

RECONSTRUCTING REGIONALISM: WHAT DOES
DEVELOPMENT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Latin America is transiting an era of redefinition through a combination of national level statecraft and the reshaping of the regional political economy. The significance of current transformations is to be seen in political reinvention of democracy and development in response to the legacies of neoliberalism in the region. The extent to which these responses are framing anti-neoliberal or post-neoliberal projects is a matter of debate. This debate is picked up in this chapter by looking at how regionalist projects are part and parcel of how development is thought of and implemented in the region. Regionalism has often been thought as a governance strategy, a pragmatic response to exogenous factors and the challenges of the global political economy. Regionalism in short has been seen as policies pursued by actors (mainly states) directed at enhancing (some aspect of) their capabilities/powers of agency. Without denying the importance of exogenous factors, the aim of this chapter is to rethink the place of development in the current transformations in the political economy of regional governance. We argue that at the core of the new strategies of cooperation and solidarity is a broader question about what sort of development is at stake in a post-hegemonic era. Emergent types of regionalism in the Americas are the embodiment of alternative models of development that contest or reframe the neoliberal orthodoxy prevailing in the 1980s and 1990s. While the terms of integration and regional governance are being redefined, in practice, however, this is not exempt of contradictions. Regional projects are faced with substantially divergent visions of what regional governance should mean and how integration projects should respond to current challenges of development in the new construction of the region

Although it would be wrong to assume that we can depict a single, fixed interpretation to what are evolving regional policy responses, we suggest, that the moment of *a* hegemonic single mode of political economy for the region is over. Latin America is navigating in the absence of one, hegemonic, “meta-narrative” (Whitehead 2009). There is no master history or a single roadmap redefining the political economy in the region. What we rather find is that the many crises of neoliberalism gave way to a redefinition of the regional space and regional politics of cooperation and integration. A new common sense defies the accepted wisdom on development and the common sense model of society of the Washington Consensus. This chapter analyzes the new architecture of regionalism in Latin America in light of these trends, focusing not only on the factors that govern the emergence of alternative projects that contest the “open regionalism” associated with neoliberal governance, but also the factors that address

the transformative capacity of new regionalist projects such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in advancing new models of development and society. The regional level political process itself is opening up to a much wider range of issues and political, economic, and social actors. Regionalism and integration therefore are analyzed in light of the models of development. Regionalism is increasingly what actors make of it.

Is the region facing a “Polanyian” moment of compensation for market excess, or is it part of a “revolution in the making?” There is no short answer to this question. Debates now turn to what the appropriate balance should be between states and markets and building mechanisms of responsiveness and resilience within economies and societies. The difficult birth of alternative political economies to neoliberalism certainly is testimony of the cost of neoliberalism and the ongoing processes of transformation and social recomposition. The new tonality we argue is multiscale. The loss of certainty about the wisdom of orthodox, market-led strategies for development has led to the adoption of mixed and often pragmatic policies for more responsive political economies, broadening at the same time the arena of action beyond their own immediate communities and nation states. This is visible in the creation of UNASUR and ALBA where trans-governmental and trans-social societal cooperation in welfare projects, workers cooperatives, and the creation of regionally anchored health, education, and energy production systems attempt to create a sense of belonging, identity, and inclusion. Even as they crawl, the agenda-setting capacity of these projects reflects an important political shift. This chapter depicts what these projects mean in terms of development and regional governance in a post-hegemonic era.

Looking at the UNASUR and ALBA, how are we to understand current trends of regional cooperation and projects of integration, given that the political and economic circumstances of the 1980s and 1990s no longer hold so firm (both at domestic and global levels)? How are we to conceptualize current agenda-setting attempts from a development perspective? Are we witnessing the articulation of a “third wave” (post-neoliberal) regionalism? By covering these questions the chapter provides an original and grounded analysis of alternative uses of regionalism that stand aside from those that prevailed when the United States was able and willing to play a leading political, economic, and ideological role.

