**Facing the Future: The Legacies of Post Neoliberalism**

Is post-neoliberalism over? Should we begin the task of evaluating the era of opposition to neoliberalism in Latin America in early twenty first century as simply a temporary disruption to the ‘most successful ideology in world history’ (Anderson 2000: 17)? Or are there legacies of the post-neoliberal moment that will continue to reverberate and shape the region’s politics and political economy and if so, how? Certainly, there can be little doubt but that the electoral compass in Latin America is shifting to the Right in much of the region, including Brazil, Argentina and Chile, and to the Centre in other countries such as Ecuador. Yet, if we understand post-neoliberalism as the product of a long-standing demand from below for inclusion and an aspiration for a model of development that is a sustainable, equitable alternative to disciplinary, free market capitalism, austerity, constrained sovereignty, and limited citizenship, it is clear that this agenda will not go away simply because the Left has lost office. Latin America has, after all, long been rich in resistance to exploitation for good reason. Understanding post-neoliberalism in this broader fashion, as a struggle for just development, rather than simply as a short term political project associated with a time-limited term in office, means recognizing that now is the moment to take stock of where we stand in terms of our understanding of the extraordinary period in Latin America that began at the end of the 1990s; begin to spell out its legacy; and identify what we, as students of Latin American governance, development, equity, sustainability and citizenship, still need to understand so as to make sense of future developments.

In this introduction, therefore, we look forward as well as backward to identify the on-going, multiple experiences of resistance to speculative, extractive, inequitable and unsustainable development and the demands for alternatives that emerged in Latin America. We review 18 contributions of colleagues published in *Development and Change* since 2012 to the present. These papers make a major contribution to the debate on the meaning and policies associated with post-neoliberalism, set out by an earlier generation of scholarship (see for instance, Macdonald and Ruckert, 2009; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2009; Peck et al., 2010, 2012; Escobar, 2010; Radcliffe, 2012; Bebbington and Hamphreys Bebbington, 2011; Wylde, 2012). Taken together, the selected papers provide detailed and a much-needed discussion about the key achievements, limitations and legacies of post-neoliberalism.

Three inter-linked themes emerge from our survey of the literature: (i) the contribution of these papers to the critique of neoliberal development, in which development itself frequently became conflated with growth and social and cultural homogeneity, and the articulation of alternatives, as they have emerged in the region and going forward, in the shadow of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (ii) the ever-present challenges of citizenship and democracy in Latin America, which have consistently underpinned demands for political, cultural and economic changes in the region since twentieth century at least, and the extent to which post-neoliberalism constitutes an extension, or not, of democratic citizenship; and (iii) the nexus between post-neoliberalism, the environment and the sustainability agenda, which is critical for the survival and wellbeing for many of the region’s peoples and communities. In all three areas, post neoliberalism proposed alternative policy paradigms and mobilised communities. As such, we use these themes to group together the contributions of colleagues in *Development and Change*. First, however, we outline briefly the broad contours of the post neoliberal debate.

Post-neoliberalism: a new perspective on governance and social change

Post neoliberalism has offered a novel analytical perspective on modes of governance in the region, almost certainly the most exciting since democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s. It emerged in the early twenty first century to as describe new political economies and political cultures emerging in Latin America and has gone onto to become a lens through which scholars could interrogate attempts, which seemed to be taking place across the region, to transform cultural, social, economic and citizenship, political economies, human rights, sustainability and extractivism, identity, nationalism and regionalism. As a concept, post-neoliberalism gas opened up genuinely new possibilities for understanding Latin American political economy and development (Peck et al., 2010; Radcliffe, 2012; Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012). Additionally, it has provided a frame for analysing apparently *progressive* changes and their potential for substantive democracy (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009). Enriching this more analytical scholarship, was a a more partisan debate that focused on the rightness – or not – of the term itself (see for instance Yates and Bakker 2014).

Post-neoliberalism quickly became an interdisciplinary, scholar-activist space that sought both to probe and to articulate a fresh set of *ideas* about how the economy could/should be run, bolstered by a conviction that greater control over market for reasons of morality, democracy and efficacy was possible and a way of exploring the *specific and often contingent politics and policies* that aimed to correct existing architecture of governance. Of course, this shared regional ‘moment’ gave rise to quite different national experiences, shaped by divergent political cultures, patterns of leadership, economic potential, geopolitics, and experiences of marketisation and economic liberalisation; if, in all cases, the era of high neoliberalism had intensified the exclusion of those at the margins of society, there was considerable variation across the region in relation to who precisely found themselves worse off, disregarded or humiliated as a result of economic liberalism and the pursuit of markets and profit at all cost.

