrinking rather than expanding, as growth in world trade has «bypassed rather than integrated the developing world into the world economy» (Petrella, 2005: 149). It is the profit that matters, not life, and as zones of social abandonment spread, «more and more people are deprived of the ability to lead a decent and dignified life» (Petrella, 2007: 280).

My thesis is focused on Latin American liberation theology, but as already mentioned, the concern about those excluded from the global market has also been addressed in other parts of the world. Even if their context might be very different from that of Latin American, the global state of Vita to a large degree provides them with the same agenda for doing theology. The suffering of the poor requires radical questioning of the capitalist system, and one of those concerned with this questioning is South-African scholar Charles Villa-Vicencio. He writes «this questioning must be from the perspective of and serve the interests of the poor. This requires that contextual and ideological critique be employed to assess the benefits for the poor of both capitalist and socialist options for addressing specific economic problems» (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 192). Villa-Vicencio criticizes theologians for only pointing to the weaknesses inherent to the economic systems of socialist Marxism and capitalism, thus ending up effectively promoting the status quo. He argues that as theology is about the well-being of God's creation, human dignity, and fair distribution of resources must be theologically affirmed. The theological ideals for this economic vision is to be realized in a budget which is balanced although favoring the poor, meaning that the lifestyle of the middle-class and the wealthy must be reassessed. Thus, he argues, «the Church is obliged to work with concerned economists, political activists and the exploited poor in seeking to redress a situation within which the marked is influenced by (...) agreements that benefit the rich» (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 193-195). This argument supports Petrella's call for strengthening the interdisciplinary training of future (liberation) theologians. The theological task is not the construction of specific economic models for society, «it is rather to bring the basic social impulses of the liberating biblical tradition to bear on the economic struggle of the poor and the oppressed in contemporary times» (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 197). To do so, the Church must ensure that the economy is not left to market forces that serve the interests of the powerful, and this can be done by promoting forces that allow for democratic intervention by everyone. This quest for an economic alternative to exploitative capitalism constitutes [and] given the global realities of the present, the vision of the alternative order is not finalized (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 197-198).

Petrella argues that in the changing theological context for doing liberation theology «there is a proliferation of liberation theologies – but not one is prepared to deal with the spread of zones of social abandonment» (Petrella, 2007: 284). He describes the theological context as one of a rapid increase in theologies that claim to be liberation theologies, but who according to Petrella are dealing with inclusion rather than liberation, and argues that «the upsurge of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and ecology as the organising axis for liberation theology has blurred the fact that material deprivation (...) remains the most important form of oppression» (Petrella, 2007: 279, 284). He stresses that he considers race, gender, ethnically and sexually based oppression important categories to work with, but sites Boff and Boff who claim that there is a difference between being a black taxi-driver and a black football idol. He argues that the most shocking assaults on human dignity are directed against the poor, and that «[being] black and/or female and poor increases a risk that is grounded in class» (Petrella, 2007: 284). I will return to his emphasize on class as the most important category when I attempt to contextualize Petrella's project in the context of contemporary Brazilian society.

3.2: Responding to the new context

The materially poor are oppressed and excluded from taking part in the market, the system which through the global spread of capitalism has become the dominant world order, but according to Petrella, liberation theologians fail to deal with material deprivation. This is because they are suffering from the «debilitating conditions» of amnesia, monochromatism and gigantism. Those suffering from amnesia tend to loose focus as they forget the problems they seek to solve and the goals they want to pursue, while theologians with monochromatism, on the other hand, suffer from limited range of vision, leading them to focus only on the goal and thus limit the range of resources they could use to reach it. Giantism is characterized by its ability to paralyze liberation theologians as they get obsessed with the gigantic forces oppressing the poor. «Theologians who suffer from gigantism see capitalism everywhere and responsible for everything. Within this conception even envisioning a means of negative resistance is a close-to-impossible task» (Petrella, 2007: 284-289). These debilitating conditions moves the theologians away from what was originally

the ideas and agenda of liberation theology as they «ensure that material poverty and social liberation are never successfully placed at the forefront of theology» (Petrella, 2007: 289).

3.2.1: Reasserting core ideas

Trying to respond to the changing context and the various challenges, liberation theology has developed various responses. Petrella elaborates three which he considers the most central ones. The first is called reasserting core ideas. This position recognizes that the context for doing liberation theology is changing, but argues that liberation theology's core ideas as the concepts of the nonperson and the preferential option for the poor are genuinely theological concepts which do not lose their relevance (Petrella, 2006: 3). This position tries to separate liberation theology from Marxism and the death of socialism, and argues that «liberation theology was never intrinsically tied to any particular social-scientific mediation or historical project» (Petrella, 2006: 3). Petrella draws on the work of José Maria Vigil who argues that liberation theology never had its own model of society, and that the focus on class struggles was a tool used to better understand the reality of oppression, thus the crisis of a socialist model of society only affects liberation theology at a practical level. The core ideas are highly relevant also in the new context, a point which Petrella underlines this by citing Gutiérrez who claimed that «[theologies] live insofar as the conditions that gave them birth remain» (Petrella, 2006: 3). It is the strategy of liberation, and not liberation itself that has failed. By clarifying this, it will be possible to update the discipline at the level of mediation while the paradigm itself remains the same (Petrella, 2006: 3-4).

3.2.2: Revising basic categories

Accepting the premise of the core idea's continued relevance, the second response takes this a step further by revising and reformulating basic aspects and categories of liberation theology. This step is taken to open up for implementation of new sociopolitical, economic and cultural

mediations (Petrella, 2008). Liberation theologians taking this position rejects the understanding of the poor as a unified revolutionary subject, refuses to accept the dichotomy of reform and revolution, and embraces popular culture and civil society as the privileged arena for liberation (Petrella, 2003: 206). In his reformulation of liberation theology, Pedro Trigo proposes alternatives to early liberation theology's revolutionary worldview and contemporary market-oriented neoliberal worldview. He rejects the understanding of the poor as a unified subject with corresponding interests and the marked model of society as one in which everyone is included (Petrella, 2006: 5). The poor is not a class that fully embodies history, but rather they are tactically excluded from the all-encompassing marked as it is based on the «exchange of goods and services that the poor do not possess» (Petrella, 2006: 5). Petrella argues that liberation theology's basic ideas need a «redefinition through the incorporation of new social scientific and cultural mediations»; that there is a need for differentiating «the same theological concept (...) by imbuing it with different political, economic, social and cultural content» (Petrella, 2006: 10). By reformulating some of the basic ideas, liberation theology is better prepared for implementing new knowledge and adapting to the new reality in which it must operate.

3.2.3: Critiquing idolatry

The third response develops a critique of the idolatrous nature of capitalism and modernity which are examples of idols «since they take priority over human life», and as opposed to liberation theology's God as a God of life, these idols require human sacrifices (Petrella, 2006: 8, 10). Liberation theology «does not speak of an irreligious world but of idolatries found in the world that are masked by an understanding of modernity as secular» (Petrella, 2008: 127). Neoliberalism's supposedly secular discourse is a classic example. Neoliberalism has its own vision of paradise, its own version of sin, and it demands faith and sacrifice. Petrella argues that it is theology disguised as social science (Petrella, 2008: 127). The implementation of GATS, TRIPS and TRIMS are expressions of the idolatrous logic that riles the world, and this logic has become universal by the far from neutral process of globalization (Petrella, 2008: 21, 38). Franz Hinkelammert criticizes neoliberal market economy utopian

exaltation of the market, arguing that the laws of total capitalism destroy society, and that capitalism «is irrational in that it is self-destructive» (Petrella, 2006: 9, 10). Hinkelammert argues that strategies for opposing liberation theology has changed from denouncing to an adoption of liberation theology's terminology and the understanding of the relation between God's kingdom and history. He illustrates this by citing a speech held by former head of the International Monetary Found (IMF), Michael Camdessus, at a congress for Christian businessmen, where Camdessus develops a theology supporting the IMF and its structural adjustment programs (SAPs) using the focus on the poor, the Reign of God, and liberation. This can be understood as an example of how theology is not limited to the religious sphere, and how the most dangerous idols, like the capitalist system, might hide behind a secular disguise.

The three moves, reasserting core ideas, revising basic categories and critiquing idolatry, are part of liberation theologians' attempt to respond to the current challenges that liberation theology faces. They are important, but Petrella argues that all three are inadequate. He criticizes the first move, reasserting core ideas, for its vagueness and its inability to refashion liberation theology. Without incorporating social science, the practical meaning of liberation theology's core ideas become unclear and the discipline unable to provide alternatives to the current global order. Even if this first move is necessary, Petrella argues that it remains incomplete (Petrella, 2006: 4-5). Analyzing the second move, revising basic categories, Petrella criticizes what he considers an exalting of civil society and downplaying the importance of state power, and claims that its alleged role might just be a «product of wishful thinking» (Petrella, 2007: 7). He refers to social science literature on Latin America documenting an increasing political apathy among the majority of the population, and adds that an «exclusive focus on civil society downplays the continued importance of structural, political and economic change» and «the importance of state power» (Petrella, 2007: 7). Petrella acknowledges the importance of critiquing modernity's idols and unmasking the sacrificial logic they build on, but argues that this in itself is not adequate. The developing of life as the absolute criterion for judging society is not something unique to liberation theology, and the real problem comes after critiquing idolatry as «the disagreement begins with the

problem of what institutions best serve the goal of enabling human life» (Petrella, 2006: 11). Alternatives are needed to show the idol as idol, but as long as it is not clear what these alternatives are, the three moves remain «incapable of moving from critique to the construction of alternatives» (Petrella, 2006: 11, 17). They miss a concept once central to liberation theology that Petrella argues could give renewed strength to liberation theology: the historical project.

3.3: The historical project

Historical projects are «models of political and economic organization that would replace an unjust status quo» (Petrella, 2006: vii). They are models for combining theology and social science, and had a central place and role during liberation theology's heyday. Several central liberation theologians have written explicitly on the historical project. One of them is Hugo Assmann who considered the historical project central in liberation theology's self-understanding. He discussed the political dimension of faith, and proposed a three level approach where liberation theology's historical reflection on faith has to operate: At the level of social, economic and political analysis, at the level of opting for particular political theories and approaches, and at the level of strategy and tactics (Assmann, 1975: 112). He argued that the language of liberation would lose its content if the historical project was missing, and that the historical project is what distinguishes liberation theology from other theologies (Petrella, 2006: 16). These points were also central in José Míguez Bonino's «Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation» where he discussed the historical project describing it as «a midway term between a utopia, a vision which makes no attempt to connect itself historically to the present, and a program, a technically developed model for the organization of society» (Bonino, 1975: 38). Liberation theology of the 1960s and early 1970s used the term to define itself against political theology, arguing that no standpoint could escape thinking in terms of historical project (Petrella, 2006: 12-13). Bonino followed Gustavo Gutiérrez' description of Latin American society as characterized by dependency, and he called for a rejection of a developmentalist attempt to further integrate the continent into the international capitalist system. He saw a fundamental contradiction between the capitalist

form of production and the worker whose labor is exploited and advocated a social revolution in Latin American society, what he called the «Latin American socialist project of liberation», which envisioned a break away from the domination of the North, changing the economic structures of society and at the same time mobilizing the people to displace oligarchic elites from power. He called for a sense of participation in the population, particularly in the oppressed people, so they could become the masters of their own history (Bonino, 1975: 33, 39-40). This is also part of Gutiérrez' argument as he claims that recognizing the Latin American situation «naturally leads one to speak of liberation and above all to participate in the process» (Gutiérrez, 1988: 54). As reformist efforts have failed, it is only through liberating itself from the domination of the great capitalist countries that Latin America can achieve and experience authentic development.

[This implies] more than overcoming economic, social, and political dependence. It means (...) to see the becoming of humankind as a process of human emancipation in history (...) to see humanity in search of a qualitatively different society (...) It is to seek the building up of *a new humanity*» (Gutiérrez, 1988: 54, 56. His emphasis).

The historical project differentiates Christian groups and theologies as some argue that liberating the non-person is an economic, social and political matter, and thus a non-theological discussion. Gutiérrez denies this, and argues that it is rather a different kind of theology (Petrella, 2006: 15, 23). Liberation «can be applied to an understanding of history [where humankind is] responsible for its own destiny [and which] provides a dynamic context and broadens the horizons of the desired social changes» (Gutiérrez, 1988: 24). Liberation is not only political, but it clearly has a political element, and the liberating process needs a concept of liberation which is specific enough to address real oppression and suffering, while at the same time flexible enough to be more than a governmental program of immediate assistance (Petrella, 2006: 16).

Petrella argues that at its best liberation theologians managed to interrelate religion and social science, they managed to construct and make use of historical projects. These consisted of two parts: one epistemological and one practical and moral (Petrella, 2007: 295). The first part is the attempt to do theology from the standpoint of the oppressed by rereading Christianity from the underside of history. The theological background for concepts like the preferential option for the poor and liberation can be found here: God was conceived of as a God of concrete bodily life, there was a unified anthropology making the body central to salvation so that food, drink, and shelter was part of God's plan for all people. There was also a unified understanding of history, placing the history of salvation at the heart of human history. The other part included the critical and constructive use of social science. Liberation theologians included economics, political science and sociology in their analysis to better understand the causes of oppression and to develop historical projects (Petrella, 2006: 145, 148). Petrella argues that combining theology and social theory is important as it is not primarily theology but rather other disciplines that set the intellectual frameworks for the most influential analysis of the world (Petrella, 2007: 295).

Liberation has to do with economic, social, political and ideological structures. It seeks to operate on structures, not simply on persons. It proposes to change power relationships (...) by helping to create new structures that will allow for greater participation on the part of those now excluded (Boff, 1987: 275).

This task of changing structures seems to be forgotten by contemporary liberation theologians, and rather than helping people liberate themselves from material deprivation, contemporary Latin American liberation theologians only talk about liberation. Thus liberation theology become a painkiller, the opium of the people rather than a radical call to action and revolution (Petrella, 2008: 112, 114). As we have seen, Petrella argues that even though the context for doing liberation theology has changed, people are still oppressed, and the fundamental ideas of the discipline are still highly relevant (Petrella, 2005: XVI). The problem is that the construction of historical projects has been abandoned, and «in its current denial of a role for the social sciences in the construction of historical projects, liberation

theology fails fully to take the goal of liberation to heart» (Petrella, 2005: 155). Liberation theology no longer deals with real liberation, but rather with inclusion, and «only by refusing to trade in liberation for inclusion can a theology be a *liberation* theology» (Petrella, 2007: 289. His emphasis). Liberation theology must rebel again, and this time it must rebel against itself and refuse to become a theology for academia and the middle class (Petrella, 2008: 122).