Theoretically, the chapter proposes to rethink region and regional governance as a new political space, where consensus are deliberated and delivered. Although most scholars accept that regionalism is more than legalism, institutions, and supranationality, there is still much misunderstanding (and even bewilderment) about what regionalism beyond Europe means (Sbraglia 2008). Prevailing arguments seem to characterize regionalism as a dichotomy between “old” and “new” regionalism. But these categories that nest mainly within the regionalism-neoliberal globalization relationship are insufficient to explain how states are currently responding to their own national commitments and to new region-building, a project that contests the politics and policies of established neoliberal architecture. We contend that Latin America can be seen as the subject of new struggles and political formations where old trajectories

and political economic projects are being redefined. In other words, in a context where the wisdom of unregulated markets is being contested the region is emerging as a platform where diverse political and developmental projects find a space for action. Second, while the analytical field of (comparative) regionalism, especially that explaining non-European regionalism, addresses questions about the factors that lead to the emergence of a specific form of regionalism, the literature runs short on explaining how transformative regionalist projects are part and parcel of a broader question about development. By analyzing emerging projects of regional cooperation, the chapter suggests that their transformative capacity needs to be seen in terms of new spaces for action driven by new aspirations for autonomous development and socioeconomic inclusion.

This study therefore analyzes regional governance as manifestations of a broader search for alternative, post-hegemonic, political economies in the region. The analysis proceeds in four parts. The first part offers an overview of regionalism and development in historical perspective. The second part concentrates on ALBA and UNASUR and speculates on the nature of transformations in regional politics and the extent to which these projects represent new parameters beyond the neoliberal consensus. The third part provides an analytical framework to make sense of these changes and offers a critique to New Regionalism as an approach as it falls short in explaining regionalism beyond market-based considerations of “old”/close and “new”/open. The chapter closes with a discussion about challenges to the resilience of post-neoliberal regionalism.

2.1. REGIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN AN ERA OF CHANGE

Latin America is currently a test bed for political and economic processes that since the early 2000s brought forth a debate that centers on what a synthesis between state and society, and between state and markets, entails to overcome the costs of neoliberalism in terms of citizenship, democracy, and inclusion. The relationship between state and markets, and the place for social actors, however is not new. It has been at the core of a debate about development and regional cooperation since the late nineteenth century. In many ways, both development and regionalism have been embedded in historical patterns of national and inter-American politics. Undeniably, the uniqueness of Latin American political economy lies in the fact that its search for economic development has been profoundly and indelibly shaped, from the nineteenth century onward, not only by local political and economic conflicts but also by the need to offer national and regional responses to the steady assertion of US global and regional hegemony.

Considering development, some have described it as paradigmatic grand narratives while others as specific forms of ideas (knowledge) informing practices that sustain power relations (Escobar 1995). From these perspectives, development shapes power relations as much as it is shaped by them. The argument could also be extended to the concept of region building. Development often unfolds as alignments of political

institutions and economic growth, which may manifest nationally and echo regionally, if generally accepted. This defines regionalism as economic organization of a particular regional space through institutions established along economic and political lines (see Gamble and Payne 1996; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003).

Historically, the debate concerning the political economy of development in Latin America has been marked by a tension between two paradigms: namely “neoclassical” free trade view versus structuralist view based on building long-term comparative advantage. This debate responded to demands of uneven growth despite early insertion into the global political economy; tensions between production for the internal market and the global economy; difficulties with domestic capital formation and the presence of foreign capital across important sectors of regional economies; and class struggles over the direction of state policy (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). These tensions were exacerbated by the presence of the United States as a regional (hegemonic) power that never ceased to loom large.

Latin America has, in effect, been in search of a stable model of growth and development since the collapse of the oligarchy-dominated model of liberal economics and export agriculture in the 1930s. At the center of the development debate in Latin America are questions about the role and the weight of the state versus the market at the national level, and the potentials of the region as a platform of a better insertion in the global economy.