The post-neoliberal turn came at the end of a tumultuous and painful period in Latin America, as democratisation was quickly followed by the entrenchment of neoliberal development, integration into global financial markets and the financialization of social welfare. The costs of these policies are well documented (Solimano and Soto 2005; IADB 2006) and they led directly to a clamour for change. Post-neoliberalism offered, above all, a politics of hope to citizens made vulnerable through marketisation and uncertainty (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009). Its appeal to voters lay precisely in the challenge it offered to the rising levels of poverty and inequality (Londoño and Székely, 1998). As a political project, it promised opportunities to affirm dignity and human rights in the face of markets, a transformation in values that underpin production and the management of national assets, the creation of socially responsible economies and the opening up of new public spaces for debate.

Inevitably, the extent to which it has delivered on these pledges has fallen short, though how far short remains contested. Here, the debate principally turns on the extent to which the new Left governments that were described as post-neoliberal could genuinely be regarded as such; that is, should this label only be applied to governments, programmes and policies that are entirely contrary to neoliberalism and committed to the creation of non-market societies, economies and cultures? After all, the fact that the new Left governments of the early twenty first century were usually far more moderate in practice than their rhetoric, and indeed were profoundly reformist across a broad swathe of policy areas from social welfare to taxation and fiscal spending has been pointed out frequently – and is difficult to contest.

These debates have generated a fast-moving literature that has enabled students of Latin America, and comparative development more widely, to ask questions as to what constitutes (or what should constitute) routes out of neoliberal models of development and whether anything more than resistance to neoliberalism is possible in our complex, inter-connected global economy. More, then, than simply a discussion of how the Left in Latin America has variously tried to deal with the challenges of growth, equity and inclusion, the concept of post neoliberalism has captured scholarly attention because it has provided a way both to question the morality of neoliberalism itself and to benchmark the progress of movements and governments that have, in different ways, set out to do so. In terms of debates and in relation to political practices, post-neoliberalism has operated as a challenge to the inevitability of neoliberalism and banal slogans such as ‘no pain no gain’ or ‘there is no alternative’ (TINA) (Fernandez Arias and Montiel 1997; Munck 2003; Thorp 2012).

Looking back, it is abundantly clear that the promised transformations of the state, society, the economy have not happened – and in some outlier cases such as Venezuela, reforms seem to have directly contributed to economic misery, out-migration and social collapse. Once in office, post-neoliberal governments became increasingly pragmatic – some might say even cynical, partisan and contradictory – and distanced themselves from the projects of root and branch transformation. Even at its best, post-neoliberalism has not been able to make a definitive break from neoliberalism and its governance strategies (Cordoba and Jansen 2014). This is clear, for example, in terms of social programmes which remain tied to the cash transfer model (see Lavinas 2018) or models of development that, despite led by a more interventionist state, remained tied to primary commodity production and extractivism as cornerstones of growth-oriented development in Latin America (Gudynas 2010; Bebbington and Hamphreys Bebbington 2011).

But post-neoliberalism nonetheless encapsulates a critique of neoliberalism that remains extraordinarily powerful. For this reason, it is hugely important not to fall into the temptation of burying it as a failure, but rather to explore it, stripped of its strictly temporal dimension, as a collection of voices, demands and programmes that have sought to reconfigure political agency and modes of action in order to articulate a new politics of inclusion.

Development and ‘development alternatives’

Post neoliberalism is, above all, about challenging the mainstream meaning, process and purpose of globalised market-led development and development understood as growth. Post neoliberal ideas and experiments in governance have been driven by local ideas, associated with local people that seek to redefine the subjects and beneficiaries of economic and social activities and question the ways in which markets have distributed economic and social gain, cultural value and reputational credit. As such, it should be no surprise that post-neoliberal ideas and practices have generated renewed interest in Latin American contributions to development practice and thinking and at the core of many of the papers in this Virtual Issue are new engagements with development ideas and new approaches to multiple and overlapping inequalities and the challenges of managing the growth-sustainability nexus. Some, like Radcliffe (2015), tackle the question of ‘alternatives’ directly, while others do not use the term but their work nonetheless wrestles with these fundamental questions.