Petrella stresses that his «goal is not to provide a ready-made historical project» but to «contribute to the task of clearing spaces from which new historical projects may emerge» (Petrella, 2006: 93). His project is one of reconstructing liberation theology, providing an alternative to the increasing hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, and he argues that «if your starting point is the non-person, and your goal really is liberation, you also need a constructive use of the social sciences in the imagination of historical projects that can lift people out of their need» (Petrella, 2006: 125). He understands the non-person as being the one excluded from the global market, thus he explains oppression as having to do with poverty and social class. Petrella argues against the race based identity politics that have dominated much of liberation discourse in recent decades, claiming that rather than liberation theology being about color, race, gender, or sexual orientation, the common denominator should poverty. He claims that the new theologies only increases separation and racism, while poverty and oppression are categories that spread across divides and can provide a common theology. Turning liberation theology into identity politics only blurs the fact that “material deprivation, that is, the deprivation that comes from one’s class standing in society, remains the most important form of oppression” (Petrella, 2008: 81-82). Two-thirds of the worlds population lives in poverty, and as mentioned, Petrella argues that «by grounding themselves in the perspective of the oppressed (...) liberation theologies are grounded in the broadest context available today and so come as close as possible to being the first truly global theologies» (Petrella, 2008: 134-135). The primacy of class as the defining category for liberation theologians to work with will be further explored and discussed when attempting to contextualize Petrella’s alternative model.

Petrella's project is as an attempt to incorporate «new social-scientific mediations to understand the political, economic, and social context within which [liberation theologians] work», and seeks to go «beyond merely calling for revision while at the same time remaining faithful to liberation theology's original understanding of itself as theology» (Petrella, 2005: 147-148). Petrella writes that the loss of historical projects means that the particular way of thinking in which one combines the religious ideal with a specific approach to this ideal, remains unacknowledged. The future of liberation theology is tied to recovering definitions and pursuing the discipline's own ideals, and the recovery and development of historical projects is the most central task for liberation theology today (Petrella, 2005: 148-152). To reconstruct liberation theology, there are several obstacles to overcome. One of these is the changing context in which liberation theologians work, an external factor that is hard to escape. We have seen how liberation theologians have tried to answer to this, and how Petrella criticize them for abandoning the historical project. He stresses that the main challenge for contemporary liberation theology is not this new context, but rather internal obstacles, and considers this positive as the internal conditions depend on those doing liberation theology, thus it is possible to do something about them (Petrella, 2006: 17, 147). According to him, there are mainly two internal challenges that contemporary liberation theology faces. The first is that its methodological statements does not prioritize the construction of historical projects, and this problem is due to a restricted understanding of theology and the (mis)understanding of the role of social sciences. The second internal challenge is liberation theology's approach to democracy and capitalism (Petrella, 2006: 93).

3.4: Restricted understanding of religion and the role of social sciences

Petrella argues that traditionally there have been two different views on how theology is done and what theology is called to do. The first view on liberation theology's methodology is called the canonical view, and sees liberation theology as the rereading of tradition. The discussion of methodology concerns how the term liberation in understood, and Clodovis Boff contrasts the Vatican's understanding of liberation as salvation to liberation theology's understanding of liberation as social liberation (Petrella, 2006: 25-26). He argues that the

latter is a process that consists of different steps: seeing the situation of the poor, judging the situation based on the words of the Bible, and acting by bringing revolution to change social conditions (Boff, 1984: 2-5, 13). The socioanalytical and the hermeneutical steps of seeing and judging are considered tools to construct a new theology, while the goal of social liberation is formally pursued in the third and practical step of the process. The problem with this position, Petrella argues, is the divide between theology and social sciences. He identifies Boff's epistemological scheme as central for liberation theology's turn away from the construction of historical project, arguing that Boff isolates theology from the socio-analytical, giving the latter a non-theological role (Rowland, 2008: 47). Social sciences are restricted to reading and explaining reality, and it is only in the hermeneutical step that the discourse is theological. Petrella writes that there is a need to overcome this split, and argues that «the social sciences do not just read reality, they are the realm where God's promise of life fails or succeeds» (Petrella, 2006: 33). If God is a God of life who has a preferential option for the poor, the theological mediation is related to «the actual working out of these tenets in historical practice and projects in the same way that faith is related to the realisation of faith in practice in a particular historical context», and «without direct theological discourse about the socio-historical, theological theory and praxis – God and action – are not truly integrated» (Rowland, 2008: 47). The second view is called the marginal, and understands liberation theology as the critique of idolatry. According to Petrella, this view is Jung Mo Sung's alternative to Boff's methodology, as Sung claims that the hermeneutical mediation is unnecessary. He argues that it doesn't make sense to interpret or judge the reality as we live in by rereading the Bible as our context is completely different from the one described in the Bible. He claims that reality already is interpreted in the socioanalytical stage, and that the interpretation might happen even before this stage, in a step zero, as one must suppose that those who engage and participate in the struggle for liberation have already judged reality. Supporters of the marginal view argue that theology is more than rereading the Bible; it is the «unmasking of idols that ground the system of death» (Petrella, 2006: 30-31, 33). For them, «critiquing market idolatry with the aid of the social sciences is itself theological», even if the social sciences does not get a role in the process of developing political and economic alternatives to the current world order (Petrella, 2006: 38).

Both the canonical and the marginal view on liberation theology's methodology lack a constructive role for social sciences that would make the construction of historical projects possible, and without social sciences the concepts of liberation theology remain empty (Petrella, 2006: 26, 37). Still, liberation theology stresses its «proper theological nature by focusing on Scripture and tradition as its privileged sources», pushing the construction of historical projects out, arguing that «what is not a part of theology cannot be asked of the theologian» (Petrella, 2006: 147). Petrella denies this analytical split between the theological and the sociopolitical, arguing that liberation theology needs to incorporate social science as this is part of what it means to do theology in and as liberation theology. If separated, the social sciences are limited to reading reality, and to preparing it for theological reflection, and Petrella argues that the «strict non-theological delimitation of the social sciences' role in the socioanalytical stage (...) ends up negating liberation theology's supposed focus on liberation» (Petrella, 2006: 24, 29, 39). What should thus be the role of social science in contemporary liberation theology? Social sciences are what give meaning to the theological terms, and should be used to unmask the false neutrality of these. They must function as critical tools that the liberation theologian can use to better understand reality and the causes of oppression, and they must have a constructing role and outline «the concrete social, political and economic forms that could help people attain better living conditions» (Petrella, 2005: 136). Social sciences are essential in the reconstruction of liberation theology, and «there is no possibility of constructing historical projects if the social sciences do not return into the practical mediation [of liberation theology] and detail the vision of society for which the call of action is heralded» (Petrella, 2005: 153-154).

The historical project is needed to make sure that the process of liberation does not end in idealism, and without it liberation «either loses its connection to the real world or too quickly identifies itself with a political program» (Petrella, 2006: 15-16). The process of constructing historical projects should be the main priority of liberation theology, and it depends on how liberation theologians understand and makes use of both theology and social science. To liberate the non-person, the theological and socioanalytical parts must be held together. Only then can the preferential option for the poor and liberation be more than values

by which society is judged. Only then can they «be developed as alternative social forms; that is, political, economic and social institutions that can be enacted at society's many levels» (Petrella, 2006: 39). For this alternative social forms to emerge, liberation theology needs to oppose the dominant social science approach to Latin American democracy which he describes as a subscription to a «minimalist procedural definition of democracy», which hinders the imagination of new historical projects (Petrella, 2006: VIII, 46). This definition of democracy builds on the work of Joseph Schumpeter who defined democracy as a political method, as a system in which people choose their rulers through elections. He operated with a set of strict conditions for when and where democracies could survive, preconditions that according to Petrella are often forgotten in mainstream social science literature on Latin America. Petrella argues that neither the social nor the political conditions for Schumpeter's democracy are met, and describes it as a paradox that democracy in Latin America run beside an increase in poverty, inequality and polarization rather than functioning as an attempt to lower them (Petrella, 2006: 47-51). This version and understanding of democracy separates the concept from «the foundation of poverty, marginalization and exclusion upon which it rests» as it «forgets that the right to vote allows for a change in masters while a nation remains in slavery» (Petrella, 2006: 46).

There are mainly three phases in liberation theology's relation to and understanding of democracy in Latin America: democracy via revolutionary socialism, democracy via the base communities, and the current take on democracy as stagnant (Petrella, 2006: 62). The first phase took place in the context of military coups and a struggle against leftist powers, and focused on democracy as «incorporation of excluded segments of the population» by attacking structural inequality, giving people tools to exercise citizenship, and breaking power alliances to achieve a truly democratic order (Petrella, 2005: 156). The second phase used the base communities as tools «to work towards a parliamentary [and] popular or participatory democracy», and sought to build the new society from the bottom up through an open political process (Petrella, 2005: 157). The current understanding of Latin American democracy is one of a stagnant democracy that does not necessarily change the current situation and order. Petrella argues that the very notion of democracy seems to be legitimized

by the fact that there is no alternative system, thus it needs not promise to deliver material improvement or social inclusion (Petrella, 2005: 155). Petrella does not want to reject democracy as a concept and social system, but he stresses that a more complex and authentic version is needed for true liberation to take place. New historical projects should make use of liberation theology's insight that democracy must not and cannot be separated from analysis of the economic foundation of society, refusing «to separate democracy as a political mechanism from [its] social, political-participatory, and economic basis» (Petrella, 2005: 156). These insights are important in opening up space for the imagination of new historical projects, as «[a] democracy that fails to incorporate into its self-understanding the pursuit of the economic conditions required for the reproduction of life of its citizens condemn itself to civil unrest and police repression» (Petrella, 2006: 69). Thus there is also a need to analyze liberation theology's relation to capitalism, the ruling world order that contains the oppressive and excluding structures that make some rich and others poor. This system includes the spread of zones of social abandonment, where the non-person is the one who does not or cannot contribute to the market. It results in increasing inequality and exclusion, and the value of a human being is dependent upon how much it produces, meaning that the lives of the wealthy are more important than the lives of the poor (Petrella, 2008: 19). This is the system that constitute the context for liberation theology today.

The problematic relationship to capitalism is not new to the tradition of liberation theology, but the theoretical approach to it has changed. It has gone from analysis through the lens of dependency theory, to imagining capitalism as the framework of world system theory, and finally to the current approach to capitalism as under-theorized (Petrella, 2006: 69). Capitalism was early on conceived of as a total system with no possibility of escaping it, and liberation theologians borrowed insights and arguments from scholars of social theory. Among these were Andre Gunder Frank, who claimed that underdevelopment was the necessary product of capitalist development. The developed countries that he called metropolises were dependent upon the developing countries or satellites: Resources flow from the satellites to the metropolises, enriching the latter while impoverishing the former. Liberation theologians like Boff built upon this notion of capitalism when he changed «deliver us from

evil» into «deliver us from the evil one», referring to the dominant world system (Petrella, 2005: 159). Hinkelammert equalized capitalism with the Western civilization, including the notion of modernity and a belief that universal institutional systems can homogenize all human relations. This resulted in that not only capitalism, but Western civilization as a whole had to be overcome by liberation theology (Petrella, 2005: 160). Petrella claims that liberation theology's embracing of Frank's dependency theory was a fateful turn for two related reasons. First, the take on capitalism limits the scope of political action as revolution becomes the only possible solution, and the size of the opponent to be combated is dramatically increased. Second, liberation theology relies too much on generalizations, lacking the concrete analysis needed to envision paths of change. The result is the idea that capitalism must be rejected as a whole. In this understanding of the concept, capitalism becomes more than an economic system, «it becomes the defining element for all of society», something impossible to avoid (Petrella, 2006: 83-84). There is no escape outside it except through a radical revolution, but since revolution seems impossible after the fall of Communism the only solution is resistance from within the hegemonic capitalism. «Imagination of alternative historical projects remains paralyzed [and] given the failure of revolution the only possible resistance becomes a vague shift in attitude that leaves the actual structures of oppression untouched» (Petrella, 2005: 158-159).

3.5: Petrella's alternative pluralism

An alternative approach is needed, and Petrella describes his project as one of providing liberation theology with «a different set of intellectual tools [contributing] to the task of clearing space from which new historical projects can emerge» (Petrella, 2006: 93). There is a need to incorporate social science not only in critiquing social structure, but also in developing new structures through a new historical project (Petrella, 2006: 134). The focus on the participation of the oppressed in the liberating process must be complemented by a focus on reconstructing the market and the state. It is not just a question of access to and participation in the ruling system, it is a question of changing these very structures, and this is why Petrella stresses that inclusion is something other than liberation. Liberation can be

brought by combating the idolatrous nature of capitalism and developing «alternatives that reveal the idol as idol» (Petrella, 2006: 124). For liberation theology being able to reinvent itself, it must be freed from the stranglehold of church and academy and take on an interdisciplinary nature. In addition to this, it must «recover politics on a grand scale and see identity politics as part of a larger project of social, political and economic reconstruction [and] cease thinking of capitalism as a monolithic whole» (Petrella, 2006: 149).

Petrella claims that «theologians today are unprepared to tackle the challenge posed by the non-person» because theological education discourages the interdisciplinary work needed for the theologians to be trained as liberation theologians (Petrella, 2006: 148-149). It is a problem, Petrella argues, that interdisciplinary work is discouraged, and this is due to a lack of self-confidence among theologians, that theology is often not considered truly academic. In addition to knowledge about the theological heritage, future liberation theologians need to be trained in other disciplines, especially social science disciplines, and learn to use the tools here provided «if there is to be any hope of placing liberation at the forefront of the theological task» (Petrella, 2006: 149). Petrella wants to pave way for a new historical project by applying to liberation theology a model building on the work of Roberto Unger, a Brazilian social theorist which according to Petrella has a «theoretical approach to capitalism and society [that] is radically opposed to that of liberation theologians» (Petrella, 2006: 94). The problem is with contemporary liberation theology is that it remains prey to a «belief that there exists only a limited number of ways society may be organized», what Unger calls the naturalistic premise (Petrella, 2006: 93-94). This premise consists of two parts. The first part is a social theory called deep structure, which builds on the closed list-idea that there is only a small list of possible institutional systems. The death of one of these leads to a crisis of alternatives, and this is arguably what happened to liberation theology with the decline of Marxism. Deep structure theory assumes the indivisibility idea, implying that the systems that compose the closed-list idea form indivisible wholes that stand and fall as a single piece. This is what Petrella described in liberation theology's relation to capitalism. There is no room for keeping some parts of the system while getting rid of others; the system is conceived of as a whole, an all or nothing. This is a central assumption that according to Petrella must be

rejected (Petrella, 2005: 160-161). Another assumption in the deep structure theory is the determinist idea. It says that there are necessary and law-like forces that govern the evolution of institutional systems like capitalism, implicating that a complete overcoming of the system is the only solution (Petrella, 2006: 95). The second part of the naturalistic principle lies behind the deep structure theory, and is what Petrella calls «the conceptual mistakes of ‘false necessity’ and ‘institutional fetishism’» (Petrella, 2006: 95). Liberation theology’s understanding of capitalism serve as an example: «False necessity is the belief that there is a natural content for contingent categories», and this is stated in the specific political expression of institutional fetishism which assumes that market economy can only take one form (Petrella, 2006: 95). Liberation theology remains unable to envision a version of capitalism that can distribute benefits in a more democratic way. The same applies to social science’s approach to democracy in Latin America: «[in] their criticism of capitalism and democracy, liberation theologians reduce them to a single, and thus natural, institutional form» (Petrella, 2006: 96).