The way these tensions unfolded can be summarized as two main waves of regionalism: a first wave identified as “closed regionalism” echoing experiments with import substitution after 1945 and the search for nationalist development while attempting to build regional autonomy; and a second one, “open regionalism,” shaped by a generalized collapse of nationalist projects in the 1960s and 1970s and the embrace of Latin America’s neoliberalism and a political willingness on the part of the (new democratic) governments to pragmatically accept leadership from Washington. The transformative capacity of regional development projects, as well as their resilience, has been linked to their capacity to respond to changed circumstances and demands at different levels of policy and politics across time. Today the regional scenario is marked by a loss of interest in the United States with building its backyard, amidst internal opposition to market opening from business and trade unions, security concerns and fears of migration after September 11, 2001; and more significantly the loss of faith in neoliberal development and economic integration across the region. This paved the way for the emergence of alternative projects of regionalist political economy creating a new environment for the (re)emergence of new agendas of regional development in the South.

2.1.1 Narratives of Development and Regionalism in Latin America

The first wave of regionalism, in the 1950s and 1970s, was identified as the “Grand Design” (Bouzas and Knnack 2009: 29). During this period regional integration was conceived as compromise between the prevailing development policy

of import-substitution industrialization and the new paradigm of integration into the world economy. Influenced by the European experience and attempting to build closed trading blocs favorable for industrialization between countries with linguistic, cultural, and geographic affinities, this “closed regionalism” was part of an economic project as much as part of the Cold War mosaic. It was grounded in the political economic philosophy as well as the policy suggestions of the ECLAC/CEPAL in the mid-1940s. The idea was to enhance and expand industrial planning to the region-wide scale, to remove barriers to mutual trade while keeping high levels of external protection to serve as an incentive to industrialization, economic growth, and investment, and a way to overcome the limitation of small domestic markets. Proponents of this policy advocated regional integration as development (see Hettne et al. 2000; Devlin and Estevadeordal 2001). At its center was the notion of bounded sovereign states, largely able to control the nature of regional commitments and protect via subsidies and tariffs their domestic producers from external competition (Chibber 2005; Lewis 2005). Ultimately, economic nationalism framed a new way of thinking and speaking about politics, economics, and culture, while regionalism became a generalized reaction to the liberal, oligarchic rule in many countries in the region (Grugel 2009).

The first relevant trade project of this kind took shape in 1960 with the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA, or ALALC in Spanish). LAFTA was created, under the inspiration of the ECLAC, by Mexico and six South American countries with the objective of eliminating all barriers to intraregional trade. In Central America, a similar initiative gave birth to the Central American Common Market joined by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, which set a more ambitious objective of creating a free trade area and implementing a common external tariff. In 1969 a split from LAFTA led Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru to establish a more institutionally ambitious common market project, the Andean Community, with an executive body with “supranational” powers and mechanisms to promote an equitable distribution of benefits. To complete the regional architecture a Caribbean Free Trade Agreement (CARIFTA) was signed in 1967, to be superseded six years later by the Caribbean Community (Bouzas and Knnack 2009).

But political instability, the general difficulties attendant on import-substitution across Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, “stop-go cycles” of economic expansion followed by contraction led to a loss of faith in state-led growth. Protectionism had resulted in overvalued and uncompetitive exchange rates for exports and the economy was dependent on the imports of capital and intermediate goods to sustain industrialization, creating a progressive trade deficit. Public spending, meanwhile, was financed by growing external indebtedness taking most of Latin America into a lost decade in the 1980s, characterized by economic collapse and a brutal fall in employment and living standards (Haggard and Kaufman 1992; Fanelli 2003). Nationalistic development projects increasingly became unsustainable. The failure of import substitution projects, together with the severity of many years of political

repression during military dictatorships that followed, affected the spirit and the actual progress of close regionalism. Furthermore, many severely indebted economies in the region were left with little choice than to align closer with the United States, a gatekeeper to external finance. Having found itself in an extremely weak bargaining position and with little faith left in nationalistic economic recipes, Latin America surrendered to US rules, which predicated the end of the revolutionary nationalist utopia, even presenting free market as a way of strengthening democracy in the region.