Although the exploitation associated with Latin America’s integration in the global economy has generated opposition throughout history, the region became a global vanguard of resistance to marketized development in the 1980s and 1990s. Almost inevitably, therefore, a preponderance of papers in this Issue deal with development ideas as articulated by social movements and communities and provide detailed research on the social networks and civil society movements that have pushed for the adoption of new development priorities, most especially in the Andean region. This is due, at least in part, to the apparently unstoppable trend towards identity politics in that sub-region and to our academic fascination with the way in the region has pioneered claims-making based on difference; but it is also a consequence of the exceptional contribution post-colonial scholars and critical development studies, geography, anthropology and ethnography have made to the study of Latin America in recent decades and to scholarship on difference and diversity. But we should also note that one of the defining features of post neoliberalism was its electoral viability, as politicians and policy makers also embraced new visions of equitable development from above. As Dayton Johnson (2018) put it, policy makers in Latin America were ‘shaken up’ by unsustainable levels of inequalities, not just income inequality but cross-cutting gender and ethnic inequalities, and the political consequences that stem from them. Experiences of uneven development, exclusion and social injustices gave birth to particularly fertile new forms of policy making in the face of almost unbearable social costs caused by decades of market-led development and austerity.

It is interesting to note in the light of this that, though the initiatives adopted by politicians once in office have also been explored in depth by some authors in the Issue, comparative analysis between policy domains and between governments remains is still incomplete. Some contributions such as those of Graef (2013); Fletcher (2012); Grandia (2013); (Vos and Boelens 2014) Hillenkamp (2015) argue that governments have been more successful in putting in motion policies to reduce socio-economic inequalities than in addressing cultural and identity-based forms of discrimination. Vos and Boelens (2014) explore some of the underlying reasons that explain the intractability of cross-cutting inequalities, which include how highly politicized forms of governance that normalize and justify market-led practices come to be seen as ‘legitimate’. This makes them extremely difficult to uproot. The result, what Fletcher (2012: 113) calls a gap between ‘vision’ and ‘execution’ in terms of inclusive and socially responsive governance became almost inevitable, even for progressive governments committed to change. So, as Graef (2013) and Fletcher (2012) both show in the case of Costa Rica, environmental interventions that were aimed at poorer communities dependent on natural resources were quite limited in scope. Government initiatives have tended also to overlook the consequences of industrial resource extraction operations, and land use alteration as a consequence, they argue.

Certainly, the fact that post neoliberal governments struggled to articulate and implement fully coherent strategies for equitable development and, as a result, their relationships with local social movements and communities became more problematic over time is now well researched. Molero Simarro and Paz Antolin (2012); Cordoba, Kees and Gonzales (2014), and Calvo (2016) all pick this up in one way or another in relation to Bolivia, and *Buen Vivir*, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) attempt at promoting an alternative approach to development. They show that despite steps towards productive transformation and income redistribution, the government of Evo Morales has found it almost impossible to manage competing identity claims and land rights issues from increasingly vocal and organised indigenous groups due to the intensification of the economic model of natural resource extraction. As a result, despite pioneering the most extensive legal recognition of cultural rights, Bolivia has in practice dragged its feet when it comes to granting autonomy to indigenous communities (see also Fontana and Grugel, 2016).

The ways in which people have been dispossessed of land and resources is an underlying common theme of research on twenty first century Latin America and it would be inaccurate to view this process simply as an outcome of the neoliberalisation of development. Historical and long-term patterns of domination have, over centuries, imposed the enclosure of common land and the super-exploitation of the region’s abundant natural resources, alongside technocratic, Western and modernist forms of knowledge. But still, we must acknowledge the scale of change under neoliberalism which has created huge, immediate and deeply problematic legacies for rural and indigenous communities and, which have, in turn, made it difficult for governments now to act effectively and equitably. Even ‘progressive’ regimes have had quite troubled relationship with local social movements and communities because they are unwilling, or find themselves unable to, fully embrace open discussion and unpick the dependence between growth and income into the state on the one hand and the marketisation of land and (neo)extractivism on the other.