Unger’s concern is deepening democracy and expanding economic opportunity through a practice of institutional imagination, a step-by-step imaginative construction of alternative institutions. Petrella argues that liberation theology needs to incorporate this practice to develop new historical projects, and presents an approach which he argues has the possibility of opening a space for political and economic possibility (Petrella, 2005: 148). This model is called alternative pluralism, and the method is described as being neither revolution nor reform, but revolutionary reform, making it possible to find «the gradual steps that will democratize access to political and economic opportunity» (Petrella, 2005: 161-162). This approach suggests that abstract concepts such as capitalism, the market and democracy have no necessary content but are flexible and changeable social constructions that can take different forms (Petrella, 2006: 107). The idea is that alternative pluralism can be incorporated in liberation theology by following a three step model. The first move, theorizing society and economy as frozen politics, builds on the assumption that society is not the expression of an underlying natural order but rather something made and imagined by human beings: Society is «*only* the outcome of political contest», it is frozen politics, and it is fully defined through

politics (Petrella, 2006: 96-97, 99, his emphasis). What follows from this argument is that there is no coherent and systemic whole waiting to be overthrown by revolution and replaced by another whole. Society is constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in political struggles, and these struggles occur because some parts of society are temporarily more removed from political strife than others. It is the metaphor of the moth and the flame, an expression of the constant power play in society. The second step is replacing the monolithic understanding of social structures and models with a recognition of the variety of models that exists in the world today. There is no single understanding of capitalism, neither is there only one expression of the system, thus a definition of capitalism must be general enough to incorporate these different realities and contexts while at the same time specific enough so that it doesn't become too abstract to serve as a concept. Only then, Petrella argues, can concrete social science based tools such as political economy be applied in the institutional design of liberation theology (Petrella, 2006: 99-101). The third step, incorporating mapping and criticism, presupposes that the two other moves have taken place. Mapping seeks to understand the existing structures, and criticism focus on the disharmonies of institutions in society. Together they «reveal an intimate link between thinking about ideals and thinking about institutions» as they find the contradictions in the structures of society and «develop them by thinking of the possible institutional realization of our ideals» (Petrella, 2006: 104). Petrella's conclusion is that implementing Unger's model will lead to a shift in location of hegemony as capitalism can be read as a «dominant discourse *within* liberation theology» (Petrella, 2006: 111, his emphasis). Institutional imagination is contextually based, theorizes society as mixed, and makes room for the development of a new historical project. By applying Unger's model to liberation theology theory «the imaginative leap from an empty capitalism to an empty alternative is avoided» because the task and focus changes from counterpoising different systems to gradually changing the existing ones by democratizing access to political and economic opportunity (Petrella, 2006: 107, 111).

The choice and adoption of social theory is a political act, and «a liberation theology for the Americas must avoid totalizing social theories such as dependency theory or world system theory that present economic and political systems as monolithic wholes» (Petrella, 2008:

138). Petrella suggests critical legal theory as being the most useful resource available to Latin American liberation theologians as it would allow a «move beyond a blanket condemnation of ‘capitalism’ or ‘globalization’ and instead examine the way the legal minutiae of the variety of actually existing capitalisms affects the distribution of resources in society» (Petrella, 2008: 138). It is legal terms that set the terms capital and labour negotiate by, and as law plays a role in distributing power and privilege it could be used to change the rules of the game. Rules could be changed to affect the advantages some have over others by changing power structures in society. Legal rules, which are often considered neutral, can be reconsidered if one imagines alternative rules. In this way, critical legal theory can be applied so liberation theologians become able to see that legal ground rules in society can take different forms, making it possible to «find steps to democratizes access to economic and political opportunity by tilting the rules of the game towards the less fortunate» (Petrella, 2008: 138-139).

3.6: Summary

The contemporary context for liberation theology is one in which the socialist alternative has broken down and many have deemed liberation theology dead with it. Still, poverty is the reality for the majority of the worlds population, and Petrella argues that it is the strategy, not liberation theology itself that has failed. He describes the current context by borrowing João Biehl’s term *Vita*, meaning the global spread of zones of social abandonment. This social destiny is the result of the ruling logics where profit is valued over life, and results in the creation of a rich-poor divide that is social rather than geographical (Petrella, 2008: 51). The market has become the judge of the value of life, thus liberation theology must be given new meaning in this new context, and according to Petrella it should focus on class as the primary category (Petrella, 2008: 2, 19). Interdisciplinary cooperation is promoted as an important step for the Church who, being on the side of the poor, must aim at changing power structures in society and promoting an economic alternative to exploitative capitalism (Villa-Vicencio, 2007: 197-198).

Petrella writes that liberation theologians have proposed different responses to the new context, and mentions three different ones that he calls reasserting core ideas, revising basic categories, and critiquing idolatry. The first builds on the argument that the genuinely theological concepts of liberation theology are still valid, and the second argues that there is a need to implement new sociopolitical, economic and cultural dimensions to these to adopt them to the current situation. The third response is critiquing the idolatrous nature of capitalism and modernity, and revealing the supposed secular discourse of modernity (Petrella, 2008: 127). Petrella argues that these responses are important, but remain inadequate as they do not give any clear alternatives and are «incapable of moving from critique to the construction of alternatives» (Petrella, 2006: 11, 17). Part of the problem, he argues, is that liberation theology suffers from a restricted understanding of religion and social science, and a problematic relationship to capitalism. He proposes an alternative model, building on the work of Brazilian social theorist Roberto Unger, seeking to deepen democracy and expanding economic opportunity as part of a step by step process of imaginative construction of alternative institutions (Petrella, 2005: 148). In this model, society is considered a political construction, and by replacing the monolithic understanding of social structures and models, and recognizing of the variety of models that exists, can concrete tools of social science be applied in the institutional design of liberation theology today (Petrella, 2006: 99-101).

4: Liberation in the Brazilian context

Petrella argues that liberation theology needs to work with more complex and authentic version of democracy if liberation is to take place and if the alternative pluralist model is to be implemented. What does this mean in the Brazilian context? Rudolf Von Sinner argues that «citizenship has become the new key concept for democracy in Brazil», that it has made its way into theology, and that «economic exclusion has made it urgent and political change has made it possible» (von Sinner, 2012: 68, 116). He considers it urgent to engage in issues of citizenship in a more concretely and decisively way (von Sinner, 2012: 116). We have seen how Petrella argues that liberation theology's current take on democracy is a hinder for the imagination of new historical projects as it builds on a minimalist procedural definition of democracy grounded in the work of Joseph Schumpeter. The use of Schumpeter is problematic as neither the social nor the political conditions for his theory are met in the current Latin American context. This results in a situation where democracy is legitimized by the fact that there is no alternative system even though this democracy is stagnant and not necessarily changing the current order. Petrella's argument is that liberation theologians need to approach democracy as a fragmented and changeable social construction so that the structures can be reformed, and he emphasizes that liberation cannot take place unless a more complex and authentic version of democracy is developed. How then will his project of alternative pluralism, combined with focus on citizenship, look if applied to the context of Brazilian society?

4.1: Becoming a hierarchical, democratic state

The Latin-American context differ from the Norwegian in many ways. The continent and its population has a long history of colonization and suppression which affects the contemporary reality. One of the factors that are clearly present is the strong hierarchical system that is established in Brazil. When the Portuguese came to Brazil, they found a land of enormous resources. They tried trading with the native peoples they encountered, but soon this relationship turned to enslavement. As the indigenous groups were also at war among

themselves, the Portuguese were allowed to adopt a classic divide and conquer strategy, and the new country evolved into a system of landlords with responsibility of colonizing, enjoying a large degree of freedom. The Portuguese crown were far away, and the large estates were regarded by the landlords as their own personal kingdoms. Today, a relatively small elite still controls «the bulk of the country's most productive terrain, while millions of peasants have no plots of their own and are forced to (...) miserable living as sharecroppers or to migrate (...) in search of a plot of land they can call their own (Rother, 2012: 11-13). The colonizers did not officially own the land, they sought to extract the resources as fast as possible in order to return to Europe as rich men. As women colonist from Portugal were scarce, some leaders of the settlements married daughters of local chiefs. This helped seal tribal alliances and guarantee supplies, and was the beginning of the racial mixing that defines Brazilian culture as we know it. The mixing «extended to Africans as the slave trade back and forth across the South Atlantic expanded dramatically in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries» (Rother, 2012: 14-15). Even though the military dictatorship of the 1970s tried to spread a sense of pride in racial mixing, it has rather been considered shameful, and even today Brazilians are «reluctant to admit the sordid origins of the phenomenon and the elements of sexual and class exploitation it involved» (Rother, 2012: 16).

In 1549 the Portuguese crown ordered direct royal rule in most parts of Brazil as the shortcomings of the landlord system became apparent. Profits from trade made other European states jealous, and especially the Dutch and the French sought to create their own colonies on the Brazilian coast. Fearing the threat that the foreign powers represented, Lisbon decided to step up its colonization efforts. When Portugal came under Spanish control in 1580, Holland started advancing in Brazil. When gold was found around 1700, an enormous Portuguese migration set off and the crown's interest in controlling Brazilian territories reawakened. Although being geographically far, Brazil felt the political changes that took place in Europe in this period. The spread of Napoleon's power represented a threat to the Portuguese crown, and in 1808 the royal family fled to Rio de Janeiro. This transformed Brazil from a neglected colony to the center of an empire. After the defeat of Napoleon came the time for the royal family's return to Portugal, but the king's son, Pedro, was determined to

remain, and his 1822 declaration «ficcão», meaning «I stay» is known as the birth of the Brazilian nation. The empire lasted until the 1889 coup d'état which sent Pedro's son and his family into exile. The first republic, 1889-1930, saw continued economic growth, but social inequality grew and as the military powers lacked popular support they did not want to risk elections. When slavery was abolished, government encouraged European and Japanese immigration to supply labor which increased both population and the racial mixture in Brazil (Rother, 2014: 16-22).

The restricted international trade caused by World War I resulted in industrial surge and growth of factories in Brazil, and helped create a domestic market. Little was done to help the freed slaves after abolition of slavery, and education was not emphasized as oligarchic families feared that educating the population would threaten their authority. This was related to a system that required voters to pass a literacy test. The global depression put an end to the economical growth as the coffee industry was devastated and with it Brazil's finances. Political tensions were high, and in October 1930 protesters took to the streets. Armed forces stepped in, a provisional junta was established, and presidency offered to Getúlio Vargas. Vargas ruled as a dictator from 1930 to 1945, when he was forced to step down. But only five years later he won a democratically conducted election, and ruled for four more years until he, after various political crisis and corruption scandals took his own life. The next president, Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (JK) won the 1955 elections, and during his administration, under the slogan «fifty years in five», Brazil made huge progress. The capital was moved to Brasilia, and on Kubitschek's initiative a domestic automobile industry was installed. Industrial production grew by 80 percent, and Brazilian companies profited greatly. Still, the costs of this progress would soon become visible. In 1960, JK turned to the International Monetary Fund for a \$47,5 million loan. By 1998 this loan would grow to \$41,5 billion, and «the IMF was to become a major player in the Brazilian economy» (Rother, 2012: 22-25).

Frustration and tensions grew again, and in 1964 a coup d'état overthrew president Goulart's government and an authoritarian military regime assumed power. The regime started stripping

important civilian figures of their political rights, and in December 1968 the Institutional Act No. 5 granted the General dictatorial powers, suspended the constitution, dissolved Congress and all of the state legislatures, and imposed censorship. Large scale human rights abuses and political repression occurred, and power was transferred from one general to the next (Rother, 2012: 28-29). The military dictatorship lasted until general Figueiredo took office in 1979. He promised a policy of «abertura» (opening), and already one year later the Workers Party of Lula was founded. Both the press and the Church grew increasingly outspoken, and when the General's term was coming to an end, millions of Brazilians took to the streets demanding democratic elections. The power of the military was weakening, and after 21 years the military rule ended and democracy was restored, «but the unjust social structure and the inequalities that had bedeviled the country since the arrival of the Portuguese nearly five hundred years earlier remained unsolved (Rother, 2012: 31-32).

4.2: Globalization and the relation between democracy and capitalism

Globalization has been a challenge to Brazilian society, and César Benjamin argues that there is a need to stop mystifying it (Benjamin, 2000: 33). Arguably, globalization has resulted in the power of defining productive structures for society being left to external agents, and Benjamin calls for a discussion of what he calls the «national space» or the sphere of civil society. He argues that the local space is too small while the global space is too big and complex, and that the lack of instances in Brazilian society expressing citizenship leaves human relations to be defined by market relations (Benjamin, 2000: 69-71). The complexities of globalization and the increased power of the international market strengthens the hierarchical structures of society, and today poor people are found in all economic sectors. The richest 1 percent of the population owns more than fifty percent of the wealth, and Benjamin criticizes the current democratic system for becoming blunt and vague, arguing that «the broad consensus in favor of democracy, obtained in the 1980s, produced a relaxation of the critical reflection on this crucial issue» (Benjamin, 2000: 110, my translation). The democratic game has become unable to influence the distribution of wealth, and thus loses

its principal source of legitimacy and leaves the state ever more vulnerable to external influence.

There is something fundamentally wrong with a democracy that produces - and legitimizes - an increase in social inequality in a society historically marked for being so unequal. This «something», that remains silenced by the dominant way of thinking, needs to be unraveled (Benjamin, 2000: 110, my translation).

The upholding and continuation of this situation is possible as long as participation, means of communication and access to information and facts are restricted. Benjamin describes a reality that resembles what Petrella described as stagnant democracy when he writes that the system is structurally incapable of meeting and lacks the means to decrease the embarrassing social distances. He calls this situation one of restricted democracy, as it is one «without participation, without equality of opportunity [which becomes] a caricature of itself» (Benjamin, 2000: 117, my translation). Thus the need to recreate «the space of the citizen» in a way that makes it possible for the population to mobilize (Benjamin, 2000: 118). He understands democracy as the juridical equality between citizens, the liberty of individuals and the division of powers, and claims that

[Democracy] can only gain a powerful public sphere [by operating] between the dispersed crowd, on one side, and the concentrated power of the state, on the other, expanding the spaces of participation and using the resources that the advancement of information techniques and communications provides (Benjamin, 2000: 118, my translation).

4.3: «Do you know who you are talking to?»

