

Introduction: Everyday Life in (Post-)Neoliberal Latin America

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This book explores the cultural dynamics of neoliberalism and anti-neoliberal resistance in Latin America. While Latin American neoliberalisms and the region's transition—perhaps temporary—to post-neoliberalism have been extensively debated (Dávila, 2012; Flores-Macias, 2012; Goodale and Postero, 2013), extant research has largely focused on relevant political and socioeconomic processes. The cultural dynamics of neoliberalism, anti-neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism, in terms of the discursive construction of neoliberal common sense and the organization of everyday beliefs, norms, values, and systems of meaning, have received far less attention.

Together, the studies in this volume seek to address this gap. They pursue three objectives. First, they seek to explore how neoliberal narratives of self and social relationships have transformed everyday life in contemporary Latin America. Second, they examine how these narratives are being contested and supplanted by a diversity of alternative modes of experience and practices in a diversity of settings, in the context of anti-neoliberal and post-neoliberal sociopolitical programs. In this context, the studies in this book examine to what extent contemporary Latin America might in fact be described as post-neoliberal, given the crisis of political challenges to neoliberalism in societies such as Venezuela, Argentina and Bolivia. Third, the following chapters interrogate the discourses and cultural practices through which a societal consensus for the pursuit of neoliberal politics may be established, defended and contested.

Neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism in Latin America

At the beginning of the 21st century, nations such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela have attracted international attention for their forceful critique of neoliberalism and their pursuit of alternative developmental models. Until the turn of the century, neoliberal theories had dominated political and economic life at the global level (Harvey, 2005; Davies, 2014). The end of the neoliberal cycle of the 1990s in much of the Latin American region has led to what John Beverley (2011) called a post-neoliberal moment. However, these post-neoliberal political programs have recently entered a period of crisis. The beginning of this crisis was marked by the early death of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (2013), and it has continued with the electoral defeat of Argentina's left-wing government in 2015, the escalating economic and political crisis in Venezuela, and the removal from office of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil in mid-2016. The current social, economic and political unrest has been heavily intensified by the worldwide financial crisis that began in 2007–08 and its lasting repercussions. Even though Bolivia and Ecuador are politically relatively stable now, there are clear signs of public disillusionment with both country's governments and the political and ideological models they represent. The failures of these programs and ongoing conflicts among neoliberal and anti-neoliberal elites and social movements have by the mid-2010s resulted in growing social instability. This book examines cultural responses to this instability. It looks at a wide range of cultural forms, such as literature, underground cinema, street fairs and self-help books to explore how Latin Americans construct subjectivities, build communities and make meaning in their everyday lives during a profound crisis of the social. In this context, it is important to emphasize the role that neoliberal and post-neoliberal narratives of self and social relationships may come to play in popular culture and everyday lived experience in Latin America today.

David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as:

in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

The global hegemony of neoliberalism has turned out to be extraordinarily durable even throughout the contemporary period

of profound socioeconomic crisis brought about by a far-reaching deregulation of financial markets (Mirowski, 2013). At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge that the global dominance of neoliberal theoretical dogma has resulted in a diversity of sometimes only loosely connected policy programs, forms of political practice, institutional dynamics, and cultural narratives. In Latin America, obvious examples of this diversity are the infamous experiments with neoliberal economic policy during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile and the far-reaching privatization of public services in Mexico that took place from the 1990s onwards under conditions of formal democracy (Harvey, 2005). Roy et al (2007) accordingly describe neoliberalism as a shared mental model with potentially heterogeneous institutional consequences:

Neoliberalism as a shared mental model refers to the spread of market-oriented ideas across the globe that has been occurring over the past three decades. ... while these ideas have had an important effect in shaping global economic reform, this importance has varied greatly across countries and regions. Additionally, in cases where neoliberal ideas have been influential, they have not always been successful.

This diverse account of neoliberalism marks a central point. How have neoliberal narratives of self and social relationships transformed everyday life in contemporary Latin America?