What the articles in this Issue make clear is the debate over what development means and the gap between elites and ordinary citizens in terms of economic and social preferences has made for contested development strategies that continue to impact directly on the wellbeing of communities. These issues sit at the heart of the region’s politics and political economy and they will not simply go away because the Left has lost office. Moving forward, then, what lessons can be learned about future development ‘strategies’ from the legacies of almost two decades of leftist governance and heterodox economics? In the first place, we suggest, the past in Latin America is always present – or at least, it is not easy to leave behind. Legacies from the past have clearly shaped – some would say hindered - post neoliberal strategies in Latin America. Radically and successfully changing development strategies is even harder than the social movements and the Left thought. Post-neoliberalism may have distributed the benefits of dependence better than neoliberalism, but it is still a project of governance reflective of Latin America’s historical dependence on resources, or the ‘paradox of plenty’ (Karl 1997). As a result, the deep reliance on extractive industries and the dependence of government on taxing natural resources and agriculture to sustain social spending ultimately accentuated the political authority of extractive companies as well as exacerbated the social and political tensions that characterised the Left in government, leading to their weakening in some case loss of office.

The dilemma between exploiting natural resources for socio-economic development and defending both human and environmental rights certainly became a major challenge for Latin America in the post-neoliberal era. It has fueled creeping authoritarianism, repressive legislation and criminalization of protest, curtailing, sometimes violently, communities and activists rights and halting environmental justice claims (Grugel and Fontana, 2018). The growth in paramilitary activities, intimidation and even assassinations of activists, journalists and indigenous rights advocates, such as Berta Cáceres in Honduras in March 2016, and other campaigners across the region (Birss 2017; The Guardian 2018) is a clear manifestation of the region’s failure to advance alternative governance in relations to development and human rights and the Left’s acceptance of the limits of citizenship imposed by the economic model of growth.

Democracy, citizenship and rights

Citizenship is Janus-faced. It refers both to autonomous self-expressions and subjective identities of belonging and community and, at the same time, to institutionalised regimes, symbols and repertoires that link the state to its people and legitimatise government. Under post-neoliberalism, changes occurred to both dimensions of citizenship.

The wave of democratization in Latin America in the 1980s was achieved above all through the mobilisation of the poor and civil society; yet, as democracies settled, societies became increasingly atomised by the profound socio-economic restructuring, severe cuts in public spending and the flexibilization of labour markets that were imposed. Ironically, then, democratisation coincided with concerted action by states to limit civic voice and close down avenues for participation beyond the ballot box. Neoliberalism also brought to a close the dominant regional development model of industrialisation through state protectionism, gradual expansion of uneven and weak universalist systems of welfare provision, and the (partial) incorporation of the labour movement (Pribble, 2013). As such, it was perhaps only a matter of time before popular demands were made for an end to neoliberal rollback, a new social contract, a more active state, and the construction of a new social consensus to address the poverty legacy, invest in education and create welfare. As we have ourselves argued in the paper included in this Issue (2012), ‘post-neoliberal experiments’ combined a pragmatic attempt to refocus the direction and the purpose of the economy through state spending, increased taxation and management of exports with a project of enhancing citizenship through a new politics of cultural recognition in Bolivia and Ecuador and attempts to recreate the state-sponsored pact between business and labour in Argentina and Brazil.

Inevitably, then, the revamping of citizenship has been pivotal to post-neoliberalism. Experiences of poverty and marginalisation, perceptions of social injustice and new claims from indigenous and LGBT communities to environmental groups, have strengthened and shaped the language of human rights and created new opportunities for activism. As Calvo (2016) suggests, indigenous groups particularly in the Andean countries, created new languages of identity and practices of ‘self-governance’ (also Rice 2018). As Siegel (2016) demonstrates, claims for indigenous rights have often been coupled with environmental and resource governance demands. Whether successful or not in the short term, these experiences in political agency and modes of action, have implications for inclusive development and citizenship over the long term. From this perspective, the question is not just what the (post-neoliberal) Left achieved in office in relation to the demands for recognition and inclusion but, more fundamentally, what structures of opportunity were opened to allow new claims to be made, and how they were opened; can we identify a genuinely new rights-based discourse to governance, based on community, that goes beyond traditional partisan politics? Certainly, taken together, the contributions here suggest the emergence of new subjects of citizenship and objects of justice (in both a political sense and in a distributive sense) in an iterative and cumulative process that will be difficult to eradicate from regional politics whichever government is in office.