Partly as a pragmatic program to regain access to international financial flows, and partly as a result of a sense that there was little choice, the region embraced the Washington Consensus almost submissively (Drake 2006:27). The United States also provided debt relief through the Brady Plan while involving Latin American governments in a discussion of the (new) rules for regional integration. This set the agenda for the second wave of regionalism, the so-called new regionalism, dominated by trade and financial liberalization and underpinned, politically and ideationally, by an acceptance of the perception of an “unavoidable reality” of the market-led globalization. Although most of the organizations of the first period, such as the Andean Community, did not disappear, by the early 1990s, the old regionalism was largely superseded by “open” regionalism, which also fitted well with the new geopolitics of the post-Cold War period (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Payne 2000; Varynen 2003; Sørensen 2004).

These pressures were even more urgent as the trade regime came increasingly under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization (WTO). An equally important driver was a series of US-led free-trade agreements aimed at eventually creating a hemispheric free-trade association, and the formation of multiple and overlapping, bilateral and plurilateral preferential trading arrangements. The establishment of the MERCOSUR in 1991 grouping together Brazil, the largest economy in Latin America, with Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed with Canada and Mexico in 1994, for instance, was premised on the notion of “open regionalism.” Both MERCOSUR and NAFTA were articulated as strategic responses to the imperatives generated by globalization processes aimed at enhancing markets, trade, and investment (Phillips 2003b: 329). For the United States, meanwhile, this context opened a window of opportunity toward a more ambitious “Enterprise for the Americas,” introduced in 1990 by President George W. Bush Sr. and designed to lead to a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) launched by President Bill Clinton at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994 for its signature in 2005. The FTAA, launched on the footsteps of NAFTA, resembled the old vision of Pan-Americanism under a neoliberalism guise as it sought to integrate the Americas through the liberalization of economic policies opening up a vast market from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.

The embrace of neoliberalism as a developmental project has been material for extensive debate among academics and practitioners. The idea of switching to the market as the driver of the economy, and cutting back the state, settled into the economic policy program of choice in a context of political instability and hyperinflation

in the early 1980s. Without questioning the view that the neoliberal era did indeed represent a high point of external influence over regional politics, we should nonetheless note that there were quite distinctive national patterns of engagement in Latin America as elsewhere (Peck and Tickell 2002). In the process, emphasis on the particularities of regional development gave way to narratives which posited a model of globalized development through markets, financial deregulation, and internationalized capitalism (Williamson 1990; Dornbusch and Edwards 1991). Across Latin America, whether through conviction or because there seemed to be no alternative, governments capitulated to the tenets of letting markets operate both domestically and globally (Drake 2006: 33). The arguments about how the economic recession of the 1980s intensified the ideational and material leverage Washington and Washington institutions enjoyed (Stallings 1992) are now well known. It is not surprising then that critical voices saw the adoption of neoliberalism in Latin America not only as an erroneous economic recipe but also as a straightforward capitulation to the United States—something the region had tried to avoid in the earlier years of industrialization by import substitution (Robinson 2004).

The Washington Consensus set out to transform economic practices via a range of policies from the privatization of public assets to cuts in public expenditure and it played well at a time of conservative and timid democratization when the “excesses” of the Left were blamed for having provoked the extreme violence that engulfed much of the region in the 1960s and 1970s. There is some evidence to suggest that liberal economics did indeed limit (or at least shed light) on corrupt state practices (Wise 2003). But overall, the immediate political (as well as economic) impact of the Washington Consensus on Latin America’s nascent democracies was negative. It led to the introduction of highly executive, undemocratic, and non-consultative procedures within government, reduced access to the state, deepened poverty, heightened social and economic exclusion, and increased social tensions. The attempt to locate citizenship and identities through market relations proved particularly difficult in a region with strong traditions of both corporatist and social movement-based forms of organization. Socially, the neoliberal legacy was measured in poverty rates that barely dropped throughout the high period of neoliberalism (from 48.3% in 1990 to 44% in 2002), as welfare was systematically squeezed and inclusion reduced to those who could pay for health, good schooling, and social security (ECLAC 2010). Moreover, despite the introduction of poverty-reduction policies, significant numbers of people were still left behind, including poor children and women and indigenous groups (ECLAC 2010) and inequality intensified. As the problems associated with market-based and market-led policies spiraled, two trends were clearly visible by 2001.