How are these narratives being contested and supplanted by alternative modes of experience and practice in a diversity of sites and cultural fields? To what extent can contemporary Latin America be described as post-neoliberal? We intend to raise these questions through the case studies presented in this book.

In the field of Latin American studies, neoliberal hegemony was contested by decolonial theory in the late 20th century. Departing from what Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1992) called the “coloniality of power” in the early 1990s, this line of research has explored how modernity’s matrix of global power manifested itself throughout the Latin American social fabric and formulated cognitive alternatives. Some of the merits of decolonial theory lay in its concrete referentiality, and in its appreciation of forms of coexistence and indigenous organization, as reflected by the studies of Walsh (2013), Escobar (2008), Coronil (1997), Mignolo (2005), and Castro Gómez (2009). However, alternative forms of knowledge and constructions of local power could not be applied to larger cultural contexts within

the region, and they had little applicability to the political changes of the 21st century, when the interests of leftist governments began to distance themselves from the subaltern demands that initially fed them. The end of the neoliberal cycle in much of the region has led to the present time being identified as post-neoliberal.

However, contrary to what one might expect, secular power asymmetries remain alive. If there was and still is a critical, anti-neoliberal consensus, disagreements regarding possible alternatives have worsened as the left became increasingly hegemonic. Laclau's theory of populism (2005) came to displace decolonial theory in much of the academic debate over the past decade. Laclau provided a conceptual basis for sympathizers of pink tide governments who needed to escape from the negative stigma of the liberal tradition about populism. From this perspective, populism provides a discursive tool to think about changes in hegemony. However, to the extent that the pink tide did not entirely meet the social, political, economic and cultural expectations of countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Nicaragua, debates about whether it is even desirable to capture the state have emerged. As Jon Beasley-Murray argued, Laclau "took the state for granted, and never questioned its power" (2010, p.69). In recent years we have witnessed the restoration of new exclusions to sustain the hegemony of the pink tide, while the definition of the "people" is becoming more restrictive.

What are alternatives are there, then, for thinking about Latin American communities that are emancipatory? To exit the dichotomous choice between hegemony and counter-hegemony, and recognizing similar practices of power between the right and the left, scholars like George Yúdice (2004), Alberto Moreiras (2013) and Jon Beasley-Murray (2010) prefer to blur the boundaries of hegemony or dispense with concept of ideology at all. While Moreiras (2013) calls for an "infrapolitics" which is situated at the very edge of the political, prior to any subjectivity, Beasley-Murray (2010) argues that politics is not moved by ideology, but by habits and affects. Neither the people nor the subaltern, both Moreiras and Beasley-Murray propose the concept of "multitude" to talk about a collective that would function as a kind of autarchic social power. However, these latest proposals are not exempt from questioning either. There is a difficulty in linking post-hegemony and concepts like "multitude" and "infrapolitics" with concrete practices in Latin America. The contribution of these theories will be tested in the next decade.

Neoliberalism, politics and culture

Recent events raise important questions about the dynamics of neoliberal and post-neoliberal politics in Latin America today, and about the future viability of political programs that seek to occupy post-neoliberal discursive spaces (Gago, 2017). In the most basic terms, these questions result from the current and ongoing crisis of post-neoliberal parties and political movements and the re-emergence of governments led by political parties and sectors of Latin America's elites that have been closely associated with neoliberal political projects. Important crisis moments include (but are not limited to): the escalation of social, economic and political conflict in Venezuela, following the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013; Mauricio Macri's rise to the presidency in Argentina in 2015; the electoral defeat of Kirchnerism; and the decline of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) in Brazil, manifest in acrimonious public debates about corruption and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. At the same time, political programs that can be described as both anti- and post-neoliberal continue to exert a strong influence in Latin America, particularly through the governments of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Lenín Moreno in Ecuador.

