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# Facing the Future: The Legacies of Post-Neoliberalism in Latin America

## Introduction to *Development and Change* Virtual Issue

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### ABSTRACT

This virtual issue reviews the post-neoliberalism literature published in *Development and Change* between 2012 and 2018. It reflects on recent and ongoing, multiple experiences of resistance to speculative, extractive, inequitable and unsustainable development and the demands for alternatives that emerged in Latin America. The argument is developed through an analysis of the 18 most relevant articles published in this journal, that make a major contribution to three key interrelated debates, namely: the meaning and policies associated with post-neoliberalism; challenges of citizenship and democracy; and the sustainability agenda. Collectively, the selected articles provide a detailed and much-needed discussion about the key achievements, limitations and legacies of post-neoliberalism.

### INTRODUCTION

Is post-neoliberalism over? Should we begin the task of evaluating the era of opposition to neoliberalism in Latin America in the early part of the 21st 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 that the electoral compass in Latin America is shifting to the Right in much of the region, including Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and to the Centre in other countries such as Ecuador. If we understand post-neoliberalism to be the product of a long-standing demand from below for inclusion, and an aspiration for a model of development that is

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a sustainable, equitable alternative to disciplinary, free market capitalism, austerity, constrained sovereignty and limited citizenship, then 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. Defining post-neoliberalism in this broader context, 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, particularly with regard to this extraordinary period in Latin America that began in the late 1990s. In this article we spell out its legacy and identify what we, as students of Latin American governance, development, equity, sustainability and citizenship, still need to understand in order to make sense of future developments.

This virtual issue looks to the future and at the past to identify the ongoing, multiple experiences of resistance to speculative, extractive, inequitable and unsustainable development and the demands for alternatives that emerged in Latin America. It reviews 18 contributions from colleagues published in *Development and Change* between 2012 and 2018. These articles make a major contribution to the debate on the meaning and policies associated with post-neoliberalism which was set out by an earlier generation of scholarship (see for instance, Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Escobar, 2010; Grugel and Riggiozzi, 2009; Macdonald and Ruckert, 2009; Peck et al., 2010; Radcliffe, 2012; Wylde, 2012). Collectively, the selected articles provide a detailed and much-needed discussion about the key achievements, limitations and legacies of post-neoliberalism.

Three inter-linked themes emerge from our survey of the *Development and Change* literature since 2012: (i) the contribution of these articles 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 the 20th 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 well-being of many of the region's peoples and communities. In all three areas, post-neoliberalism proposed alternative policy paradigms and mobilized communities. In this Introduction, we use these themes to group together the *Development and Change* contributions. 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 provided a novel analytical perspective on modes of governance in Latin America which is almost certainly the most exciting since democratization in the 1980s and 1990s. The term was coined in the early 21st century to describe new political economies and political cultures emerging in Latin America and has become a lens through which scholars analyse attempts which seemed to be taking place across the region to transform cultural, social and economic aspects as well as citizenship, political economies, human rights, sustainability and extractivism, identity, nationalism and regionalism. As a concept, post-neoliberalism has opened up genuinely new possibilities for understanding Latin American political economy and development (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; Peck et al., 2010; Radcliffe, 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 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. It was bolstered by a conviction that greater control over the market — for reasons of morality, democracy and efficacy — was possible and offered a way of exploring the *specific and often contingent politics and policies* that aimed to correct existing architectures of governance. Of course, this shared regional ‘moment’ gave rise to quite different national experiences that were shaped by divergent political cultures, patterns of leadership, economic potential, geopolitics and experiences of marketization and economic liberalization. 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 the 1990s during a tumultuous and painful period in Latin America when democracies in the region struggled to reconcile political and social inclusion. Democratization was in effect 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 (IADB, 2006; Solimano and Soto, 2005) and led directly to a clamour for change. Post-neoliberalism offered, above all, a politics of hope to citizens made vulnerable through marketization and uncertainty (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2009). Its appeal to voters lay precisely in the challenge it provided to the rising levels of poverty and inequality (Londoño and Székely, 1997). As a political project, it promised to uphold the dignity of all citizens in the face of markets, collective human

rights, a transformation in the 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 post-neoliberalism has delivered on these pledges has fallen short, though how far short remains contested. Here, the debate principally focuses 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 opposed 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 21st century were usually far more moderate in their practice than in 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’ (Fernandez-Arias and Montiel, 1997; Munck, 2003; Thorp, 2012).

Looking back, it is abundantly clear that post-neoliberal promises of transformation of the state, society and economy have not happened — and in some cases such as Venezuela, reforms have directly contributed to economic misery, out-migration and social collapse. Once in office, post-neoliberal governments across Latin America became increasingly pragmatic — critics might even say cynical, partisan and contradictory — and distanced themselves from 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 et al., 2014). This is clear, for example, in terms of social programmes which remain tied to the cash transfer approach (see Lavinas, 2018) or models of development that, despite being led by a more interventionist state, were tied to primary commodity production and extractivism as cornerstones of growth-oriented development in Latin America (Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Gudynas, 2010).