One area, however, where rights advances were relatively weak, at least in so far as policies advanced by Left governments, was in relation to women’s rights (Grugel and Fontana, 2018). It is not surprising, therefore, that new demands in areas ranging from reproductive rights and sexual health to safety on the streets and freedom from harassment led to new independent collective demands that challenged traditional gender roles and provided anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist repertoires of contention, the legacies of which are clearly reverberating across the region today (NACLA 2018). The rapidly changing gender politics of the region will surely generate new and innovative scholarship in the immediate future and the legacies of rights claims under post-neoliberalism will constitute an important backdrop to this work.

Allied to the issue of citizenship is, inevitably, the social question. Post-neoliberalism has coincided – or made possible – debates about the *purpose* of welfare rather than simply its mode of provision. Saad-Filho’s analysis of social policies in Brazil (2015) is particularly important here. He asks whether it is genuinely possible to see state welfare provision as transformative and a vehicle for inclusion and citizenship. This question is particularly pertinent since both Saad-Filho (2015) and Birn, Nervi and Siqueira (2016) show how neoliberal welfare reforms brought aspirations to universal cover to a close and led to the introduction of targeted, conditional social programmes that were aimed at changing the behaviour of the poor (attitudes to health care and education for example) or encouraging the poor to work by creating tax incentives and workfare programmes (see also Barrientos 2016). Using the example of Brazil, the most significant regional provider of targeted welfare programmes, Saad-Filho suggests that the continuance of neoliberal welfare into the ‘post-neoliberal’ era undermines the emancipatory potential of the Left in office. And to be sure, the long-term impact of cash transfers on human development, security and inequality is still uncertain (Lavinas 2018).

As Saad-Filho suggests, cash transfers programmes created complex legacies for contemporary welfare debates in Latin America. The retention of a social protection paradigm through cash transfers, social pensions, and other forms of targeted spending pragmatically addressed the poorest at moments of severe financial cut-backs but did little to break with the finance-dominated blueprint of neoliberal social policy. Both Saad-Filho and Lavinas agree that government transfers, indirect taxation, subsidies, and expanded household debt fostered a transition towards a mass-consumption society and got in the way of new social policies serving as a step to greater equality in society. This paradigm remains in place nonetheless, even though as Rival, Roldan, and Larrea (2015) note in this issue, its limits have consistently been identified by the influential regional think tank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which has encouraged governments forcefully to try and go beyond the cash transfer model in order to tackle the deep-seated causes of inequalities (Calvo 2016; also Grugel and Riggirozzi 2018). Still, whatever judgements we make of of the model, the era has witnessed improvements in terms of expansion of programmes, recognition of new subjects of welfare, the introduction of rights-based policies, greater access to education and health and higher levels of employment than in the past. Maintaining momentum in this area, with a changed social policy model or not, will be challenging for any government in the future, whatever its political persuasion.

Extractivism, Biodiversity and Biopower

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Latin America’s political economy is the persistence of the region’s dependence on mining and other primary commodities. Natural resources and agriculture have dominated exports for five hundred years and attempts to shift away from that dependence have ultimately always failed. Even dependency theorists such as Cardoso and Faletto (1979), who came to close to predicting that primary production would condemn the region to ‘underdevelopment’, still expected foreign investment in the mining sector to give way to (foreign) investments in industry under high modernism. In fact, expectations for diversification have always disappointed. This remains as true now with a more statist model of development as in the era of industrial production in the 1970s or the years of liberalisation of financial markets in the 1990s. Under neoliberalism, the region’s dependence on primary commodities intensified, nature was increasingly commodified and the relationship between local communities and the environment in which they lived radically and dramatically altered; and this has proved hard, if not impossible, to change.