The complexity of questions about post-neoliberalism's presents and futures is thus visible across Latin America. In Venezuela, a nation that attempted perhaps Latin America's most radical program of societal reorganization, scholars have called into question the future of progressive societal development, given the recent and ongoing retrenchment of Chavism. Thus, in a recent analysis, Spanakos and Pantoulas argue:

The concern about survivals of neoliberalism among political activists within Bolivarianism has been accentuated since the death of Chávez. Many activists at the base level fear that the post-Chávez PSUV and government leadership are moving toward greater centralization and institutionalization—that they are returning politics to the technically trained bureaucrats and elected officials. This means a decided movement against the creative and more free-flowing politics of the street (post-neoliberalism as ontological project), and this has important implications for the legitimacy that key support groups accord the government. (Spanakos and Pantoulas 2017, p.49)

Spanakos and Pantoulas here draw attention to shifts in the relationship between government and political grassroots, and between state and citizen, that have recently emerged in Venezuela, and they suggest that Chavism's continued political legitimacy will reside in its ability to retain its links to the "free-flowing politics of the street." At the same time, Spanakos and Pantoulas also highlight a lack of clarity with regards to a long-term political vision, beyond anti-neoliberal resistance:

The legacy of one of Latin America's most strident anti-neoliberals, Hugo Chávez, provides a valuable opportunity to do that. Analyzing post-neoliberalism during and following the presidencies of Hugo Chávez confirms what careful observers have noted: that anti-neoliberal movements are clearer about what they oppose than about what they propose (Spanakos and Pantoulas, 2017, p.49)

Spanakos and Pantoulas's concerns are echoed in Elbert's equally recent analysis of post-neoliberal politics in Argentina. Drawing on empirical research on unionization and political solidarities in two factories in Greater Buenos Aires, Elbert finds:

There has been a growing debate about the characterization of political regimes that emerged in Latin America after the crisis of neoliberalism In Argentina, unemployment was drastically reduced, and the government allowed the comeback of national level collective bargaining. However, the Argentine state tolerated labor informality in order to foster capital investments. In this context, the present study provided evidence of union solidarity strategies toward informal workers. In a broader sense, it showed that workers were not passive victims of labor fragmentation policies but did have agency and were fundamental in developing strategies of resistance to the persistent inequality of capitalism in Argentina. (Elbert, 2017, p.141f)

Elbert's analysis again conceptualizes the viability of post-neoliberal political programs in terms of the relationship between government and political grassroots, and between state and citizen. Taking this argument further, Errejón and Guijarro emphasize the need for post-neoliberal movements to achieve a coherent sociopolitical vision, and to give this vision roots in a coherent social base. In this context, they highlight

the achievements and limitations of post-neoliberal government in Bolivia and Ecuador:

In this sense, the MAS's hegemony seems more comprehensive, capable of dismantling opponents and mediated by organized social sectors—largely campesinos, but also popular-urban and near-middle-class ones on which they rely and by which they expand. The hegemony of the PAIS movement seems subject to greater challenges. Although Correa's leadership remains uncontested in the electoral domain, it has not formed a social bloc around itself, and it is more dependent on the charismatic game that confronts, in addition, the traditional powers that came out of the regime crisis less weakened than in Bolivia and therefore retain a greater ability to resist. The flexibility to incorporate formerly alien issues and demands into its discourse thus seems to be a core feature of hegemony. It is this tension between openness-inclusion/closedness-exclusion that will mark the future directions of political processes in Bolivia and in Ecuador. (Errejón and Guijarro, 2016, p.50)

Errejón and Guijarro add to the conceptualization of post-neoliberalism in terms of the relationships between government and political grassroots and between state and citizen in so far as they draw attention to the long-term viability of relatively new and fiercely contested political movements. While MAS and PAIS have fared well and managed to retain power at the national level, recent developments in Argentina and Brazil have been more complicated. Thus, Grigera ties the past successes and subsequent decline of Lulism and Kirchnerism to short-term commodity booms, in line with older, historical populist movements in Latin America:

We have thus explained the emergence of Kirchnerism and Lulism as responses to the crisis of neoliberalism. We have opted to use the term 'Pink Tide neopopulism' to distinguish them from classical post-war populism, and 'neopopulism' from neoliberal populism. The differences between both were traced in the nature of the mobilized subject, the enabling condition, and the depth and type of the crisis. (Grigera, 2017, p.452)

Finally, explaining the dynamics of post-neoliberal politics in Latin America, it is important to account for the ability of neoliberal political programs and the constituencies that support them to creatively reconstitute themselves. Weinberg is mindful of this when she writes of the “thousand faces of neoliberalism” and Mauricio Macri’s ascent to the presidency in Argentina:

In the new scenario under Macri, we will have to observe the impact of this change on negotiations with the new government and on the ways in which possible new policies and strategies are developed for this sector. One of the main problems we have observed in these years has been the negative impact of institutional fragility on the development of medium- and long-term policy, with the constant creation and disappearance of state structures that we are witnessing nowadays. While remaining hopeful and supporting political activism, we might keep in mind the thousands of faces of neoliberalism. It seems that we are witnessing new arrangements and combinations of old structures. (Weinberg, 2017, p.165)

The permutations of neoliberalism at the level of national political and economic programs and its diffusion into everyday social relationships are further rendered visible by recent research in Mexico. Here, a range of studies has emphasized developmental trajectories and sociopolitical continuity between the stringent implementation of neoliberal structural adjustment programs from the 1980s onwards, the radical privatization of public goods that began in the 1990s, and the escalation of violence initiated in the mid-2000s through the disintegration of everyday social relationships and the growing power struggle between a weakened state and drug cartels seeking territorial and political control (Gaytán and Bowen, 2015; Laurell, 2015; Martin, 2005; Paley, 2015).

How, then, can we make sense of post-neoliberalism presents and futures across the region? A useful point of departure in answering this question lies in Verónica Gago’s observations as to the limits of progressive government in Latin America and the persistence of neoliberalism in new permutations:

The progressive governments’ perspective, which attempts to neutralize the practices from below while the governments present themselves as overcoming an era of popular resistance, closes of a more complex and realistic image of

neoliberalism. ... The progressive governments, despite their rhetoric, do not signal the end of neoliberalism. Further, they severely complicate the characterization of what is understood as postneoliberalism My thesis is that neoliberalism survives as a set of conditions that are manifested, from above, as the renewal of the extractive-dispossession from in a new moment of financialized sovereignty and, from below, as a rationality that negotiates profits in this context of dispossession, in a contractual dynamic that mixes forms of servitude and conflict. (Gago, 2017, Introduction)

Gago's argument usefully returns us to an understanding of neoliberalism not just in terms of large-scale socioeconomic and political programs, but rather in terms of the rationality that organizes social interaction in everyday life. In this sense, and in line with sociology's longstanding lines of sociological enquiry (Adorno, 1991; Marcuse, 2002; Weber, 1992), in this book we approach neoliberalism as a cultural process. We adopt Alain Touraine's (2007) notion of cultural paradigms as a point of departure to develop our argument from an international comparative perspective. Following Touraine (2007), we see a cultural paradigm as a structure of symbolic coordinates with which subjects construct a horizon of expectations, an image of the surrounding world and especially an ethical language that facilitates self-identification in a social context.

This analytical standpoint is useful in three ways. First, it allows us to conceptualize neoliberalism, anti-neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism as cultural processes, in terms of the construction of distinctive sets of norms, values and beliefs that may be mutually exclusive and opposed but, at the same time, are implicated with each other in complex ways. Second, this perspective makes it possible to conceptualize post-neoliberalism as a long-term process, beyond short-term achievements in the electoral and economic arenas. In this sense, Weinberg concludes:

Is it possible to talk about a post-neoliberal era in Latin America? Is it possible to talk about post-neoliberalism in Argentina? Many writers have proposed, and I agree, that the "post-" prefix might be understood not as signifying the complete end of the prior phase and the starting of a new one but as part of an ongoing process. (Weinberg, 2017, p.153)