What we see in Brazil today is that even if democracy has been restored and citizenship become a central concept, political participation is still restricted to a minority of the population. This powerful elite lives in a reality that stands in stark contrast to that of the majority of the Brazilian people. Biehl argues that contemporary Brazil is characterized by a growing division between those able to participate in the market and those socially excluded, a growing state of *Vita* (Biehl, 2005: 21). Biehl claims that this reality is one in which citizenship «has been deemed universal for the minority who are rich, regulated according to the market forces for the working class and the middle class, and denied to the multitudes who are poor and marginalized» (Biehl, 2005: 47). This description of citizenship as only including a minority of the population corresponds with Brazilian anthropologist Roberto da Matta's argument that Brazil is a hierarchical society «in which social origin and social position are critical to determining what an individual can or cannot do, and to knowing whether a person is above the law or must obey it» (Kingstone, 2008: 235). The hierarchical order functions as a mechanism «returning people to their places,» revealing, in consequence, the entire paradox of application of a universal law that has a «duller level of reality» (da Matta, 1978: 170, my translation). He describes as contradictory the way Brazilians talk about their openness and informality while at the same time upholding the hierarchical structures (da Matta, 1978: 140). The Brazilian society is characterized by a large gap between those who have and those who don't, and has historically been one with a small elite minority enjoying wealth and privilege, and a vast majority living in terrible poverty. A modern middle class has appeared the last decades, and as these people prosper, they express their newly obtained status by hiring servants in their homes. They need someone to be lower at the hierarchical order to uphold their own position, thus the Brazilian underclass persists (Rother, 2012: 50). The hierarchical system is described as heritage of slavery (Kingstone, 2008: 235). The structures of this society is reinforced in the language e.g. in that Brazilian Portuguese does not have just two different forms of addressing others, separating between formal and informal settings; it has four. Two of them means «you» and are used in intimate or ordinary settings with those regarded as one's equal. At the more formal level there is an extensive use of honorifics, and the most formal level form of address is the «o senhor» which is a form used when one wants to show respect. What these two last forms also do is that by using them

you place yourself at a lower hierarchical level or in a different category the one you are talking to (Rother, 2012: 44). This contributes to maintaining and straightening the hierarchy. In this hierarchical society some have precedence over the other. To explain how this functions, da Matta separates the two categories person and individual. An individual is the classic citizen which is free and equal go the others, one of many in the faceless majority, while a person is the acting subject and the dominant category, something more than an individual (da Matta, 1978: 170-171, 175).

The separation of the person from the individual is a separation of classes, and Petrella argues that class is the primary category when rank types of oppression. This is why he wants liberation theology to think across particular liberation theologies that focuses on among other race, gender and sexuality, even though he recognizes the importance of oppressions based on these categories. By thinking across them it is possible to reveal the overarching context within liberation theologians must work, recognizing that all social arrangements of oppression involves class (Petrella, 2008: 3, 81). Ranking class as primary also makes possible to see that «the divide between those included and those excluded from the global economy is not merely a geographic rich-poor polarization, it is also a *social* rich-poor divide» (Petrella, 2008: 51, his emphasis). Thus one can argue that the spread of zones of social abandonment, the spread of Vita, is a global phenomenon. Those excluded are non-persons, and might not even count as individuals and citizens. The cruel reality is that some must obey the law while others are considered above it, and this tendency to defy laws and rules leads to what Rother calls a lack of civic solidarity.

Every motorist on the road seem to think he is the only one with a car and drives accordingly, without regard for his fellow citizens. At the bank, a theater box office, the bus stop, or the grocery store, there is usually someone (or several someones) who believes he or she is much too important or in too much of a hurry to have a stand in the line and pushes to the front (Rother, 2012: 42).

The lack of civic solidarity contributes to upholding a hierarchical system with great differences between those who have and those who don't. Those with power, those considered persons, often get away with what an individual would have been punished for. Rother argues that «notions of hierarchy, of different types and levels of treatment for people of different social and economic backgrounds, are actually built in to the legal code» (Rother, 2012: 42). As I am writing about how people are treated differently depending on their worth measured in their degree of participation in the market, I get the message that one of my fellow students in Brazil has lost her father. The story I am told is one in which the non-person or individual gets a face as it concerns a hard working farmer, husband and father of three, who was hit by a truck while he was riding his motorcycle. The driver of the truck saw that he had hit the man and that he was severely injured, and what the truck driver did is that he pulled the injured man out of the road and placed his bike upon him to make it look like an accident. What he didn't see is that one of the neighbors, who had heard the crash, had come out of his house and witnessed the whole scene. The injured man did not make it to the hospital. His family, with the neighbor as witness, filed a case against the truck driver, and this is where the importance of status and contacts comes in: This truck driver happened to be a man with close friends in the local politics. Because of his position in the local hierarchical system, the police have decided that my colleague's father died in a motorcycle accident, and are not willing to do any further investigation. The truck driver goes free, and the family is left without nothing. I can't help of wondering what would have happened if roles were switched and it was the truck driver that had been hit by the farmer. Depending on who you are and the contacts you have, you are treated differently.

This is not unique for Brazilian society, but it illustrates possible consequences of a hierarchical system. One typical Brazilian phrase has become the symbol of this logic. Rother explains:

[On] those occasions when someone in a position of power is not treated with the deference he believes he is due, when he is treated as just another citizen and held to the same standards as everyone else (...) one of the most common phrases heard in

those circumstances is «Você sabe com quem está falando?» which means, «Do you know who you are talking to?» (Rother, 2014: 43).

It is through this phrase that you express your position and rank, and take a position superior to the other. It is by saying these words that you can park illegally or jump to the front of the line as this phrase «permits the establishment of a person where there used to be only an individual» (da Matta, 1978: 170, my translation). This phrase and the logic behind it contributes to upholding the hierarchical structures of Brazilian society, the structures that must be challenged if the oppressed non-person is to be liberated.

4.4: Central actors in the Brazilian society

A part of the liberation project is to create new structures in society by increasing participation, especially the participation of those who are excluded by the current system. Remembering Gutierrez' definition of liberation as the struggle for a just society, we need to analyze the power relations that already exists to find the central actors that influence and controls Brazilian society. The goal of the liberation process is the creation of something new, the creation of the space of the citizen, and this idea of a process over time is found in Petrella's alternative pluralism model. His model is proposed is a contrast to the what he considers an unrealistic revolutionary perspective of the first generation liberation theologians that envisioned a leap from monolithic capitalism to monolithic socialism. The problem, as I read Petrella's project, is the goal he sets for his project. He seeks to open space for the imagination of new historical project, but his project is not the replacement of capitalism but rather working within the frames of this system to improve it. As I have argued, his project becomes one of inclusion rather than liberation, a project which breaks with arguably is one of the core elements in liberation theology's self-understanding, namely the take on capitalism as a system which is in its nature constituted on class exploitation. If these structures are part of capitalism's nature, simply changing or revolutionary reforming the system will not do. I understand liberation to be liberation from these oppressing structures, and that focusing on

class as the primary category of oppression logically leading to a rejection of capitalism. Thus the step-by-step actions of revolutionary reform should lead to a completely new system. This was what liberation theologians imagined when they sought a socialist alternative to the capitalistic system using elements from Marxist theory as a tool used to better understand the reality of oppression. To figure out how a gradual revolution could take place in the contemporary Brazilian context, I will analyze some of the powerful actors in Brazilian society.

4.4.1: The Brazilian state

Petrella argues that social science literature has documented what he describes as an increasing political apathy in the majority of the Latin American population. Thus he emphasizes the continued importance of state power for structural, political and economic change (Petrella, 2007: 7). Political changes have indeed taken place in Brazil the last decades as Brazil has gone from military dictatorship to a democracy with a popularly elected president. Two men have above all others dominated Brazilian politics in this period, and the two represent «dramatically different facets of Brazil» (Rother, 2012: 251-252). Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was President for eight years from 1995, initiated reforms of the apparatus of state, imposed budget controls and limits to bureaucrat salaries, improved high school enrollments and political stability, encouraged respect for the judiciary and its rulings, and brought the military under civilian control. His contribution to the formation of what Brazil is today was significant, and he was part of making history in 2003 when political power was, for the first time in more than 40 years, passed from one elected civilian president to another (Rother, 2012: 253-254). The man who took over, Luiz Inácio «Lula» da Silva, is what Brazilians call a «povão», meaning «of the people». He was born into a peasant family in the poor northeastern state of Pernambuco, and immigrated to São Paulo where he sold oranges on the street and worked in factories (Rother, 2012: 252). Rother argues that «Lula» and his rise to presidency contradicts the hierarchical structures of Brazilian society (Rother, 2012: 49). As president, he continued and extended Cardoso's politics, and introduced government programs to reduce the gap between rich and poor which incorporated nearly all Brazilian citizens in the economy. This resulted in a strengthened domestic market which has

encouraged Brazilian companies to increase investment and hire more employments. Today, as a result of increasingly market-friendly politics, Brazilian economy is among the most balanced and diversified in the world (Rother, 2012: 141, 145). Lula is known for his achievements through political programs. He addressed structural challenges not only in economics but in social reforms. Some were initiated by Cardoso, while others were both initiated and implemented by Lula. State programs has changed the situation for millions of Brazilians, and the development that has taken place the last decades has been close to a fairytale. The economy grew so much that Brazil passed by the United Kingdom and became the world's seventh largest economy. Thirty million people were brought out of poverty, and huge oil discoveries were made on the Brazilian continental shelf (Stefansen, 2014). Among these is the governmental program Bolsa Familia (Family Basket) is an example of a government program that has had great impact. The program has technical and financial support from the World Bank, and on the World Bank's website it is described as «an innovative social initiative taken by the Brazilian Government [that] reaches 11 million families, more than 46 million people, a major portion of the country's low-income population» (World Bank, 2013). The program gives direct transfer to poor families with children, and in return

[The parents] commit to keeping their children in school and taking them for regular health checks. [The program] has two important results: helping to reduce current poverty, and getting families to invest in their children, thus breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission and reducing future poverty (World Bank, 2013).

Education deficit through increasing access and quality was among Lula's major targets. The results of Lula's reforms was that «GDP growth rose from only 1.15 percent in 2003 to 5.71 percent in 2004, the strongest expansion since 1996, led by an industrial expansion of 7.89 percent», and economical expansion continued in Lula's second term as president (Roett, 2011: 114, 116). But even if governmental programs have changed Brazil, the rich-poor divide persists. «We only have poverty in Brazil because we want it», one of my professors

argues, expressing that the very existence of the hierarchical system depends on some being poor. In a democratic system the state should be providing freedom for all citizens, but a large number of Brazilians are oppressed and excluded from the ruling system. Brasilia and the political power the capital represents is far from where most people live, and far from the lives of the majority of Brazilian citizens. The very idea behind the construction of Brasilia and the moving of the capital from Rio de Janeiro, was to centralize the capital and to give the population an initiative to move away from the crowded coast of Brazil. The project was part of president Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira's fifty years in five plan for development, and an answer to a call from the constitution which ever since Brazil became a republic had wanted to change the location of the capital. With the moving, the center of gravity began, for the first time in Brazil's history, to move away from the coast, and with it an opportunity of modernization of the vast and backward interior was opened (Rother, 2012: 24). Still the construction of Brasilia has been criticized, not just for the hundreds of millions of dollars spent in the process. Brasilia was built on an empty plateau, based on the idea of functional rationality, and

In part the problem with Brasilia is that in some ways it succeeded too well. Designed for about 500,000 people, the city now holds over 2.5 million. The apartment building complexes that communist-sympathising Niemeyer designed to house the rich and the poor, are now home to the rich and the rich (Banerji, 2010).

The contrast between the carefully planned organization and architecture stands in stark contrast to the reality in large parts of the country this capital is meant to represent. It was built as a hypermodern city which should represent a modern democratic state, but has been severely criticized for not being representative. Lack of representation was what motivated many to take to the streets in June 2013. The manifestations signaled a profound critique of Brazilian politics, and indicated the distrust towards the structures and institutions of the Brazilian state. Despite the practice of secret ballot, political practices marked by corruption persists. The system itself is perceived as corrupt and as being in the service of vested

interests. Being a citizen does not only mean being able to vote and to be voted, or being able to choose between different political parties, and thus the current democracy does not change reality or construct a different society, writes William César de Andrade (2014). I will come back to these popular movements when discussing Brazilian civil society.

4.4.2: Churches and religious leaders

Religious actors have influenced Brazilian politics and civil society since the Portuguese conquistadores came and took the land in the name of the king and the Vatican.

In Brazil separation of religion and politics has been part of the republican ideal since the late 19th century. But in real life, the Catholic church, the evangelical organisations and the leaders of the [spiritist movement of Allan Cardiac] and Afro-Brazilian spiritualist religions have always influenced politics from places of worship (Novaes, 2005).

Religion can be used both a source of legitimacy and as a source of motivation, and many of the churches and religious institutions in Brazil possess a large degree of political impact. Demerath's metaphor of the moth and the flame becomes apparent in a Brazilian context where the Catholic church traditionally has enjoyed a position of great power and influence. Its position has been challenged by the recent developments of new churches and denominations in Brazil, and this clearly affects the context in which a new liberation theology project must be developed. Using the word recent when discussing these developments might not be very precise. As mentioned, the Church's monopoly was challenged by urbanization and other factors that changed Latin American society, but this development has roots that reach even further back. Latin American society has a long history of cultural and religious complexity. The Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores did not meet a religious vacuum when they entered what to them was the New World, and variety and syncretism still characterizes Latin America. By recent developments, I mean the growing

amount of Protestants among the population. One explanation to their growth is that «their vibrant preaching, emotional prayer and singing (...) appeal to Brazilians more than the liturgical masses of the Catholic Church. They also use electronic and social media more effectively to proselytize» (Boadle, 2013). Torkjell Leira, Norwegian social geographer, just published his first book in which he attempts to describe and explain what he calls the new Brazil, and he characterizes the changing position of the Catholic church in Brazil the last decades as one of the biggest changes of Brazilian society. He describes Brazil as a country where «everyone believes in God, often more than one», and that this results in a statistical problem where it is hard to classify people according to religious affiliation (Leira, 2014: 192, 195). Everyone believes, but exactly what they believe in is changing. Leira describes the recent developments as a religious revolution where the worlds biggest Catholic country is becoming the country which has the highest number of Pentecostals and spiritualists (Leira, 2014: 195).

Igreja Universal is the leading exponent of the new Pentecostal movement that emerged in the 1970s. This church is part of a very charismatic movement, and it has a greater financial focus as part of what the Brazilians call «teologia da prosperidade» or prosperity theology. The logic is simple: the stronger you believe and the more you give, the happier and richer you will get. These churches are conservative in religious as well as political questions, and most of them strongly oppose homosexuality and abortion. Along with the focus on money, there is a strong focus on sin, healing and individual solutions through prayer (Leira, 2014: 201). Noble argue that «given the wealth and widespread business interests of some of these churches (...) the neo-Pentecostal churches are (...) essentially weapons of capitalism» (Noble, 2007: 15). At the same time, he claims that

These churches do respond to the needs of people in ways which the liberationist discourse has often proved incapable of doing. They draw on elements of Brazilian popular religion, coming from Africa as well as medieval Portugal, and provide a different way of life for those who join them (Noble, 2007: 15).