Little seems to have been done, or at least to have been achieved, to unsettle the expansion of commodity production in the post neoliberal era. Reliance on primary exports actually increased from 50 to 55 per cent between 1995 and 2009 (UNDP 2010). The consequences of this are considerable. From a political economy perspective, as Arsel and Buscher (2012), argue ‘the dynamic of extracting from [Nature], polluting it and conserving it’ became even bigger business in ways that were unanticipated even thirty years earlier. As the papers in this collection make clear, the new extractivism has forced state and society-based actors in Latin America to work with commodity dependence, most especially in the Andean region and, perhaps to a lesser degree, in Central America. A ‘new’ approach to extractivism became a fundamental, and highly controversial, pillar of post neoliberalism in government since it was an approach that effectively encouraged deeper exploitation for the purposes of taxation. At the same time, there has been no new approach to conservation and biodiversity losses which have proliferated as a consequence. Post neoliberalism, in fact, has had very little to say to the challenges of conservation. Initiatives and finance for conservation tend to be international in origin and they remain fundamentally conservative; governments nationally have done little or nothing to challenge this approach.

Looking back now over the contributions in *Development and Change*, it is striking the extent to which the journal has become a preferred home for critically engaged scholarship that has taken the study of commodities out from economics and political economy and into anthropology, geography and politics, and refocused research on the social, community and ecological losses that are underway in Latin America as a result both of intensified extractivism and weak and partial conservation efforts. Lizia Grandia (2013), for example, provides a forensic account of how development banks in the Mesoamerican region are supporting the penetration of corporate trade and commerce, focusing on a previously marginal area of Guatemala, the department of Peten, where widespread land grabbing has taken place. Marketization, she argues, has led not to a strengthening of the state or to the generation of new resources for anti-poverty programmes or redistribution but to ‘new power assemblages’ that link agro-industrial elites with the military and with illegal narco networks. The result is a loss of land and autonomy for communities that have been historically been geographically marginal in Guatemala, along with new power alliances that are now enact and enforce new forms of political and social domination.

Siegel’s contribution to the debate is also distinctive in that she links the debate on natural resources to questions of democracy (Siegel 2016). Her contribution points to the ambiguities in regional state approaches to extractivism: on the one hand, governments have sometimes pioneered new strategies of social inclusion through tax and spend policies generated by resource rents, and, on the other, the reliance on mining and extractivism has closed off opportunities for substantive democracy based on difference. Siegel’s paper, in fact, goes some way to address a puzzle posed by Radcliffe: why, with rising demands for policy making based on difference, diversity and equality, are indigenous communities still experiencing the consequences of skewed and unequal development? The answer, Siegal suggests, is government reliance on mining rents means that they simply cannot afford to listen to community demands.

Meanwhile, Graef (2013) explores how environmentalism and environmental sovereignty can be framed in public debates to change outcomes in land use from proposed investments. Taking a longer historical frame than other papers in this collection, and focussing on state responses to land deals in Costa Rica, Graef argues that we can learn from projects that have been stopped or stalled in the past, as well as from current experiences. Her conclusion is first, that ‘sovereignty, democracy and the environment are intertwined’ in Latin America and secondly, that the possibilities of shaping outcomes are more fluid that is sometimes acknowledged: in the case of Costa Rica, ‘politicians, students, scientists, communist dissenters, indigenous people and local farmers’ have all spoken at key moments, while ‘marginal communities’ have sometimes been able ‘to define the boundaries of the nation’. Still, we must beware to being too optimistic in our expectations from public engagement and local institutions. As Botazzi et al (2014)show*,* the implementation of the programme for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in the Bolivian Amazon has not enabled communities to challenge exploitation but has served to increased pressures on land for food production and increased community dependence on external funding. Overall, the result has been to encourage the tendency to privatize land that has traditionally been collective, with negative impacts both for local groups and for the environment. Fletcher (2012) draws not dissimilar conclusions about conservation in the region. In short, both suggest that if efforts to promote and protect Latin America’s biodiversity and enhance the wellbeing of those who have historically lived from it continue to be framed through market mechanisms, the future is bleak.

Post-neoliberal futures

The Left is leaving office, becoming more isolated or even discredited as in the case of Venezuela. But – and looking to the region’s future now - it is nevertheless clear that the challenges post-neoliberal governance attempted to address will not simply go away. Whatever assessment we make of the Left in office, the inequities of citizenship, the weaknesses of welfare, the demands for identity, concerns about growth, sustainability and biodiversity remain key drivers of regional politics. How will governments manage these issues in the future and how will the social and civil society movements and communities affected by them respond?