This conceptualization of post-neoliberalism as a long-term process is useful, third, in so far as it may render apparent developmental disjunctures at the political, economic, and cultural levels. In this context, specifically, it seems important to be attentive to neoliberalism's capacity to organize common sense and to define, therefore, everyday norms, beliefs, and values even in times of ostensible political defeat (Bröckling, 2007; Dardot and Laval, 2013). The deep roots and persistence of neoliberal common sense become apparent both in public discourse, in genres such as literature or film (Blanco-Cano, 2014; Nehring, 2009; Ruiz, 2014), and in the vocabularies of motive that individuals bring to everyday social interaction (Nehring and Kerrigan, 2018).

Outline of the book

The chapters in this book explore different responses that have resulted from Latin American society's efforts at reconstructing sociocultural paradigms that might render a changed world intelligible. The book comprises a range of case studies that explore how cultural and artistic narratives, such as literature and cinema, construct alternative visions of reality that challenge hegemonic discourses, whether neoliberal or anti-neoliberal. In this sense, these case studies analyze how memory and silence are deployed in cultural narratives to overcome social trauma, imagine new forms of constructing community, and give voice to cultural and ethnic groups that have been marginalized for long periods of Latin America's postcolonial history. While there is a substantial body of scholarship on neoliberal politics and economics in the region, research on the cultural dimensions of neoliberalism and anti-neoliberal resistance has largely limited to small-scale case studies. There is a dearth of texts that explore how neoliberalism in its various localized manifestations has entailed cultural transformations across the region. By exploring neoliberalism as a set of interrelated cultural forms, we seek to address this gap. It is our aim to offer a transnational and comparative perspective on the ways in which neoliberalism has transformed public discourses of self and social relationships, popular cultures, and modes of everyday experience. To this end, this book combines contributions from a range of disciplinary perspectives in the humanities and social sciences. At the same time, it offers a broad cross-regional perspective by bringing together scholarship on Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Venezuela, and Latin Americans in the USA.

These case studies analyze how memory and silence are deployed in cultural narratives to overcome social trauma, imagine new forms of constructing community, and give voice to cultural and ethnic groups that have been marginalized for long periods of Latin America's postcolonial history. These case studies fall into four thematic parts: Subjectivities and Imaginaries of the Social; Popular Culture and Resistance; Memory and Society; and Religion and Popular Faith. The first four chapters (Contreras Natera, Nehring, López de la Roche, and Ponce Cordero) consider experiences and discourses of everyday subjectivity in the context of hegemonic, subaltern and emergent imaginaries of the social in Latin America. The following three chapters (Silva Ferraz, Padilla and Chaguaceda, and del Percio) examine modes of engagement, resistance and contestation of neoliberal politics through popular culture. Magdalena López and Gerardo Gómez Michel then explore how contemporary sociopolitical discourses and practices are grounded in culturally situated modes of historical memory. Finally, Emmanuel Alvarado and Jungwon Park draw attention to the central role that popular religious attitudes and practices may play in the everyday politics of neoliberalism and anti-neoliberalism in Latin America.

Chapter 2, by Miguel Ángel Contreras Natera, reviews how, from the final years of the 20th century onwards, radical changes in forms of political subject formation have taken shape in Venezuela. These changes have displaced the dominant forms of economic and political regulation of the past 50 years. He proposes that the emergence of political imaginaries rooted in social and political struggles has entailed the constructions of new forms of sociability, new cultural paradigms, and new modes of historical memory. The Venezuelan experience, in Contreras Natera's analysis, amounts to a turning point in the political development of the region. However, the far-reaching consequences of the global crisis that began in 2008 have entailed problematic consequences across Latin America. Tensions caused by fragmented practices of consumption, the extension of criminal networks, and the dislocation of social policy have had profoundly destabilizing consequences. In this sense, this chapter seeks to formulate a comprehensive analysis of the tensions, divisions and uncertainties in popular imaginaries of the social in Latin America. Its argument will focus on Argentina, Paraguay, and Venezuela, contrasting divergent modes of social change, from the moderate and progressive development of Argentine society to radical transformation of Venezuela. Against this backdrop, the chapter will explore alternative

modes of social development in the context of the widening social structural heterogeneity of Latin America.