Nevertheless, post-neoliberalism 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 globalized, 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. At the core of many of the articles included 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. Radcliffe (2015) tackles the question of ‘alternatives’, directly addressing the fundamental contradictions affecting sustainable development in Latin America.

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 contributions in this virtual issue deal with development ideas as articulated by social movements and communities, providing detailed research on the social networks and civil society movements that have pushed for the adoption of new development priorities, particularly in the Andean region. This is due, at least in part, to the apparently unstoppable trend towards identity politics in that subregion and to our collective academic fascination with the way in which the region has pioneered claims making based on difference. It is also a consequence of the exceptional contribution post-colonial scholars and those in critical development studies, geography, anthropology and ethnography have made to the study of Latin America in recent decades and to the scholarship on difference and diversity. We should also note that one of the defining features of post-neoliberalism has been its electoral viability, as politicians and policy makers have embraced new visions of equitable development from above. As Dayton Johnson (2018) states, 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, although the initiatives adopted by politicians once in office have also been explored in depth by some authors in this virtual issue, comparative analysis between policy domains and between governments remains incomplete. Some contributions here, such as those by Fletcher (2012), Graef (2013), Grandia (2013), Hillenkamp (2015) and Vos and Boelens (2014), argue that governments have been more successful in putting in motion policies to reduce socioeconomic inequalities than in addressing cultural and identity-based forms of discrimination. Vos and Boelens (*ibid.*) 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: 313) 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. They argue that government initiatives have tended to overlook the consequences of industrial resource extraction operations and land use alteration as a consequence.

It is well documented that post-neoliberal governments struggled to articulate and implement fully coherent strategies for equitable development, causing their relationships with local social movements and communities to become more problematic over time. Calvo (2016), Cordoba et al. (2014) and Molero Simarro and Paz Antolin (2012) all pick this up in one way or another in relation to Bolivia, and the attempts of *Buen Vivir*<sup>1</sup> and the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) to promote 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 the competing identity claims and land-rights issues from increasingly vocal and organized 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

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1. *Buen Vivir* draws from ancestral conceptions of *sumak kawsay* in Quechua and *suma qaman* in Aymara, in the indigenous languages of the Andean region. It defines development as ecologically balanced and culturally sensitive to the rights of indigenous peoples. *Buen vivir* was adopted as a guideline for development in the Constitution of Ecuador in 2008 and Bolivia in 2009 (see Radcliffe, 2012).

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 21st century Latin America and it would be inaccurate to view this process simply as an outcome of the neoliberalization of development. Historical and long-term patterns of domination have, over centuries, imposed on the region the enclosure of common land and the excessive exploitation of its 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 which have, in turn, made it difficult for current governments to act effectively and equitably. Even ‘progressive’ regimes embracing post-neoliberalism in Latin America have had quite troubled relationships 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 of the state on the one hand and the marketization of land and (neo)extractivism on the other.

The articles in this virtual issue contribute to the debate over what development means and the gap between elites and ordinary citizens in terms of economic and social preferences, which has made for contested development strategies that continue to impact directly on the well-being of communities. These issues sit at the heart of the region’s politics and political economy and they will not go away simply 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 is still a project of governance reflective of Latin America’s historical dependence on resources, or the ‘paradox of plenty’ (Karl, 1997), even if it distributed the benefits of that dependence more widely than neoliberalism. 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 and exacerbated the social and political tensions that characterized the Left in government, weakening their position, and in some cases leading to the loss of office.

The dilemma between exploiting natural resources for socioeconomic development and defending both human and environmental rights certainly became a major challenge for Latin America in the post-neoliberal era. It has fuelled 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 — including Berta Cáceres in Honduras on 2 March 2016, and other campaigners across the region (Birss, 2017; *The Guardian*, 2018) — is a clear manifestation of the region's failure to embed alternative governance in relation 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 institutionalized regimes, symbols and repertoires that link the state to its people and legitimize 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 mobilization of the poor and civil society; yet, as democracies settled, societies became increasingly atomized by the profound socioeconomic restructuring, severe cuts in public spending and the flexibilization of labour markets that were imposed. Ironically, then, democratization 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 industrialization 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 social movements demanded 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 inclusive and dignified welfare provision. As we have argued in the article included in this virtual issue (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 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 marginalization, 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' (see also Rice,

2018: 299). 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 were they 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 advances in human rights have been weak, at least in terms of policies advanced by Left governments, is 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 near 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 with — or made possible — debates about the *purpose* of welfare rather than simply its mode of provision. Saad-Filho's (2015) analysis of social policies in Brazil 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 (*ibid.*) and Birn et al. (2016) show how neoliberal welfare reforms curtailed aspirations to universal cover 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 (2015) 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 (see also Lavinas, 2018).