The shallowness of neoliberal democracies was an important factor in the opposition to the political and economic order that bred in much of Latin America during the 1990s and was catalyzed, sometimes with considerable violence and state repression, by economic crises by the turn of the century. In the early 2000s, civil society and many forms of non-partisan collective action movements emerged demanding

participation, inclusion, and accountable governance (Friedman and Hochstetler 2008). There were periodic episodes of resistance and unrest at the attempts to undermine traditional patterns of community or belonging in Mexico, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, and, eventually, Argentina. The claim was that the state should have a responsibility toward rights of citizenship, while finding new spaces for reshaping politics, policies, and institutions. Indeed, in the end it was the difficulty of reconciling neoliberalism with popular expectations of inclusive, democratic politics, rather than a failure of its strictly economic rationale, that has led to its unraveling, as governments committed to change gradually took office in a setting marked by the retreat of market orthodoxy.

One important manifestation of these developments across the region has been the emergence of New Leftist governments. A spectrum of national responses has seen the election of a series of Leftist governments in much of Latin America, in Argentina, and Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, and recently in Peru. At odds with neoliberal policies, these governments embarked on a search for an alternative to the orthodoxy of neoliberal political economies (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009; Panizza 2009).¹ The change in the political orientation in many countries in the region since the early 2000s was not simply rhetorical. In general new Latin American governments adopted more radical models of political inclusion and citizenship and a new attitude to state building and representation in a multiscalar way. In this context, reclaiming the region became not only a way of resisting US power but also a genuine reflection of what Latin American should do and what it should look like in the face of the crisis of neoliberalism. New and often contingent policies were introduced to rebuild and extend the role of the state in the regulation, provision, and distribution of economic resources. This combined with a greater emphasis on the inclusion of previously excluded groups and the significance of ethnic politics, supports Tockman's (2010) notion of "post neoliberalism" as a combination of Keynesian welfare politics and socialism. Finally, the change in political economy led to another important manifestation, the rediscovery of the region as a common space for pulling together resources in support of post-neoliberal practices and in rejection of the idea of neoliberal-led regionalism.

The adverse effects of economic integration on social cohesion and development were gradually shared across the continent contributing to an increasing deep disenchantment with neoliberal policies as they failed to deliver on their promises of development beyond controlling inflation. Latin American countries were increasingly hit by unsustainable levels of poverty and inequality. Poverty rates barely dropped throughout the high period of neoliberalism (from 48.3% in 1990 to 44% in 2002), as welfare was systematically squeezed and inclusion reduced to those who could pay for health, good schooling, and social security (ECLAC 2010). Soon,

¹ Norberto Bobbio (1996) argues that the pursuit of equality is the dimension that distinguishes left from right. In particular, he argues that the Left seeks to reduce the amount of suffering in the world, that the Left tends toward egalitarian values.

even subregional expressions like MERCOSUR gradually turned into a platform for resistance to further neoliberalism, reinforced in turn by the incorporation of Venezuela to the founding group (Malamud 2005: 423). Institutionally, the “repoliticization” of MERCOSUR was seen in reference to new initiatives for labor rights, participation of civil society, the establishment of a regional parliament, the introduction of the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) in 2000, and the establishment of a Fund for Structural Convergence in 2005, marking a new direction beyond trade-led goals, and the road to what later crystallized as UNASUR. In this context, the agenda of integration ushered in by the FTAA negotiation encountered the difficulties of losing support and legitimacy, while the United States turned to a number of bilateral trade deals (Phillips 2005; Shadlen 2005; Gallagher 2008).

The Fourth Summit of the Americas, which took place in Mar del Plata in November 2005, grounded two opposing views: one favoring the proposed FTAA—mainly supported by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and countries especially dependent on preferential US trade agreements—and another dissenting group—including MERCOSUR countries, Venezuela and Bolivia—which declared themselves against a hemispheric trade agreement and refused to commit to future FTAA talks. New talks about South American governance and forms of cooperation took shape into concrete projects that contested both neoliberalism as a development project and the legitimacy of Washington to remake the hemisphere in its own image. UNASUR and ALBA were embraced as contesting projects (Tussie 2009). As the next section explores, both opened an opportunity for accommodation of political and economic projects, reasserting alternative ideas about development and regionalism. Indeed, in contrast to the proverbial “There Is No Alternative,” now promising alternatives realigned their strategies for development and governance recapturing the region as a space for policy formulation on social, political, and development issues that overtook the traditional drivers of “open regionalism” in the 1990s.