Daniel Nehring, in Chapter 3, revises how the roles of psychological discourses play in contemporary popular cultures in Latin America, particularly since the neoliberal socioeconomic model has been imposed—and in many ways embraced—in the region. Nehring uses an analysis of the Mexican self-help publishing industry to examine the roles that psychological narratives may play in constructing, bolstering or subverting neoliberal subjectivities. In Mexico, self-help publishing involves, first, the translation and sale of texts written elsewhere, often in the USA, Europe and other Latin American nations, and, second, the sale of books by Mexican authors. Nehring argues that the Mexican self-help industry has a distinctively hybrid character, since a variety of interpretations of self-improvement compete for a readership. The author contrasts self-help texts that blend psychological concepts with Christian nationalism with secular accounts that rely on pseudo-scientific and philosophical arguments to formulate a moral vision of a successful life. Despite their narrative diversity, he proposes that neoliberal understandings of self, choice, and personal responsibility are pervasive in self-help texts. Nehring concludes that, given their popularity, these texts may be read as indicators of much broader public discourses that manifest in a variety of narrative forms and media—in political rhetoric and policy discourse, in news media, in TV talk shows, in online social media, in popular psychological texts, and so forth. Read this way, self-help books speak to the pervasiveness of neoliberal common sense in contemporary Mexican society.

In Chapter 4, López de la Roche first presents explanatory factors concerning Colombian divergence from the recent tendency in several Latin American countries toward 21st century models of political socialism or in conjunction with post-neoliberal development. He then explores the complex legacy of political culture bequeathed by the governments of Álvaro Uribe Velez (2002–06 and 2006–10), which involved an important military effort to combat the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known by its Spanish acronym, FARC) but was not able to defeat them, although their debilitation constituted one of the factors that led to the negotiations in Havana. López de la Roche deals with redefinitions in the political culture and hegemonic communicative regime promoted by President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–14 and 2014–17), which favored promoting successful conclusion of the peace process with the FARC and the initiation of a new, complex and still uncertain phase of national reconciliation among Colombians, notwithstanding obstinate Uribistic loathing of

both the FARC and President Santos, and President Uribe's systematic and ideological delegitimization of the peace process. De la Roche also focuses on issues concerning the October 2, 2016 ratification plebiscite of the Havana Accords, the triumph of the rejectionists, the renegotiation of the Accords with representatives of the rejectionists by the government's negotiating team, the mobilization of the citizenry in defense of the Accords, and the ratification of the revised accord by the Congress at the Colon Theater. Finally, he outlines some of the challenges and possible alternatives for the country's political development during the post-Accord era.

In Chapter 5, Rafael Ponce Cordero examines the phenomenon of underground cinema industry growth in recent years in Ecuador. He reasons that the vigor around these productions relies on three key factors: first, its strong independence from the traditional and centralized film industry—the production is in most of the cases run by non-professional crews (from script writing and direction to acting and post-production). Second, these films have located their production and screenings away from the economic and political centers of Quito and Guayaquil, giving space to “the local world” to be represented, but also to be watched on the screen by the same people in their own space. This is due the use of mostly local, legal and pirate, distribution channels. Finally, as Ponce-Cordero analyses this movement, he proposes that what is behind the success of the new “Cine Bajo Tierra” is a vigorous response to, and sometimes a critique of, the disastrous consequences of the application of neoliberal policies in Ecuador. Boasting titles such as *Sicarios manabitas* (Hitmen from Manabí), *Doble trampa* (Double trap), *El regreso del llanero vengador* (The return of the avenging cowboy), *Drogas: el comienzo del fin* (Drugs: the beginning of the end), *Avaricia* (Greed), and *El ángel de los sicarios* (The hitmen's angel), these films depict scenarios of crude violence, poverty, and merciless surviving behaviors that have found an “appreciation” from their local viewers as a dialectical relationship of self-awareness between filmmakers and audiences who ultimately have suffered the same under neoliberal policies.