The Pentecostal churches provide a different analysis of society and different understandings of liberation. They offer community and fellowship, they offer hope and a way of understanding one's own life and history in the larger context of Christian faith and the promise of salvation. Their theology stands in stark contrast to liberation theology. Where liberation theologians focus on human rights and major social problems as poverty, marginalization and hunger, the Pentecostal churches focus upon individual problems as alcoholism, adultery and unemployment. Where liberation theologians see violence and murder as the tragical result of uneven distribution of income, lack of state commitment to improving infrastructure and lack of social programs in poor neighborhoods, the Pentecostal churches argue that violence and murder are the consequences of bad morals and the influence of evil spirits. Thus the solutions given from these churches are often completely different from the ones promoted by liberation theology (Leira, 2014: 201-202). Their explanations are based in the individual rather than larger structures, thus their solutions deal with changing the single persons life rather than changing society as a whole.

The evangelicals emerged on the political scene after the military dictatorship. They came from a range of political parties and got together to make sure that the new constitution of 1988 did not give advantage to Catholics. The 32 persons that were elected to the chamber of deputies formed «Bancada Evangelica», the «evangelical bench». This group is neither ideologically nor politically united, but come together to vote on matters of evangelical or moral interest using biblical references to endorse the interests of the evangelical churches. The degree of influence posed by Bancada Evangelica is hard to measure, and «the combination of intense competition and (unfortunately) a party system that encourages rotation and ad hoc alliances is an antidote to the risks of religious intolerance and a rise in fundamentalism» (Novaes, 2005). Novaes writes that

The well-attended evangelical churches were considered a rich source of votes, so candidates visited churches and benefited from the fact that ministers urged their congregations to vote (...) But that does not mean that evangelicals automatically vote as their minister tells them or that (...) they always vote for candidates of the same

faith. Their struggles for influence in religious matters may be attenuated or accentuated depending on the circumstances of an election (Novaes, 2005).

«While Catholic priests are banned from running for public office, evangelical churches actively encourage their pastors to engage in politics and often use the pulpit to persuade their followers who they should vote for» (Boadle, 2013). This serves as an example of how religion can be a source of motivation, that religious affiliation influence political attitudes and behavior, and that belief systems can influence the behavior of policy makers. Religion is also a source of legitimacy, and arguably many Brazilians have a larger degree of trust in religious actors and church leaders than in politicians and the political system. Fox and Sandler argue that as religious legitimacy depends upon the support of the population, the religious institutions that position themselves too far outside the political and cultural mainstream loose their influence (Fox, 2004: 35-43). Leira claims that the growth of Pentecostal churches with their massive media exposure and their influence in Brazilian politics has turned Brazilian society in a more individualistic and conservative direction (Leira, 2014: 201-202). Most Pentecostals follow a dualistic contraposition between the church and the world, and reject liberation theology and accuses the movement for «falsely suggesting that human beings could change themselves and the world effectively» (von Sinner, 2012: 259, 271). The churches themselves are organized as strict hierarchies, thus they have copied rather than challenged these structures in Brazilian society. Participation in non-religious associations is low, but the churches have an impressing ability to mobilize people. Submission and obedience towards authorities are restricted by biblical passages, but these texts do «not speak of rights, but only duties, which seems to contradict the most important aspect of citizenship, i.e., to have and be able to enjoy rights» (von Sinner, 2012: 255, 276).

The existence of religious vote-catching has been visible in Brazilian elections especially the recent years. In the 2010 elections, «evangelicals increased their presence in Congress by 50

percent and now have 68 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and three in the Senate» (Boadle, 2013).

The rise of evangelical Christians as a conservative political force in Latin America's largest nation has put the ruling Workers' Party on guard and led President Dilma Rousseff - who is seeking re-election in 2014 - to appoint an evangelical bishop to her cabinet (...) Last year, Rousseff named evangelical bishop Marcelo Crivella as her fisheries minister, even though he admitted publicly he knew little about fishing. Crivella is nephew of Edir Macedo, founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Bishop Macedo, a billionaire who owns the TV Record network, has 5 million followers and is a hugely influential power broker in Brazil (Boadle, 2013).

The influence of evangelicals in Brazilian politics is also visible in the elections this year. The death of Brazilian Socialist Party candidate Eduardo Campos on August 13 is central since his successor is the evangelical Marina Silva. After her entrance in the elections, the political campaigns has increased focus on the role of religion and gay rights. «All three candidates [Dilma, Silva and Neves] are doing their best in these two topics to score some points with undecided voters – and that means to be considerate to religious leaders and homosexual activists» (Savarese, 2014). One of the first political moves Silva made was releasing her program in which she stated that she would fight homophobia and support gay marriage. It did not take long for conservative religious leaders to respond, and the demand was for Silva to take back the statement.

It took less than a day for the candidate to go backwards, claiming there was a mistake in the edit of her program. Gay rights activists are now furious with her. Evangelicals, who are 22% of Brazil's population, are mostly behind her campaign. Malafaia, [a Pentecostal pastor and televangelist] who has popular TV shows, was so pleased that he promised to support Silva in a likely runoff against Rousseff (Savarese, 2014).

4.4.3: Brazilian media

The media is another important actor in contemporary Brazilian society and the access to TV broadcasting and publicity is extremely important for political candidates and other influential stakeholders. Christiane Lima writes that

The media influences people on how to act, think and even who to dress. It creates demands, directs the customs and habits of society besides defining styles, catchphrases and social discussions. The media dictates the rules, trends, standards of beauty, the idols to be worshiped and followed by imposing beauty standards increasingly unattainable. And drives men and women in search of that little body that only photoshop can produce (Lima, 2014, my translation).

Still, the role of mass media is not only its influence on consumption habits and beauty standards. Lima argues that «the mass media should contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity, the promotion of human rights, to combat all forms of violence, access to information, among others. This should be its primary function» (Lima, 2014, my translation). Media should bring information to people and in that way contribute to creating and maintaining a critical and enlightened population, as this is arguably one of the most important components of democracy.

What does the situation look like in Brazil? An article posted on the homesite of the Humanist Institute at Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), describes the current situation in Brazilian media. In Brazilian television, the media house Globo controls 73 percent of advertising revenue, and in the market of pay-TV, Globosat has 38 channels and veto in the NET and SKY channels, which together control 80 percent of all subscribers. In the big cities like Rio de Janeiro, the group controls the major newspapers, TV stations and radio. Media monopoly is forbidden by the Constitution, but the law is not implemented and the antidemocratic concentration in media persists. The Constitution also prohibits holders of

elective political positions to control public concessionaires, still several Globo stations are controlled by politicians. The article reads that Globo operates politically by directing local news coverage and by seeking to define the public agenda (Unisinos, 2013). The UNESCO office in Brasilia writes that even though the Constitution guarantees «broad access to information from different and multiple sources (...) reality shows that the country still has a long way to go in terms of diversifying its information sources» (UNESCO, 2014). One important step in this process is improving the quality and efficiency of journalist education, «especially regarding [the] ability to qualify press professionals capable of covering the sophisticated agendas of human rights and human development» (UNESCO, 2014).

The political impact on Brazilian media is not a new phenomenon. The military government's authoritarian rule, starting with the coup in 1965, made the artistic community suffer, and television, particularly novelas, became the scene where intellectual writers that had written for theater and cinema could be creative (Partlow, 2009). Novela is the Brazilian term for soap opera, and is a phenomenon most Brazilians have some kind of relation to. Studies conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank have shown that there is a link between the novelas produced by Rede Globo and lifestyle choices among the Brazilian population. One example that these studies found is what they described as a celebration of a specific conception of family in the novelas. Analyzing 115 Globo novelas in the period between 1965 and 1999 they found that 72 percent of main female characters did not have children, while 21 percent had only one child, and the studies linked these numbers to the declining fertility rate in Brazil the past half-century. Being part of an urban, modern middle class was associated with not having children. According to Joshua Partlow, Globo officials «deny the premise that their programs have enough influence to change mass behavior in such a way», and argue that these reports «diminishes the capacity for free will of the people» and thus are antidemocratic (Partlow, 2009). Partlow disagrees, and sites sociologist Joseph Potter who claims that the impact the novelas have on people's lives is absolutely unquestionable: «It's not a literate society, it's not a place where there are books and newspapers, outside the upper 10 percent, and television fills that space» (Partlow, 2009). In a society where people don't have access to facts but to versions about the facts, the importance of controlling the means of

communication increases (Benjamin, 2000: 115-116). In describing the importance and the powerful role of media in contemporary Brazil, Brazilian liberation theologian Frei Betto argues that media has gone from being the fourth estate to being the first. "Without a media that can give voice to the oppressed, who can express alternative opinions, we will be accepting a media dictatorship, which is viscerally associated with large capital» (CONIC, 2014b, my translation). It is to a large degree Brazilian media that controls and directs public opinion, and since the media is largely controlled by one small group within the elite, popular movements need to make use of other means of communication. This is became evident in the demonstrations that took place last year where there was a widespread use of social media which plays an important role in expanding the traditional democracy in Brazil as it increases and democratizes access (Leira, 2014: 217). This is crucial for a modern democracy: «Brazilian democracy will only be consolidated when the means of mass communications are democratized; when the principles for social communication prescribed in the Constitution gets out of the paper and freedom of speech is a guaranteed right for everyone» (Unisinos, 2013, my translation).

4.4.4: Civil society

Even though Petrella is afraid of downplaying the importance of structural change at state level, he recognizes that a more complex of understanding of the category poor forces a «recognition that social progress requires an alliance across different social groups», and a turn toward civil society: It is here, in the sphere of everyday life, that people come together to demand their rights (Petrella, 2006: 6-7). His argument of political apathy among the Latin American population was strongly refuted in June 2013. The pressure of public opinion became very visible as millions of Brazilians took to the street to protest against the absurdity of the hierarchical structures that da Matta pointed out, to protest against the enormous differences between the persons and individuals in Brazilian society, and to demand changes. The protests were initially communicated by international media as a reaction against increased ticket prices for bus, train and metro in some Brazilian cities, but has later been described in a more ample and complex way. The increased prices is understood as the

famous drop that made the cup overflow, and the demonstrations as the result of a growing frustration among the Brazilian people, caused among other by the enormous spendings on stadiums for the world cup, a recent spike in inflation, high taxes and appalling public services. People took to the streets, and by mid-June the protests had become the largest in Brazil in 20 years. The demonstrations started out peacefully, but changed character on June 13 when the brutal military police of São Paulo turned the situation into a terrifying rout.

Dozens of videos, some from journalists, others from participants and bystanders, show officers with their name tags removed firing stun grenades and rubber bullets indiscriminately at fleeing protesters and bystanders and hunting stragglers through the streets. Motorists trapped in the mayhem ended up breathing pepper spray and tear gas. Demonstrators found with vinegar (which can be used to lessen the effect of tear gas) were arrested. Several journalists were injured, two shot in the face with rubber bullets at close range (Economist, 2013).

One of the organizers of the protests were interviewed by The Guardian, and he stated that the demonstrations were the result of an awakening in the population: «Brazil woke up. The youth are going to the street, the workers as well, to construct a new fight. We are changing the history of this country. We are going to construct a new politics where people have a voice and go to the street to demand this» (Watts, 2013). In an article published in September 2014, Bruno Pavan analyses what happened. He writes that people took to the streets to fight for their liberty and their access to political power (Pavan, 2014). It was mainly the new middle class that protested, and the reasons for this is arguably the developments «in the last decade [by which] 40 million people have escaped from absolute poverty [and] they see further improvements in their living standards as their right and will fight tooth and nail not to fall back into poverty» (Economist, 2013). The protests have been given different names, and has among other been described as the moment where «O Gigante acordou», meaning the Giant awoke. They have been seen as an expression of the profound critique of the Brazilian politics, pointing out the distrust in the structures of the Brazilian state (Andrade, 2014: 7).

4.5: Fighting for political representation

When people took to the streets to demand their president to take action on corruption charges, president Dilma had to respond. Trying to answer the demands of the streets, she proposed the creation of a popular referendum. Her proposal implied that the government would do a query questioning the population about their desire to elect a group of representatives that would chart a new political system for Brazil. Only hours later, deputies, ministers and even the vice president threw cold water on the idea of the president, but civil society took advantage of the space opened up by the discussion, and around 400 movements, organizations, parties and unions launched the campaign «Popular Referendum for Exclusive Component». In what is called the Week of the Motherland, the first week of September 2014, a plebiscite took to the streets of Brazil to collect votes, asking the question «are you in favor of an exclusive and sovereign component of the political system?». The popular referendum has no legal value, but is expected to have political force, and the intention is to change the current situation in which the Brazilian constitution states that only Congress may announce referendums. Initiators of the campaign hope that popular pressure can force Congress to approve the referendum as legal, and by doing so contribute to expanding opportunity for political participation (CONIC, 2014a). The 1988 Constitution represents a conservative transition from dictatorship to democracy, as its formulators were the same deputies and senators elected to Congress by the current political system. Many traces of the dictatorship are preserved in contemporary Brazilian society, one example being a highly visible military police in the streets. At a congress held at Faculdades EST in September 2014, Frei Betto argued that a national congress controlled by the elite have no interest in structural changes, thus these can only be achieved through the popular plebiscite which is meant to represent the whole population (Betto, 2014). One of the arguments behind the movement is that democracy needs not only be participatory but also representative. I participated in an act for collecting votes in the town Porto Alegre together with a group consisting of various representatives from the Catholic Church pastoral and ecumenical organizations, a group which is supported by trade unions, political parties and social movements. On the homesite

of CONIC, the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil, they explain that they want a political reform:

The structure of the Brazilian State has historically served the interests of the elites and the maintenance of their power over the workers, the excluded, over the Brazilian people. Few are the spaces in which people really have their voice heard and there are few opportunities to interfere in the course of politics in general, especially in the construction of public policies for the majority of the population (CONIC, 2014a, my translation).

The initiators claim that the structure of the judiciary acts in favor of the powerful and against the people. They argue that the rules of electoral organization in elections for legislative and executive offices prevent women, black people, the landless workers, Indians, and other popular sectors of society the access to spaces for exercising power, and that the political system prevents social progress of these groups (CONIC, 2014a). Their goal was not only to collect votes, but to spread information about the plebiscite. They claim that the manifestations in June 2013 showed the necessity of urgent political changes in Brazil. One of their main arguments refer to what they call the cry of the streets, where demonstrators held posters that read «não me representa!» which is translated «don't represent me!», referring to the lack of representation in Brazilian politics. In Porto Alegre we distributed flyers that showed how the composition of the Congress differs from the Brazilian population. The flyers showed among other that black people constitute 51% of the population but only 8,5% of congress representatives. The numbers are quite similar for women, while the 30% of young people only have 3% of the representatives. The flyer read that the reason why people's interests are not heard is the lack of representation, and that the current political system restricts the participation of the people in defining of the direction of the country's development.