How transformative these national and regionalist projects are is a matter of debate. The extent to which South America has separated itself from the larger Latin America and is transiting a moment of adjustment managing the worst aspects of neoliberalism, or some sort of “revolution in the making” remains an open discussion. To analyze what these projects mean in terms of current dilemmas of development the following section makes a distinction between moderate political economic projects born from resilient neoliberal models that prevailed during the late 1980s and 1990s and more radical, counter-hegemonic models of integration led by new and deep transformative projects.

2.2. TRANSFORMATIVE REGIONALISM: RE-TERRITORIALIZATION OF REGION(S) AND CONSENSUSES

One of the striking characteristics defining current dynamics of political economy in Latin America is the attempt to redefine boundaries (geographical and ideological) beyond the historical hub of open regionalism, while fostering new institutions,

funding mechanisms, regional policies, and collective practices in social fields such as education, health, employment, energy, infrastructure, and security. Although embryonic, this manifestation of post-neoliberal politics attempts to give answers to unresolved needs of development, growth, and democracy. Regional models embraced by ALBA and UNASUR reflect attempts to refashion the relation between the state and the regional space for the achievement of those goals, redefining at the same time collective responsibilities and more critically what development is for, and what regionalism is for. It is at this point that it is interesting to make a distinction between the two main regionalist projects that have, although in different ways, a transformative perspective of continental reach, ALBA and UNASUR.

2.2.1 ALBA: Non-capitalist Practices as Alternative Development Principles

ALBA represents an unprecedented attempt to foster an agenda that is not based primarily on trade liberalization but actually on welfare cooperation and solidarity, placing a distinctive emphasis on civil society participatory practices in planning and administration (Harris and Azzi 2006). In contrast to other projects in the Americas, it has taken a particularly confrontational line in trying to challenge the United States with regard to almost all issues on the inter-American agenda.

The creation of the ALBA was proposed by President Hugo Chavez in 2001, but as a project materialized in 2004 when Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez endorsed the first declaration of the ALBA.² ALBA represents a radical, ideologically transformative project that extends Chávez's twenty-first century socialism into a pursuit of regional integration scheme, in direct opposition to neoliberalism. The link between the ideological strand of Chavez and the *Chavismo* however must not overlook new practices driving trans-border relations as well as the consequences of these relationships for a concept of development based on the exchange of human resources.

ALBA rallied around the rejection regionalism of the 1990s in which Latin American economies competed to lock in deregulation and attract foreign investment. Since its conception in 2004, it proposed an alternative model of development and accumulation underpinned by new principles of solidarity and complementarities, which in some cases, like in Bolivia and Ecuador, were included in constitutional reforms (Chapter 3). The political economic philosophy embraced by ALBA is based on two pillars: endogenous development and a new internationalism based on the exchange of human capital. Undeniably this is a model that is sustained by an oil-dependent diplomacy. Nevertheless, the impact of many of the human development and capacity-building projects supported by this new philosophy is to be seen in the longer run. Endogenous development is conceived as new types of production relations aimed at creating community-based economies or "popular economy." It has been largely applied in Venezuela through cooperative models, state intervention

² http://www.alternativabolivariana.org/pdf/documentos_albaVI.pdf

for the application of redistributive policies, and social programs; establishment of new local institutions, cooperatives, and public firms to support planning; management of local-based resources; and implementation of welfare projects in response to communal needs (see Parker 2007).