Next, Adilson Silva Ferraz (Chapter 6) shows how complex neoliberal dynamics are expressed in a case study: the displacement of the traditional Brazilian Caruaru Market, in the State of Pernambuco, from the center of the city to its periphery. This relocation will cause the homogenization of the traditional market with a global model that satisfies the increasingly competitive demands of the region. Although this market has been an emblem of the city and its cultural values, Ferraz's study shows that the relocation was supported by a good

part of local civil society in conjunction with the state authorities. This demonstrates that collective mechanisms of deliberation do not necessarily guarantee strategies of resistance against neoliberalism. Since neoliberalism is not only an economic theory but also a form of hegemonic subjectivity, different groups or communities can legitimize it through democratic mechanism. Without a change of consciousness, the author concludes, there can be no post-neoliberal momentum.

The chapter by Armando Chaguaceda and Alexei Padilla (Chapter 7) exposes the difficulties of creating public spheres through meetings, magazines, blogs, or talks in a country like Cuba, where the liberal concept of civil society has no place. The authors turn to the historical experience of other single-party socialist countries in Europe to compare the Cuban case. They expose the similarities between the Cuban constitution promulgated in 1976 and the one of the Soviet Union of 1936, which subordinated freedom of the press and of speech to the construction of socialism. Such limitations produce the precariousness, fragmentation and reduction of the various public spheres that have arisen in the Caribbean country under intermittent periods of opening and closing of governmental tolerance. The article highlights the singularity of the magazine *Espacio Laical* during the years 2008 to 2014 under the aegis of the Catholic Church. This publication was a form of public sphere that welcomed some ideological diversity to debate the economic reforms initiated by Raul Castro and the social problems of the island. However, its impact on Cuban civil society remains to be seen.

In line with decolonial theory, Enrique del Percio argues that there is a Latin American thought of indigenous, Creole or African background, different from what he calls the “European matrix” of philosophy. The difference lies in a conception of the world in terms of relations and not of essences. Under this relational logic, concepts such as fraternity, sovereignty, freedom and equality are redefined outside Western logic, without eluding the existence of conflicts. According to the author, this conception of the world is characteristic of Argentine politics; where popular principles have been misunderstood by the European and neoliberal matrix.

From a literary criticism approach, Magdalena López analyses the most paradigmatic case of the pink tide anti-neoliberal states: Venezuela, where after 17 years of *Chavismo* in power, much its recent literature has focused on representing the 1990s. This phenomenon responds to a dispute over memory regarding the meaning of the period before the ascent of *Chavismo*. It is a dispute that remains confined to national paradigms of political polarization. In this chapter, Magdalena López

proposes the concept of a Black Friday Generation to talk about juvenile subjectivities of the late 20th century that escape the nostalgic views embraced by both the official discourse and the Venezuelan lettered city. Through the analysis of the novels *Pim Pam Pum* (1998) by Alejandro Rebolledo, *La última vez* (2007) by Héctor Bujanda, *Bajo tierra* by Gustavo Valle (2009) and *Valle zamuro* (2011) by Camilo Pino, she shows a constitutive uprooting that allows for a notion of historical continuity between the neoliberalism of the 20th century and the Bolivarian Revolution of the 21st. Thus, López concludes, the perspective of the Black Friday Generation offers a vision of the nation different from binary ideological definitions that violently fracture the social fabric.