This argument resembles discussions of the importance of representativity in a democracy, and the movement encouraged people to participate in the construction of a popular plebiscite so that lives could be changed through changing the system. They fought for their liberty and their access to political power. The results published the 24th of September showed that 7,7 million Brazilians voted in favor of the proposal of establishing a Popular Plebiscite. Now the movement will present these results to the three powers of the Brazilian state, the executive, the legislative and the juridical. Since the popular referendum has no legal value, the next step will be pressuring the National Congress to realize an official consultation asking the same question to the Brazilian population. João Paulo Rodrigues, one of the national coordinators of the landless workers' movement (MST) said that the query had at least three great achievements: the demonstration of a society that wants changes in the political system, the mass mobilization around the issue, and the generating of incentives for the continued articulation of social movements for political reform. "Our dispute is together with society. Together with the organized and mobilized forces we will create an atmosphere and a debate for a new constituent process and not leave this issue only with the Congress" (Belchior: 2014, my translation).

Questions of equality and hierarchy as social and ideological values are important topics in these discussions. The Brazilian dilemma is the combination of the proposal of being a legal and socially egalitarian society, as stated in the Constitution, and at the same time continue the hierarchical practices. Da Matta claims that it is crucial knowing what kind of society the Brazilian population wants.

There are forces pulling towards normative ideals as equality, democracy, modernity, but at the same time, there are pressures for a brutal hierarchy. If we compare the salary of a primary school teacher, who is a key figure in building a democratic society without starving people, with the salary of a governor, we face the absurd. This has to be corrected. Who is going to fix it? We are. These things are not done through party programs, but by the pressure of public opinion (Ventura, 2005, my translation).

Brazil has an urgent need for structural reforms. Betto describes the current political structure as one that always favors the owner, which he understands as the political class that insists on keeping the country in backwardness. He claims that there are many remains of the dictatorship in the current structure, and uses the example of representativeness. Does it make sense, he asks, that São Paulo with its 44 million inhabitants is represented by the same number of senators as Roraima [the northernmost and least populated state] who has almost 500 thousand inhabitants? Betto understands the Popular Plebiscite as a signal to the rulers of a longing towards something different and a proposal on what this could be, as a call coming from a significant portion of the population (Viana, 2014).

This movement is one of the most interesting news this last period in the country, because it points towards a necessary and positive transformation. Democracy is always in motion, is not a finished work, it may come under pressure to be colonized by capital, but can also be re-appropriated by the population itself. I believe that the movement will go in this second direction (Pavan, 2014, my translation).

4.6: Liberation in Brazil

In Brazil, liberation theology emerged in a context of high political tension, military dictatorship, human right abuses and political repression. Teixeira writes that the theme liberation was a biblical, theological, and ecclesiological theme formulated against the domain of a European theological superstructure dealing with the relationship between society, culture, politics and religion, and the relationship of these with colonized peripheries (Teixeira, 2009: 472).

Liberation theology is Latin American Theology. Theology is born out of the struggles for liberation. Liberation theology is liberation theology of the people and not the humanization of hierarchy, seeking social order of the Kingdom of God, seeking to sing their dreams, seeking to embrace the present, seeking to educate children for a better world (...) Liberation is the way in which the people of Latin America conceptualized their way of perceiving the world. Liberation is the very story of how the Latin American being became aware of its existence (Teixeira, 2009: 488, 494, my translation).

The Church had a challenging role which is still contested today, and Rowland writes that «the particular circumstances of the Church in Brazil have offered a context for the development of liberation theology which has been unique in Latin America» (Rowland, 2007: 5). Liberation theology was rooted in the base ecclesial communities (CEBs), and these were a «significant component of the contemporary political as well as ecclesiastical scene, particularly in Brazil, where it is difficult to drive a wedge between the so-called ‘popular church’ with more tenuous links to bishops and priests and mainstream Catholicism» (Rowland, 2007: 6). The radical characteristics of liberation theology made it different from other initiatives and movements that aimed at changing people’s lives for the better. Liberation theology did not only seek to help people but to radically change society by seeking a different social order (Gutierrez, 1988: 104). Its goal was not improving the system, but replacing it. Recently, many Latin American countries, particularly Brazil, have seen progressive bishops being replaced by conservatives, and this has shifted the power balance away from the more progressive and politically controversial. Rowland argues that «there is a crisis for the Church at the grassroots, both in terms of its role, so obvious in a period of oppression, and from the challenge of an all-pervasive Pentecostalism» (Rowland, 2007: 305). Pentecostal churches offered a different analysis and give different answers than liberation theology, the main difference being the focus on changing the situation of the individual rather than changing structures and systems (Leira, 2014: 201-202). They represent a huge challenge both to the Church and to liberation theology, and has become enormously popular by offering simple solutions to people, and by drawing on elements of Brazilian popular religion that the Church has oppressed or neglected (Noble, 2007: 15). The Brazilian religious

landscape is complex, and highly characterized by syncretism. It is quite usual to hear people define their religious affiliation explaining that «I am Catholic, but I frequent Umbanda (Brazilian religion blending African religions and Catholicism)» or «my family is Catholic, but my mother attend spiritist meetings and I go to Igreja Universal on Fridays». There are many different combinations, definitions and religious identities, often with Catholicism as a common backdrop or at least cultural reference, and few will characterize themselves as non-religious or non-believers. In describing this context, one of my professors claimed that in Brazil salvation does not exist outside syncretism (Bobsin, 2014).

In a democratic system in which the state is ruled by a group of people chosen to represent the wider population, trust is a keyword, and arguably there is a tendency of a low degree of trust in the current democracy in Brazil. We have seen examples of this in the demonstrations of 2013 where protesters expressed distrust in state structures, and it seems that other actors, among them religious actors, enjoy a larger degree of trust than politicians or other state officials. Garcia argues that there has been a crisis of credibility for the country (Garcia, 1997: 84). The state, which is supposed to be the provider of safety and to administer coexistence in the population, ends up creating invisibility of the excluded, thus in Brazil the «state of exception» or «state of emergency» has become the norm. Frei Betto illustrates the current situation by telling a story of a poor man starving outside a bakery. He argues that even if the man sits there every day, begging for help, the state will only react when this man grabs a rock to break the window in order to get something to eat. Betto's argument is that the state does not care for this poor man, but rather contributes to his invisibility, or in other words keep him in the state of *Vita* until being forced to react (Betto, 2014). In the periods of elections and campaigns in fall 2014, many of those I've talked to express frustration towards the entire political system, arguing that there is no point in voting or participating in other ways since the system and all those involved in it are corrupt and only care about their own wealth and career. Clearly not everyone thinks like this, but in my opinion an important step in transforming Brazilian society is to increase participation among those who already have the opportunity to participate by increasing the trust in the system. As we have seen, power play in Brazil includes various actors, and large investments and sums of money are in play.

Power relations are constantly changing and it might be difficult to get an overview of the whole picture, but one of the main characteristic of the current system is that the actors involved only include a limited number of the Brazilian citizens.

The first article of the Brazilian Constitution states that all power comes from the people, and Grotto argues that a participatory democracy in itself is not what will change Brazilian society, rather participatory democracy is a result of limitations of representative democracy (Grotto, 1997: 178-179). There is popular demand for improving democracy in Brazil, represented by various civil society movements, politicians and other actors who are working with improving the democratic order, the largest and latest example of such movements being the demonstrations of 2013. One interesting characteristic of the demonstrations is that the initiators did not want political parties to be present as they were afraid of being used as part of the politicians' campaigns in the run up for the elections that takes place in October this year. What the demonstrators wanted was to create space for extended political participation, not a movement limited to the political parties that already exist. The economical crises that Brazil has experienced have, in combination with the hierarchical structures already discussed, lead to a privatization of the political sphere, and the many have fought for a reconstruction of the idea of politics and a democratization of the term so that the masses could gain space. There is a need to create a reliable opposition by recreating and multiplying the «spaces of the citizen» in such a way that the population in any moment can mobilize to guide or regulate the actions taken by the state. Last years demonstrations showed tendencies of people achieving this space. What the protesters were criticized for is that it was not always clear what they mobilized for, that the youth took to the streets because they know what they don't want, while lacking specific alternatives to the current situation. Betto argues that one of the reasons for the crises experienced in modern society is a lack of utopia (Betto, 2014). As I will come back to, the imagination of an alternative is crucial in the process of constructing one, and I don't agree with Betto's analysis. As so many people, both through private initiatives and different organizations, dream about and work for a different reality or a different system, I think it is arrogant to claim that modern society suffers from the lack of utopia. The demonstrations in Brazil did to a large degree concern representation and

participation in democracy, and the demand for reforms to change status quo, and they showed that many Brazilians engage in this fight. The protesters argue that democracy should be understood as a sphere for popular participation and representation. I think it is possible to deconstruct the concept democracy, and to reconstruct a better version of it. As I have argued, I think that Petrella's alternative pluralist model and his method is useful, but what I don't agree with is his description of Latin American democracy as stagnant. The transformations achieved in Brazil the latest decades have paved way for questioning the democratic model, and Brazilian civil society is strengthening its existence through firm and spontaneous manifestations in which political activity renews itself (Ferrerri, 1997: 83). These are important steps in the process of constructing a new system.

4.7: Summary

Brazil has a history of exploitation of land and human beings, and is still characterized by the hierarchical system the Portuguese conquistadores implemented when they came to Brazil. It is a story of alternately growth and stagnation, accompanied by increasing social inequality, and when the country prospered economically, the wealth was only distributed among the elite. When economic growth stopped after World War 1, this lead to high political tensions in Brazil. Protesters took to the streets, the armed forces stepped in, and Vargas was appointed as dictator. Over the next decade, Brazilian presidents would increase the dependence on external sources, among other with the huge loans from the IMF (Rother, 2012: 22-25). The military coup of 1964 was the beginning of over twenty years of authoritarian military rule, and the Brazilian experienced extended human rights abuses and political repression (Rother, 2012: 28). Even after democracy has been restored, unjust structures remain, and citizenship is universal only for the rich minority (Biehl, 2000: 47).

In Brazil today, liberation theology is challenged by the growth of Pentecostal churches who promote a theology and give solutions to the challenge from the non-person that are different from the ones given by liberation theology. The Brazilian theological context is characterized

by a large degree of syncretism, and the socio-political context is one in which many are frustrated, lack trust in the system and the politicians, and fight for political representation to improve the democratic system. The hierarchical structures of Brazilian society persist, and Roberto da Matta argues that there is a strong separation between individuals and those considered persons. I have pointed out and analyzed some of the central actors that are important for the power play in the current system, and argued that there is a fight for political representation and liberation from oppressing structures. The query for a popular plebiscite held in September 2014 and the demonstrations in June 2013 are examples of a demand from the people that democracy must include everyone, but also that it must be representative. The massive mobilization demonstrate that large parts of the Brazilian population want changes, and that there is an urgent need for structural reform as the state has served the elite while excluding the majority, and as the space for being heard are few (CONIC, 2014a). The renewed political activity with the demonstrations in 2013 and the referendum in September 2014 has contributed to expanding political opportunity, and can be read as part of the process of liberation. This process is about who makes history, as liberation can be understood as the political creation of free subjects and a more humane world. How are we to understand Petrella's project in this context?

5: A good alternative? Analyzing Petrella's model

In Petrella's alternative pluralist model, poverty is understood as what causes oppression, and he wants to reintroduce class as the dominant category with which liberation theologians must work. Liberation is understood as a gradual process of changing the structures of society, a development away from the global expansion of areas of social abandonment. The non-person is to be liberated from exclusion from the market to an alternative system, and this should be done by liberation theologians and others approaching capitalism and democracy as partial and contradictory constructions rather than all-encompassing wholes. Thus one is able to avoid totalizing social theories and to construct a new global order. This is what Petrella calls the alternative pluralist model, a proposal for new historical project, which he claims is a possible way of reconstructing liberation theology.

5.1: Identifying the non-person

One of liberation theology's basic characteristics is its method which includes a rereading of Scripture and tradition from a given point of view. This epistemological break is kept and further developed by different liberation theologies, e.g., feminist theology, black theology, and queer theology. Even if Petrella argues that concentrating on class places liberation theology in the broadest context available, I find that he does not take seriously the implications of other categories (Petrella, 2008: 135). Obviously there is a difference between being «a black taxi-driver and a black football idol» (Petrella, 2007: 284). But at the same time there is a difference between being a black football idol and a white one. Oppression and exclusion is not only class based. Thus I find it important to further develop the different liberation theologies as they address different problems, and are based in different contexts. We have seen how the structures of capitalism makes impossible for the non-person to participate and have a voice, and how they give others the power to control the lives of the excluded. How to attack these power relations and which actions to take for changing them depends on the context. I agree with Petrella that social sciences must play a role not only in analysis of society and its structures, but in the practical steps of the process of doing

liberation theology, that there should be a creative tension between theology on the one side and politics and social sciences on the other. Still there is a lack of a «concrete spelling out of how a liberating theology could contribute to concrete politics, law, and the public space [and a need for] a fresh look on how (...) theology and politics are to be related» (von Sinner, 2012: 112). Reading Boff and Gutiérrez, I came to know liberation theology as something practical, a movement that directly affected everyday life. I read Petrella's argument that liberation has become nothing but an academic catchphrase, but was left with the question of whether he contributes himself in turning liberation theology into an academic discussion far from the reality of the non-person. A discussion about and a contribution to making a new historical project, a model for how to do liberation theology in a new time and context, must have its roots in the concrete situation of people's everyday life. Thus it should contribute by proposing specific steps in the process of creating something new, in creating change that can liberate the poor and oppressed. Even though Petrella explicitly states that his project is one of paving way for rather than creating a new historical project, he seem to fall victim to his own criticism: Instead of proposing a concrete solution, he analyses and criticizes the current situation, stressing that his goal is to «contribute to the task of clearing spaces from which new historical projects may emerge» (Petrella, 2006: 93). He ends up proposing some steps liberation theologians can take, but in my opinion he is far from reinventing liberation theology.

5.2: The relation to democracy and capitalism

Petrella's alternative pluralism can be read as a continuation of his theories on liberation theology and its relation to capitalism and democracy. He claims that the current position of liberation theologians when faced with these concepts is one of conceiving of them as all-encompassing wholes that either has to be rejected or accepted just as they are. His argument is that it is possible to understand both concepts as partial and complex, as flexible in the way that some parts can be kept while others are declined. His analysis of the current situation is that liberation theologian conceive of the context in which they work in a way which leads them to conclude that

Either there is no escape outside a radical revolution upheaval of existing society, or, given the impossibility of revolution, only a willful and defiant resistance is possible from within the hegemonic capitalism. In both cases, the imagination of historical projects remains paralyzed (Petrella, 2006: IX).