The promises of endogenous development in Venezuela have been accompanied by a region-wide set of initiatives defining ALBA, grouping Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominica, and Honduras. Since its conception in 2004, ALBA's growth in membership and integration capacity has translated into a number of bilateral and regional agreements, including cooperation in energy, food security, culture, finance and banking, social development, healthcare, and education (Ruttemberg and Fuchs 2011). These sectors have seen an increasing internationalism that in essence is advanced by intergovernmental agreements rather than institutionalized treaties or supranational institutions. The mechanisms to advance internationalism in these areas include mainly production networks, and "grand national" (gran-nacional) welfare programs and private cooperatives and community-owned enterprises (Altmann 2009). These instruments are the basis of a new model of organizing regional production and distribution representing an alternative to multilateralism as conceived by "open regionalism." The concept of Grand National alludes to a new form of transnational public enterprise that challenges current conventional multilateral forms of economic organization.³ It is ideologically based but not partisan. It rather sits at the intersection of new conceptions of development that in Bolivia and Ecuador are seeking to redefine the place of indigenous communities, their identity, and relationship with natural resources and their land (Escobar 2010). Echoing this philosophy, Grand National projects are intergovernmental arrangements for the exchange of human and capital resources, while Grand National enterprises geared production, sale, and distribution of goods. The Grand National projects operate within key sectors of state in the field of political, cultural, economic, scientific, and industrial activity. For instance, Tahsin (2009: 14–17) shows that in 2008, projects between Cuba and Venezuela in these areas reached 1,355 million US dollars, including a flagship program "Oil for Doctors" by which Venezuela exports subsidized oil for the exchange of medics and training programs in the country. Within this framework, programs like *Barrio Adentro* provided free basic medical care in Venezuela, while Mission Miracle provides free care to individuals with eye-related conditions, while other programs tackle the needs of individuals with disabilities across ALBA countries. The exchange of human resources is also oriented to training and education. Since 2004 5,000 Cuban medical scholarships are given to Bolivia. Bolivia is reportedly benefiting from 600 Cuban medical specialists. Bolivian doctors are educated in Cuba which at the same time helps coordination of health centers in Bolivia by sending specialists and doctors. Literacy has also been a key component

³ Conceptualización De Proyecto y Empresa Grannacional En El Marco Del Alba http://www.minci.gov.ve/doc/conceptualizacion_de_proyectos.pdf

of socioeconomic development in ALBA. Cuba provides Bolivia with the experience, didactic material, and technical resources necessary to implement the literacy programs, and has been assisting Bolivia in expanding its public schools and hospitals. In the Dominican Republic, over 100 students are reportedly attending Cuban medical schools, and approximately 75 Dominican students are in other Cuban schools. Some 2,000 Venezuelan and Cuban scholarships are available to Dominican students in computer science, medicine, engineering, sports, physics, math, and agriculture. Venezuela and Nicaragua have also implemented agreements of mutual assistance around social programs for housing and education for 47,000 street children in the latter. Other programs include food production and the organization of the ALBA Athletic Games, a two-yearly event established in 2005.

As for the Grand National enterprises, these are specific entities, private or communal, established to organize productive and trade activity to reduce asymmetries among societies, and fair and just trade. Grand National enterprises include ALBA-Food, ALBA-Energy, ALBA-Forestry, Geological Institute, and enterprises for Mining and Metallurgy, Iron and Steel, and Aluminum. A Food Grand National has been set up between Venezuela and Bolivia.⁴ ALBA is also moving into the consolidation of the Unified System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE), signed in October 2009. The SUCRE is a common monetary denomination for the payment of commercial transactions between ALBA countries (see Chapter 6). This is a financial instrument to help stimulate and deepen intra-regional trade and productive enterprises envisioned in the People's Trade Agreement. Likewise, the proposal for the first Latin American *Banco del Sur* is not only a reflection of the search for autonomy in policy formulation and implementation but also in the institutionalization of an alternative financial architecture in response to the new regional political and economic trend. If it succeeds in terms of goals and achievements, such an institution could play a significant role in regional monetary policy and provide resources to secure sound balance of payments finance. A major distinction from established international financial institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, is that the *Banco del Sur* will not operate on the basis of conditional loans but intends to advance a more democratic decision-making process for its operations. The relevance of these programs is to be seen in the way they advance a new political economy and the formation of a regional consciousness supportive of what Murh (2010: 50) identified as "transnational organized society." In many ways these developments advanced by ALBA constitute a new political economy where a concept of development sits at the intersection of trade and business; citizenship and social development; and inclusion and human rights. Interestingly, this mode of regionalism contrasts with other regionalist projects such as NAFTA, MERCOSUR, and UNASUR not only in its conception but also because the construction of region is advanced by member states which do not share any contiguous borders.