Indigenous peoples across the region are perhaps the most affected by neoliberal policies. In Chapter 10, Gómez Michel reviews some of the most severe points on the conflict between the Chilean state and the Mapuche nation, their challenges and responses to state repression, and how they project a possible future for their people within the Chilean nation. First, he resumes the origins of the eviction and consequent dispossession suffered by the Mapuche people after their military defeat of 1883. Going over the deepening of this problem during the Pinochet dictatorship, the author reaches the present time to review the Mapuche's struggles for the recovery of their ancestral territories, their direct confrontation with the extractive projects promoted by the Chilean state, and the neoliberal economic policies that, regardless of the ideological positioning of those in power, have been uninterrupted since the coup of September 11, 1973. The reaction to the protests allows him to explore the ubiquitous face of the neoliberal states: repression and social discipline through the exclusive use of force and the implementation of the emergency rule in the face of any threat (or protest) to the status quo. Gómez Michel analyzes some of the resistance strategies used by diverse Mapuche collectives and examines some literary expressions articulated by Mapuche poets, scholars and journalists that are re-imagining the Mapuche nation and their historical struggle to resist the disintegration of their identity through forced migration to urban centers.

In Chapter 11, Emmanuel Alvarado and Jenifer Skolnick examine the relationship between Christian religiosity and attitudes toward social safety-net policies over the past three decades among Latinos in the US. Over the past 30 years, the US has experienced notable reductions in social safety-net coverage, in the context of successive waves of neoliberal economic reforms. This has left members of the Latino and Black community particularly vulnerable to economic

cycles and downturns. Within this context, this chapter analyses the nexus between neoliberal political discourse, potent cultural narratives found within American Christianity and public support for social protection policies. Alvarado and Skolnick address the way in which Christian themes interact with the formation of public attitudes toward greater or lesser support for social safety-net policies among American Latinos. Looking at beliefs, attitudes and everyday experiences among American Latinos in the USA, it considers how religious beliefs may reinforce, contradict and challenge neoliberal policy programs that emphasize individual self-reliance and entrepreneurialism over public welfare provision. Lastly, the authors propose a broad framework through which to interpret their findings grounded on the existence and interaction of two counterpoised cultural narratives on social protection found within Latino American Christianity.

Jungwon Park tackles the controversial phenomenon of the religious devotion for ungodly figures in the final chapter. Popular religion is frequently considered as the remains of “pre-modern” times. To some it may seem anachronistic in an era of highly developed technologies and urban life styles. However, in Mexican society, new types of religious practices and the devotion to secular saints are associated with the drug world and the informal sector at the margins of urban life. Park affirms that these new forms of popular religion are a sign of a changing Mexican society that has been deeply impacted by globalization and neoliberal economics. His chapter explores this contemporary religious phenomenon by using Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “bare life”, underlining how the worship of Jesús Malverde, La Santa Muerte and other laic figures is gaining popularity among those who are abandoned by the mainstream and involved in the informal sector, where they remain exposed to danger and violence and abandoned by the law. Park argues that the role of new religious icons is to provide protection, identification and a sense of community without authorization by the Catholic Church, the traditional system of Christianity. Practitioners of these forms of popular religion may be accused of justifying illicit activities and reproducing the culture of fear and everyday violence. The author discusses these controversial practices to examine a social environment in which the informal sectors have been condemned while constructing their own culture, identity and ways of life.

This book rethinks the uses of neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism in analyzing the cultures and politics of contemporary Latin America. While these two concepts have well-established trajectories and are still current in academic debates, present political upheaval—the decline of Latin America’s ‘pink tide’, the rise of right-wing governments in

Argentina, Brazil, and elsewhere, and the regional impact of the right-wing political turn in the US and Europe—entails an urgent need to re-appraise their theoretical significance and limitations, and to reflect on new and alternative conceptual tools that could make sense of the far-reaching changes that Latin America faces today.

This book contributes to attendant debates by adopting a distinctly cultural focus, looking at the ways in which neoliberalism and alternative constructions of self and social relationships are grounded in cultural objects, cultural models, and everyday uses of these models and meanings. Departing from this cultural focus, the chapters in this volume move beyond established lines of debate in Latin American studies, which all too often have foregrounded the analysis of political and economic process over the need to be attentive to the locally grounded construction and contestation of common sense. It is here that the intended contribution of this volume lies.

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