As Saad-Filho suggests, cash transfer 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 cutbacks but did little to break with the finance-dominated blueprint of neoliberal social policy. Both Saad-Filho and Lavinás 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 et al. (2015) note in this issue, its limitations have consistently been identified by the influential regional think tank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which has forcefully encouraged governments to 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 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 500 years and attempts to shift away from that dependence have ultimately failed. Even dependency theorists such as Cardoso Fernando and Faletto (1979), who came 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 liberalization 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. 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 Büscher (2012: 55) argue, ‘the dynamic of extracting from [Nature], polluting it and conserving it’ became even bigger business in ways that were unanticipated even 30 years earlier. As the contributions in this virtual issue 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 on 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 *Development and Change* contributions, it is striking to see the extent to which the journal has become a preferred home for critically engaged scholarship that has taken the study of commodities out of 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. Liza 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 narcotic networks. The result is a loss of land and autonomy for communities that have historically been geographically marginal in Guatemala, along with new power alliances that now enact and enforce new forms of political and social domination.

Siegel’s (2016) contribution to the debate is also distinctive in that she links the debate on natural resources to questions of democracy. Her article 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, in fact, goes some way to address a puzzle posed by Radcliffe (2015): 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, Siegel suggests, is that 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 focusing 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 conclusions are, first, that ‘sovereignty, democracy and the environment are intertwined’ in Latin America and, second, that the possibilities of shaping outcomes are more fluid than 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’ (ibid.: 305). Still, we must beware of being too optimistic in our expectations of public engagement and local institutions.

As Bottazzi 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 increase pressures on land for food production and to increase 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 well-being 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, and concerns about growth, sustainability and biodiversity all 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 with Yates and Bakker (2014) that there remains a scholarly challenge of how to conceptualize anti-capitalist and/or anti-neoliberal forms of political activism and how to analyse public rhetoric that invokes 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 towards the Right, 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 is a new wave of connected and confident social movements, citizenship, human rights, environmentalist, feminist and anti-austerity groups such as Occupy and Indignados, and women's rights groups such as MeToo and Ni Una Menos, in Latin American and across the world, that rely less than ever on party linkages to mobilize. These organizations, 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; they are, as a result, more difficult to control.

In policy terms, we need to explore the legacies of post-neoliberal welfare, tax and investment policies. These will prove as difficult to unpick in many cases as the neoliberal frameworks that came before. Meanwhile the extent to which the SDGs present 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 underpins the global goals, echoes some of the principles of post-neoliberal development (Radcliffe, 2018); how future governments respond to this is sure to become an increasingly important topic of analysis since meeting the SDGs will require the challenging of 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 environmental and resource challenges. Here, it is clear that post-neoliberalism failed to articulate a convincing and institutionalized alternative to the neoliberal model of economic growth based on the global market and the exports of natural resources. Left governments 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 some cases state-led militarizing/increasing securitization — simply in order to maintain income and public spending. To what extent they had real choices is up for discussion. But their failure in 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 post-neoliberal governments ignored or even tried to suppress inclusion and citizenship struggles.

Out of these contradictions has come a new articulation of right-wing power in Latin America. With the political parties of the Left in retreat, we have argued here that it is independent civil society organizations that may, once again, have to try to hold governments to account and lead social resistance to any attempt to re-introduce austerity and any 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 into 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 (2018) 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 to articulate a sustainable Latin American vision of a better and less unequal society in the future.

**The 18 *Development and Change* articles included in this virtual issue (in order of appearance):**

1. Grugel, J. and P. Riggirozzi (2012) 'Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: Rebuilding and Reclaiming the State after Crisis', *Development and Change* 43(1): 1–21.
2. Córdoba, D., K. Jansen and C. González (2014) 'The Malleability of Participation: The Politics of Agricultural Research under Neoliberalism in Bolivia', *Development and Change* 45(6): 1284–309.

3. Lavinas, L. (2018) 'The Collateralization of Social Policy under Financialized Capitalism', *Development and Change* 49(2): 502–17.
4. Radcliffe, S.A. (2015) 'Development Alternatives', *Development and Change* 46(4): 855–74.
5. Fletcher, R. (2012) 'Using the Master's Tools? Neoliberal Conservation and the Evasion of Inequality', *Development and Change* 43(1): 295–317.
6. Graef, D.J. (2013) 'Negotiating Environmental Sovereignty in Costa Rica', *Development and Change* 44(2): 285–307.
7. Grandia, L. (2013) 'Road Mapping: Megaprojects and Land Grabs in the Northern Guatemalan Lowlands', *Development and Change* 44(2): 233–59.
8. Hillenkamp, I. (2015) 'Solidarity Economy for Development and Women's Emancipation: Lessons from Bolivia', *Development and Change* 46(5): 1133–58.
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10. Calvo, V. (2016) 'The Construction of the "Self" in Conflicts around Land in Contemporary Tarabuco (Bolivia)', *Development and Change* 47(6): 1361–78.
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