Petrella argues that liberation theology and any new historical project should be conducted in the frame of democracy. Winston Churchill said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried, and we need to do is ask ourselves what kind of democracy we are discussing. In a Brazilian context, democracy is deemed universal, but in reality it is only universal for the rich minority (Biehl, 2005: 47). Brazil has a system of mandatory voting, but many are frustrated with how democracy is affected by the strong power relations at play in society, how the media works or don't work, and how religious leader even in a state claimed secular possess great power and influence.

Marxist historian Ellen Wood explores the concept of democracy and its relation to capitalism. She asks whether the two are compatible, and claims that what she calls the new pluralism or politics of identity have spread after the collapse of Communism. These models, she argues, are part of a revival of civil society, and they consider the heterogeneity of post-modern society to be the essential characteristic of the contemporary world. Wood argues that these models are leaning towards an acceptance of capitalism, which she defines as a system of social relations and power which is «constituted by class exploitation» while at the same time being «more than just a system of class oppression. It is a ruthless totalising process which shapes our lives in every conceivable aspect» (Wood, 1995: 237, 262).

[Capitalism] represents the culmination of a long development, but it also constitutes a qualitative break (...) Not only is it characterised by a transformation of social power, a new division of labour between state and private property or class, but it also marks

the creation of a completely new form of coercion, the market - the market not simply as a sphere of opportunity, freedom and choice, but as a compulsion, a necessity, a social discipline, capable of subjecting all human activities and relationships to its requirements (Wood, 1995: 252).

Wood writes that the ideal democratic society is the one that «acknowledges all kinds of difference, of gender, culture, sexuality, which encourages and celebrates these differences, but without allowing them to become relations of domination and oppression» (Wood, 1995: 258). She claims that this society unites diverse human beings, but that the limitations of the politics of identity are revealed «the moment we try to situate *class* differences within its democratic vision» (Wood, 1995: 258, her emphasis). Class equality means something other than gender or sexual equality because

The «difference» that constitutes class as an «identity» *is*, by definition, a relationship of inequality and power (...) A truly democratic society can celebrate diversities of life styles, culture or sexual preference; but in what sense would it be «democratic» to celebrate *class* difference? If a conception of freedom or equality adapted to sexual and cultural differences is intended to extend the reach of human liberation, can the same be said of freedom or equality that accommodates *class* difference? (Wood, 1995: 258, her emphasis).

Wood's argument is that since capitalism is built on class exploitation, it is in its nature incompatible with democracy, and the elimination of class inequality would mean the end of capitalism (Wood, 1995: 259). Petrella does not seem to write of capitalism in the same way. He argues that liberation theologians should attempt to «reread the fall of socialism as an opportunity to try out alternative approaches to capitalism» and to reinvent the historical project (Petrella, 2006: ix). He stresses that historical project enables liberation theologians to change the structures of existing systems, and to develop a more ample understanding of theology and a more flexible approach to democracy and capitalism. He wants to change the

system through a revolutionary reform, which I understand as a way of changing and improving the current systems rather than replacing them, and he urges liberation theologians to rethink their conceptualization of capitalism and democracy, but he does not really say how this should be done. In his alternative pluralism model, which are the elements in the construction of democracy and capitalism that should be kept and which should be rejected? How should this revolutionary reform be conducted?

5.3: A liberating project?

Petrella does propose the inclusion of law as a possible next step, but says very little about how this could or should be done (Petrella, 2008: 138-139). I find it reprehensible that Petrella on this point does not speak of alternatives to capitalism itself. He promotes a change of structures, not replacing the system itself, but it is my opinion that he ends up doing exactly that he criticized other liberation theologians for doing, namely that he becomes incapable of moving from critique to the construction of alternatives, and that he works with inclusion rather than liberation. If this is the case, Petrella's alternative pluralist model of democracy becomes inadequate. What good would it do to include more people into a system which in itself does not function as it should? Part of Petrella's project is exactly the reinvention liberation theology because the term liberation has lost its meaning and been replaced by the term inclusion. As I understand it, the solution in Petrella's alternative pluralist model is to combine two elements: changing the existing systems while at the same time extending or democratizing access to these, as those excluded from them are those who suffer the most as a result of how they function today. The oppressed must be liberated through preferential option, and liberation theologians can contribute to this process by combining knowledge from the two disciplines theology and social science through reintroducing the historical project. Petrella writes that «any attempt to open space in which to develop localized alternatives to the reigning economic order must also be tied to a transformation of the world-system as a whole» (Petrella, 2006: 137). Still his proposal of a new historical project and a new way of doing liberation theology is a transformation rather than a rejection of the system.

Analyzing Petrella's project in the light of Kim's definitions of the various types of theology, I understand the alternative pluralist model to be a public theology project rather than a liberation theology project. I do not agree with Kim that liberation theology's radical approach is a limitation, but support the argument promoted by Wood and others who say that we will not reach a fair society just by gradually reforming the system as the system itself is oppressing. As the capitalistic system is in itself oppressing, the non-person can only be liberated if we construct and implement a different system (Wood, 1995: 259). I recognize several characteristics of public theology in Petrella's project, the most important being the reformatory position (Kim, 2011: 22). Kim argues that public theology seeks gradual reform through advocacy and debate, aiming at changing a system which is not necessarily evil or entirely wrong by negotiating between opposing parties to reach a fair and open society (Kim, 2011: 23-24). After analyzing and attempting to contextualize Petrella's work, I am not convinced about his project, and I argue that Petrella ends up doing exactly what he tried to avoid, namely promoting inclusion rather than liberation, and that democratizing access and including people in existing systems will not be liberating if the systems themselves and the logic that rules them are oppressing and excluding.

5.4: What about theology?

Petrella argues that theologians today are unprepared to tackle the challenge posed by the non-person. This is because theological education focuses on preserving the Christian identity «and thus discourages the interdisciplinary work needed to train a budding liberation theology» (Petrella, 2006: 148-149). He stresses that future liberation theologians should receive training in other disciplines than just theology, that they should learn to use the tools of comparative political economy, social theory and legal theory to place liberation at the forefront of the theological task (Petrella, 2006: 149). The way I read Petrella's project, I understand it as going too far in this direction. Petrella discusses the development of and changes in the theological context within which liberation theologians work, but his critique

of contemporary liberation theology and his proposal for new historical projects almost exclusively deals with social science theories. What happened to the theology part of liberation theology?

Liberation theology's call for action was grounded in an attempt to do theology from the perspective of the oppressed by rereading the Bible and Christianity from the underside of history. The Church had long defended the poor, but liberty and justice was limited as the Church could not keep its position in the hierarchical society if full equality was achieved. Liberation theology thus posed a problem for the Church.

Liberation theology was especially discomfiting because it was not just an alignment of misguided priests with dispossessed citizens in opposition to greed and torture. Such an opposition could even be supported by the Vatican, provided that it did not embrace unseemly tactics and remained reasonable. What was especially bothersome was the use of the word "theology." This implied that the movement had the capacity and the intention to develop a new approach to matters of far greater importance than whether this child died in poverty or that local leader was tortured to death. It implied the possibility of a counter-doctrine to that of the formal church (Doughty, 2007).

Part of what made liberation theology radical and controversial was its understanding and use of the term theology. The call for action came from a way of reading the Bible and an understanding of what it meant to be a Christian. Brazilian philosopher and religious scientist Ivone Gebara argues that human beings have the ethical capacity of caring for the other and a responsibility of turning the world into a good home for all human beings (Gebara, 2007: 50). This responsibility is grounded in biblical passages like Matthew 25.35-46: For I was hungry and you gave me food, in Jesus' commandment to love your neighbor, and in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In his limited discussion of theology, Petrella stresses the link between the theological and the political in liberation theology, and writes that

The inability to construct historical projects is due primary to problems internal to liberation theology itself - the restricted understanding of «theology» in its methodological statements, its understanding of capitalism and society - rather than to the shift in context captured in the fall of socialism (Petrella, 2006: 123-124, 137).

My critique is that even though he points to a «restricted understanding» of the term, Petrella does not enter into a discussion of what theology means or should mean. He acknowledges that liberation theology is founded in the understanding of God as a God of life, and argues that the “preferential option for the poor is thus based on God’s own focus upon those who lack the means to sustain bodily life” (Petrella, 2008: 15). Contribution to the process of liberating the oppressed is a question of faith, and live faith is made up by the two components faith and ideology. Faith is always related to a particular historical context, Petrella argues (Petrella, 2006: 35). Still there is barely no discussion of the role of theology in Petrella’s work, and he makes limited use of theological themes and ideas, claiming that «the question is not whether liberation theology is valid as theology but how its insights are to be translated into the sociopolitical realm. The key issue is what historical project will define what «liberation» actually means» (Petrella, 2006: 123).

5.5: Summary

Analyzing Petrella’s project and his model of alternative pluralism, I’ve pointed out some weaknesses. First, I argue that by focusing almost exclusively on class, he loses some of the complexity in the categorization of the non-person. Also, his project becomes a highly academic discussion, seemingly far from the reality of the oppressed. I accuse Petrella for not proposing a concrete solution for constructing a new historical project, only parts of what he thinks should be done, and this surprised me as he announced early in his work that he intended to reinvent or refashion liberation theology «for a new century but an old challenge, the liberation of the poor» (Petrella, 2004: VII). One of the main tasks that Petrella identifies

for contemporary liberation theology is to conceive of democracy and capitalism as partial or fragmented constructions rather than monolithic wholes (Petrella, 2006: 149). I agree with his claim that this is important for imagining alternative systems, but disagree with his way of working within the capitalist system, seeking a revolutionary reform rather than to replace it with something else (Petrella, 2005: 162). According to Wood's analysis, capitalism is in itself oppressive, and thus incompatible with democracy (Wood, 1995: 259). It follows from her analysis that the only way to liberate the non-person is by constructing a qualitatively different system.

As Petrella's model is one which combines changing the existing system with expanding democratic access, a model for transforming rather than replacing capitalism, I argue that he ends up promoting inclusion and not liberation, and that his project might have more in common with public theology than liberation theology. I also question Petrella's almost exclusive focus on the role of social science in building new historical projects. The theological components are barely discussed, except when he describes the context liberation theologians must work in. Doughty argues that by decreasing the focus on theology, liberation theology loses the radicality that bothered the Vatican, and that it was the new use of the term theology that forced the Church to deal with liberation theology from the beginning (Doughty, 2007). It was and still is the new way of doing theology, the epistemological break, that distinguishes liberation theology from other theologies (West, 2007: 159). If this is lost, is it still liberation theology?

6: Liberation reconsidered

Liberation theology grew out of a context where several parallel movements opposed the ruling order of a capitalist system and the logics of a market which excluded and oppressed those not being able to participate. Liberation theologians opposed a system that increased the gap between the rich and the poor, a system in which some were considered non-persons and banished to zones of social abandonment. They joined the cry for justice, and claimed that the very structures of the dominant systems were oppressing and thus should be replaced, advocating a revolution, inspired by among other Marxist socialist theory. Frei Betto argues that Christians should not fear engaging in politics, but get involved in the process of liberating the non-person as they are the followers of one who died as a political prisoner because he proclaimed the Kingdom of God in the kingdom of Cesar (Betto, 2014). This is the basis for Betto when he understands it as his task, as a liberation theologian, to go out and proclaim and to work for the construction and implementation of a new system as an alternative to capitalism. He claims that we have constructed a link between democracy and capitalism that leads to an understanding that one cannot exist without the other, and that we live in a society ruled by the logics of the market in which we are made into or even make ourselves merchandise. Further, he argues that our understanding of the Kingdom has changed from being something that is to come into being something «up there», something we can only become a part of after death, but that if we believe in a historical God that had and has a historical project, we should contribute to making the Kingdom come here and now. «Blessed are the poor, not because they are poor, but because God is on their side, and so should we be» (Betto, 2014, my translation).

Petrella's main project is reinventing the new historical project, a model which must combine theology and social science to realize a process of liberation that leads to this better alternative as «only a theology that is at the same time politics can really be a theology today» (Gibellini, 1996: 139, my translation). After reading Wood's arguments for why democracy and capitalism are incompatible systems, I am thinking that there must be a way to construct a model that rejects and gradually replaces capitalism even if the socialism is no longer considered a ready made alternative. There must be a better alternative than Petrella's

proposal of a revolutionary reform applying a model of alternative pluralism that keeps some part of the system while improving others. There is a need for a new project which can solve the challenge of globalization by finding the space of the citizen, the sphere in which true democracy can be evolved. The demonstrations in Brazil in 2013 and the query of September 2014 contributed in this process. For this development to continue, the division between people and state must be diminished, as must the gap between the powerful elite and the majority that sustain it (Benjamin, 2000: 147, 149). Liberation theology need to go back to Boff's definition of liberation:

Liberation has to do with economic, social, political and ideological structures. It seeks to operate on structures, not simply on persons. It proposes to change power relationships (...) by helping to create new structures that will allow for greater participation on the part of those now excluded (Boff, 1987: 275).

6.1: Liberation is about who makes history

Liberation is about who makes the history. It is the process in which the non-persons become the creators of their own reality, «the process by which the oppressed, *starting from their own cultural condition*, and *accepting it as truly expressive of their sorrows and aspirations*, are engaging in transformation of the world» (Alves, 1984: 132, his emphasis, my translation). The problem of the poor is the problem of power, Alves argues. Who determine the ways in which society is organized? Who chooses the goals to be achieved? The problem of the oppressed is that they are weak and powerless, that history is made without their voice being heard (Alves, 1984: 132). It is important that every human being has a voice in the process of being able to tell and write their own history (Chopp, 1995: 106). Liberation is thus a process towards this political creation of free subjects and a more humane world, and only through liberative actions can the human being become a creator of history, because as long as the

future is created and determined by others, the human being will remain an object instead of a subject.

Feminist Judith Butler argues that social theory always implies power, and seek to establish a metaphoric base for negotiating the power relations in play. She discusses the term «universal» applied in social theory, and questions how we can base a theory or politics in a discourse deemed universal when the very category is unmasked by its highly ethnocentric position. She argues that the «I» should be the point of reference for every human being, and that the thinking and acting «I» is a construction which would not exist if it had not been for the specific positions that the human being takes. In the production of knowledge, the subject is always masculine, focused on the white, middle-class male, but as subjects are constructed they can also be reconstructed and given new meaning. This is a political act, including questions of power, and a process of deconstruction and reconstruction which can liberate the feminine subject (Butler, 2003: 19-24, 30). Thus feminist theory serves as an example of liberation as the process of humanizing the non-person. This process exists in that each human being, as a free subject, creates its own future, and is political as the creation of history is only possible through the use of power: «Only through the historical army of power is it possible to deny yourself the inhuman today and open up the way towards a more humane future» (Alves, 2012: 75-76, 78, my translation). Alves understands politics as the practice of freedom, an activity of the free human being with the intention of creating a new tomorrow, and in the process of liberation politics is understood not as a power game of the elite, but as an activity in which all human beings are called to participate. Thus, he argues, politics become the new gospel, the annunciation of the good news which trusts the human being, and «human liberation shows the result of the responsible activity of the human being» (Alves, 2012: 78-79, my translation).