We agree, in other words with Yates and Bakker (2014) that there remains a scholarly challenge of how we conceptualize anti-capitalist and/or anti-neoliberal forms of political activism and how we analyse public rhetoric that invoke wholesale or partial transitions away from neoliberalism. Part of this means continuing to interrogate the extent to which there are genuine ideological and political opportunities to alter and transform for the better the deeply unequal world we live in and the trajectories of movements that try to do so. As the region shifts right-wards, we need, as scholars, to continue to explore places and repertoires of popular contention since the loss of office by the Left is not a defeat of civil society. Indeed, there a new wave of connected and confident social movements, citizenship, human rights, environmentalist, feminist and anti-austerity groups such as Occupy, Indignados, and women’s rights, such as MeToo, and Ni Una Menos, in Latin American and across the world that rely less than ever on party linkages to mobilise. These organisations, moreover, have shifted contentious policies away from an exclusive focus on labour and production to disputes over human rights (Grugel and Fontana, 2018) and nature and the challenges of overcoming extractivism (Svampa, 2017) and they are, as a result, much less easy to control.

In policy terms, meanwhile, we need to explore the legacies of post-neoliberal welfare, tax and investment policies; they will prove as difficult to unpick in many cases as the neoliberal frameworks that came before. Meanwhile the extent to which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present as an opportunity for critical and progressive policy making remains unclear (Horn and Grugel 2018). Rhetorically at least, the concept of ‘Leaving No One Behind’ which underpin the global goals, echoes with some of the principles of post-neoliberal development (Radcliffe forthcoming); how future governments respond here is sure to become an increasingly important topic of analysis since meeting the SDG will require s challenging neoliberal development models across a range of areas from conservation and biodiversity to poverty hunger, education and health. For these reasons, if for no other, the questions post-neoliberalism has raised in Latin America in terms of, *inter alia*, income distribution, the rights of the vulnerable, the nature of ‘decent work’ etc. will remain crucial political questions whatever the colour of governments.

Central to the future of the region will be how governments respond to the environmental and resource challenges. Here, it is clear that post-neoliberalism failed to articulate a convincing and institutionalised alternative to the neoliberal model of economic growth based on the global market and the exports of natural resources. The Left did not end dependence on commodities. Instead they consciously encouraged commodity growth as a way of raising revenue, intensifying irresponsible exploitation of natural resources – and in cases state led militarising/increasing securitisation - simply in order to maintain income and public spending.  How far they had real choices is one for discussion. But their failure to this regard is linked to the disenchantment many civil society groups experienced with the Left, especially in Andean Latin America. This in turn fuelled a failure to tolerate dissent. Perhaps politically, then, the greatest disappointment has not been so much the fact that social conflict and political disagreements continued and even expanded under the Left– that is natural in democracy - but the fact that the Left ignored or even tried to supress inclusion and citizenship struggles.

Out of these contradictions has come a new articulation of Right-wing power in the region.  With the political parties of the Left in retreat, we have argued here that it is independent civil society organisations that may, once again, have to try and hold governments to account and lead social resistance to any attempt re-introduction of austerity and onslaught on civic freedoms. The embeddedness of civil society protest in the fabric of regional politics and the traditions of autonomous and independent civic action in the region mean that social entitlements will not prove easy to take away and attempts to re-impose austerity will surely be met with a new cycle of contestation. But still, even if there is successful resistance to the wholesale return of neoliberalism, especially in the social domain, the crisis of the post-neoliberal project points to an issue of genuine and persistent concern for Latin America, and indeed perhaps more widely around the value and meaning of democracy and inclusive and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, in one respect, at least, things may be different. As Rodrik (2017) has pointed out, the global political economy is moving into an era governed by demands for national autonomy, in sharp contrast to the era of liberal global governance and this has implications for middle income countries in Latin America. Above all, it suggests that dependence on donors is reducing and that there are now more opportunities for middle income countries to set development targets for themselves and make more autonomous and meaningful *national* development choices than in the past (Horn and Grugel, 2018). Currently, research in how these shifts in global power structures affect the region is still relatively thin. Few of the studies in this collection for example engage with dimensions of power external to the state – or even, in fact, with the hemispheric political economy. Even Radcliffe’s excellent discussion of development alternatives focuses above all on the domestic consequences of social heterogeneity and diversity for more egalitarian policy-making. More work, in our view, is urgently needed on tracing the consequences of greater autonomy at the level of the state in Latin America, to complement research on society, and better understand how this will shape development strategies and the chance of articulating a sustainable Latin American vision of a better and less unequal society in the future.

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