6.2: Three steps in the process of liberation

Liberation is a process which opens space and opportunity for human beings to take a leading role in their own lives. This process of change can be understood as taking place in three steps, starting with a rereading of reality in order to get correct knowledge about the current situation, and an awareness of how our own point of view affect how we see the world. On the basis of this understanding, one can move on to the next step which is imagining alternative systems, and I recommend looking into some of the alternatives that already exist. The third step contains a recognition that the construction of alternatives will not happen by itself, thus liberation theologians and other must engage in politics, expanding the space of political participation, as political will is needed for change to take place.

6.2.1: Step 1 - A new reading of reality

The first step in a process of liberating the non-person is obtaining knowledge about the current situation. My discussion on the Brazilian context is an attempt to get a perception of reality, acknowledging that I'm only able to grasp parts of the complexity the country represent. Anyone engaging in the process of producing knowledge should be aware that opting for change one must first interpret the reality, one must see it correctly (Petrella, 2008: 79). Liberation theologies, and among them feminist theology, represent an epistemological break which challenges the oppressive structures in society by conducting an analysis of reality and a rereading of Scripture from a given perspective and context. This reading includes the recognition that since capitalism in its very nature is oppressive and unable to persist because of its internal contradictions, true liberation can only be realized in the context of a different system. Replacing capitalism will not be an easy or immediate process, Frei Betto argues, «but I hope that we are planting the seed of an alternative model based on solidarity and not on competitiveness» (CONIC, 2014b). The process of perception and interpretation of the world will help us unmask subjectivity in the construction and recognition of knowledge, which often means unmasking eurocentrism. Petrella uses the example of the Mercator map to emphasize why it is important to have the right perception of reality in order to change the world. The Mercator map is the picture that comes to mind for

many of us when we imagine what the world look like, but this map «provides a distorted picture of reality» as its focus on the Western countries make them appear much bigger than they really are, making the map «an obstacle to seeing the world correctly» (Petrella, 2008: 79-80).

This obstacle is also present in the field of theology, an academic discipline with a strong Eurocentric bias. As discussed, there is an idea of European or Western theology being the core of all theology, being neutral and pure, while theology done in other parts of the world are contextual. Feminist theologians criticize the assumed neutrality in theology and science, claiming that all knowledge is the result of a process of construction, including making various choices, and that we need to be aware of how this affects our worldview. They argue that epistemology, the production of human knowledge, has a political and ethical character. Gebara separates between epistemology of everyday life and reflexive epistemology, claiming that even though all epistemological paths have their own functions and objectives, we do not always pay attention to this. Hierarchies are introduced between the different functions, she argues, and these hierarchy of knowledge comes form our socialization. The valorization of one type of knowledge over the other is linked to the hierarchy between persons in the given context, thus it is a contextual valorization including questions of race, sex, age, and sexual orientation. Epistemology of everyday life, the knowledge produced by all human beings, is the one that is not thought of in epistemological terms. It is our reflection over ordinary knowledge which is not systemized or recognized as scientific knowledge, a type of knowledge that suffers social devalorization (Gebara, 2008: 31-34). Gebara argues that it is possible to reencounter the original space of theology by insisting in the epistemology of everyday life as valid knowledge: Theology is not first and foremost the thinking about God, the logos, but human experience in lived life, and understanding how one type of knowledge is given more value than the other might help us understand that the word theology is a word of power, that the religious world is hierarchical. Theology is the systematization of faith of the elite, it is scientific knowledge considered superior of our daily experiences, Gebara argues, and there is a «tendency of believing more in the part that the presence, more in what is written [in biblical texts] than in what is felt and lived, more in those who have global

power than in simple persons». (Gebara, 2008: 39-40, my translation). She argues that by reflecting over epistemology of everyday life we get hold on some of this power, making ourselves responsible for constructing relations of respect (Gebara, 2008: 49). As discussed in this thesis, liberation theology must rebel against itself so it does not end up only being an academic catchphrase of little relevance in people's everyday life.

6.2.2: Step 2 - Imagining an alternative

The next step in the process of liberation, a process leading to the replacing of capitalism with an alternative system that doesn't exclude and oppress those who for some reason are not able to participate in the market, is being able to actually imagine an alternative. Alternative economic models do already exist, and looking in to some of these could be a next step for liberation theologians. One example of a Brazilian organization promoting a different economic model is found in the project «Economic Justice» by the Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia (FLD) in the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB). The project is described by the foundation as «the struggle for economic justice (...) supporting local development projects to guarantee the right to decent work» (FLD, 2014). The Economic Justice program seek to construct an alternative to the free market, building on an understanding of diakonia having liberative and political dimensions in addition to the prophetic, and it involves supporting community initiatives for employment and income by strengthening economic empowerment of women and youth, and focuses on participation and political, economic and social leadership of women as crucial aspects of development. The FLD supports projects of joint marketing, fair trade and conscious consumption, while at the same time working with transforming structures and values in the pursuit for economic justice. They promote responsible consumption, and engage in the struggle against exploitation of workers and natural resources through promoting the understanding of markets as constructed economic and social reality, and as spaces of resistance against exclusion, seeking to achieve a process of emancipation, citizenship and transformation of society. The FLD works with advocacy through strengthening grassroots organizations and social movements, arguing that much of the change in behavior and structures depends on public

policies. The focus is on «the construction of a legal framework for solidarity economic enterprises, the collection of recyclable materials with inclusion of the waste pickers, auditing external debt, regulation of financial systems, budget monitoring of public spending and democratization of communication» (FLD, 2014). The Economic Justice program of the FLD is an example of how to work with individuals, especially focusing on empowering youth and women, while at the same time transforming the larger society by engaging in a process of transforming structures. The understanding of markets as constructed realities implies the possibility of changing their structures engaging in the struggle against excluding policies and practices.

It would also be interesting to analyze liberation and the possibilities for constructing a new historical project for liberation theology by connecting it to the work of the French economist Thomas Piketty. In 2013 Piketty published a book called «Capital in the Twenty-First Century», a book which has gained huge international interest. I have not had the chance to read the book, but through a presentation Piketty gave on TED talks in June 2014 I've gained a small insight in his theory. Piketty discusses wealth concentration and distribution, and argues that the rate of capital return is and has almost always been larger than the rate of economic growth. According to Piketty's studies the gap was reduced in the 20th century, but might widen again in the 21st century. He finds that even though growing wealth concentration is a natural tendency of capitalism and economic inequality one of its engines, this might threaten the system itself. Piketty claims that inequality itself is not a problem, and that up to a certain point it is rather usual for innovation and growth (Piketty, 2014). This is the logics of capitalism, a system in which liberation cannot mean complete equality, as that is considered damaging for economic development. The problem, Piketty says, is the degree of inequality. If it becomes too extreme it is also useless for growth, and at the same time he points to it being bad for democratic institutions as it leads to unequal access to a political voice. This is what I have discussed when analyzing power relations in Brazil. Piketty argues that we need to implement policies that redistribute wealth, and he proposes financial transparency, better global coordination and progressive taxation as a way of decreasing the gap. It is not technical difficulties but rather political will that is needed in the current political

context (Piketty, 2014). Piketty's central thesis, that inequality should be balanced through state intervention, seem to contradict the logics of free market, and it would be interesting to analyze further whether his proposed economic program could be used in building alternative systems.

6.2.3: Step 3 - Political will to construct alternatives

Liberation theologians need to make use of social science to find an alternative to capitalism. Betto claims that the relation to socialism and Marxist theory is different in Latin America than it is in Europe because of the different experiences on the continents. He does not agree with the ones criticizing liberation theology for its relation to Marxism, and argues that «liberation theology has been criticized for using Marxist theory to explain social structures - as if there is another theory that can be used in the frame of capitalism» (Betto, 2014, my translation). For many Latin-Americans capitalism is understood as the system represented by the USA, a system upholding the relations of dependency that many have been struggling to break. The dream of socialism as a break away from capitalism thus represents the dream of an alternative to the unequal relationship between the metropolises and satellites (Betto, 2014). The new historical project must have as its goal a valorization of the people, and in the Brazilian context this can be achieved by moving away from what Benjamin describes as Brazilian society's biggest weakness, namely the separation of the people and the state. The current order in which a small elite controls the power and is sustained by the rest of people must be replaced (Benjamin, 2000: 113, 118, 147-151). Democratic reconstruction in Brazil should include a revision of political processes and the redistribution of power and goods, aiming for the creation of a better alternative through the process of imagination a different state, a utopia (Grotti, 1997: 178).

This is not a process that will happen by itself. The processes of democratic reconstruction and the replacing of capitalism with an alternative system demand popular pressure and political will. I understand engagement in the liberation process as a responsible for all human

beings, privileged or oppressed. In the second paragraph of the Millennium Declaration it is written that “we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level», and the declaration emphasizes that the leaders have a duty to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable (UN Millennium Declaration, 2000). Both FLD’s Economic Justice program and the theories of Thomas Piketty correspond with the project of liberation theology as they seek to work with the very structures of the existing system, and the two show how the liberation process depends on political will for change. As many, both politicians and others, seem to have accepted capitalism as the only alternative, liberation theologians who believe that this system is oppressive and must be replaced have a difficult task ahead. It seems clear to me that in order to bring about change, liberation theologians must engage in politics and rebel against the capitalist system. The political space must be expanded so those fighting for their liberty are heard, and there is a need for political will so the non-persons can become the subjects writing history.

6.3: Summary

Liberation theology grew out of a several parallel movements opposing the ruling system that excluded and oppressed those unable to participate in the market. Liberation theologians joined a cry for justice, and developed a method of seeing, judging, and acting. They argued that if one believes in a God that is on the side of the poor, one should engage in the process of liberating the non-person (Betto, 2014). In Latin America, the liberation movement emerged in a context of political tensions, dictatorships, extended oppression, and a limited political space. Liberation theology was a radical movement that challenged the position and role of the Church, and their use of the term theology was especially bothersome for the clergy (Doughty, 2007).

Liberation is a question of who it is that makes history, of who has the power to be in this position. Alves identifies the problem of the poor as a problem of power, as history is made without the participation of the non-person (Alves, 1984: 132). Liberation is thus a

humanization process in which free subjects are created as power structures change. Butler argues that in the production of knowledge, the subject is usually a white middle class male, and that this should change so the «I» can be the point of reference in every human beings life (Butler, 2003: 19-24). I propose a three step model for the process of liberation, and with it an extended use of feminist theory. The first step is a new reading of reality, and it builds on one of the main characteristics of liberation theology, namely the epistemological break. What made liberation theology radically different from other theologies was its emphasis on every theology being based in a given context, and its awareness of its own perspective as it sought to read reality and Scripture from the perspective of the non-person. Liberation theology also challenged the hierarchy in valorization of knowledge and the Eurocentric bias in academic theology, and Gebara promotes what she calls the epistemology of everyday life (Gebara, 2008). The second step concerns the ability to imagine alternatives, imagining a utopia, and I consider this important in the construction of new systems. We need not only to know what we do not want, but also what we want instead of what we have (Betto, 2014). We must also recognize that alternative economic models already exist, and I mention the Economic Justice program of the FLD as one example of these. Further I propose that liberation theologians analyze the work of French economist Thomas Piketty to see whether his theories can be used in constructing alternatives. The third step I propose for the process of liberation is extended interdisciplinary cooperation and use of social sciences, and I emphasis that the process of democratic reconstruction demand both popular pressure and political will to become more than an academic discussion, or in Petrella's words; for liberation to be relevant and not just an academic catchphrase (Petrella, 2006: VII).

7: Conclusion

When I started working with this project, I did not know much about liberation theology. The more I read, the more I became fascinated by the radical character of this fight for justice and liberty. I came to know liberation theology as a protest towards the ruling system, as a fight for change with the goal of establishing a new system that could replace capitalism which favors a small elite while and by oppressing the majority of the world population. I read liberation theology as a protest, a movement uniting different people all over the world on the basis of a common understanding that change would not take place unless it was fought for. I also read the critique of liberation theology from those arguing that the movement had lost its relevance or even died with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and I understood Petrella's project as one of reinventing liberation theology by adapting it to the new context. Petrella formulates responses to those criticizing liberation theology for not being relevant, and he criticizes contemporary liberation theologians for talking about liberation instead of doing liberation theology, and for not taking poverty seriously. He emphasizes that his purpose is not to criticize a failing theology, rather his task is constructive as he seeks to refashion liberation theology «for a new century but an old challenge, the liberation of the poor» (Petrella, 2006: VII, 125). As we have seen, Petrella argues that material deprivation is the most important form of oppression, and he chooses to focus on class, even though he recognizes the work that liberation theologians have done focusing on other categories. But when Petrella, after describing the current situation in which liberation theologians must work and their failed attempts to answer to the challenges posed by the new context, proposes a revolutionary reform towards a model of alternative pluralism, I find myself asking whether this is a liberation theology project. Parts of Petrella's work clearly coincide with that was originally the idea of the movement and correspond with the work of early liberation theologians like Boff and Gutiérrez, while, as I have argued, others seem to fit better with a public theology project. My main objection is that any liberation project must rebel against capitalism, aiming at overcoming the oppressive structures in society by creating and implementing a different system, not only seek to improve the existing one.

I suggest feminist method and theory as important for conducting an analysis of contemporary society, giving liberation theologians tools to obtain knowledge about the current situation. Through a discussion of power relations in the Brazilian society I have sought to show how large parts of the population is excluded from the system because a small elite controls the means of power. I have discussed hierarchical structures and some of the different actors of Brazilian society, analyzing how the distinction between person and individual is upheld. Many Brazilians are frustrated with the political system because they don't consider the politicians representative of the people, and because the media, which should contribute to promoting cultural diversity and human rights, combat violence and ensure access to information, is controlled by the elite. In this context, I understand liberation is a process of humanization, a process in which the excluded non-person is freed from the zones of social abandonment, not by being included in the system of capitalism, but through the implementation a new system in which Vita does not exist. Through the liberation process individuals become persons as they gain the power and position to become the ones making their own history.

The construction of an alternative system presupposes interdisciplinary cooperation and the awareness among liberation theologians of the fact that liberation theology mainly takes place outside academia, that liberation happens as we walk together, «joined hands or not, learning and teaching a new lesson» (Vandré, 1968). The change of system will not happen over night, as the context in which contemporary liberation theologians must work does not provide any ready-made alternative system that can replace capitalism. Still, liberation theology must maintain the goal of replacing capitalism, and not give in on this struggle, and I suggest that liberation can be obtained through a process consisting of three steps; rereading reality, imagining alternatives, and increasing political will for creating and implementing these alternatives. I don't think the dream of liberation is utopia. A new system should and can be created - «a new and better society is always possible» (Alves, 2012: 92). As long as people are oppressed, there is a need for liberation, and I think liberation theology can contribute to this process of constructing a better tomorrow.

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