⁴ See ALBA Summit: Caricom members enter reservations on Sucre, Defence Council. Available from <http://alainet.org/active/33803&lang=es> (May 22, 2011).

Many arguments have pointed out that ALBA resembles a mere propagandistic project whose future and resilience are conditioned to the presence of Chávez and more significantly the record high oil revenues. True, there is a great deal of ideological discourse in the shaping of ALBA. At the same time, ALBA's rhetorical commitment to building "21st Century Socialism" is largely reliant on Venezuela's petroleum wealth, but we emphatically argue that, unlike other regional projects in the Americas, the significance of ALBA and possibly its resilience is to be seen in the transnational welfarist space where socioeconomic projects and regional welfare networks of solidarity can have an impact, even beyond Chávez. Likewise, although it is true that state-owned oil and gas company, PDVSA, became central for the funding of regional social welfare programs, the possibility to think development and political economy given by new trans-border practices shaped a new space for thinking and negotiating alternative models for cooperation.

2.2.2 UNASUR: Rebuilding the Region in Search for Autonomous Development

On a more moderate side of regional reinvention, Brazil is emerging as the silent competitor for regional leadership and political style, ushering consensus mechanisms with new players capable of making a new balance viable. Such policy direction is evident in the efforts of the newly created UNASUR. UNASUR crystallized as a model of governance in 2008, yet its origins must be traced back to the beginning of the decade when Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso called in the First Summit of South American Presidents in 2000. The aim was an ambitious integration project beyond notions of market expansion with renewed commitments on democratic principles and a broader sense of development. This summit created the foundations on which South American integration settled and contested US continental ambitions (Briceño-Ruiz 2007). However, it was not until 2004 that the South American integration process entered a new phase and dynamism. The Third Summit held in Cuzco, Peru, in December 2004, established the South American Union of Nations (SACN) which was later institutionalized as UNASUR. The Cuzco Declaration established three main goals: convergence between MERCOSUR, the Andean Community, and Chile through trade agreements, but more fundamentally new commitments to advance physical infrastructure (roads, energy, and communications)—a plan that was originated in the First South American Summit with the establishment of IIRSA—and political cooperation.⁵ Divergence in leadership, motivations, and political understanding of the purposes of region building led Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to diverge from the South American regionalist strategy. The result was the establishment of Venezuela-led ALBA in 2004, and the formation of Brazil-led UNASUR four years later in 2008 (Briceño-Ruiz 2010).

⁵ Cuzco Declaration. Available from www.comunidadandina.org/ingles/documentos/documents/cusco8-12-04.htm (March 28, 2011).

UNASUR is fundamentally a regional construction that capitalizes on pre-existing trade-led agreements of the “open regionalism” of the 1990s but aimed at strengthening its institutional structure in issues beyond trade, while seeking at the same time an autonomous position vis-à-vis external influence such as the United States or the EU. Remarkably, trade is underplayed as a pillar of UNASUR whereas the backbone of the new treaty is formulated in relation to democracy, inclusion, social development, physical integration, defense, and identity.⁶ In terms of institution building, it gave new impetus to the IIRSA which already formulated an ambitious project in 2000 to boost infrastructural and energy integration throughout the continent (Chapter 4). IIRSA represents a vision that in many ways reconciles established pro-market patterns of South American integration and a tradition of structuralism which recognizes a developmental role for the state guiding and promoting (rather than arbitrating) economic development (Prebisch 1949; Furtado 1961; Grugel and Ruggirozzi 2007).

It has also created the South American Defense Council, which picked up steam first in the face of territorial conflicts between Ecuador and Colombia, and more recently involving Venezuela and Colombia (see Chapter 5). These are important initiatives that restrict US interference in the South balancing the authority of the existing US-led institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS). Other areas of regional policy where regulatory frameworks are emerging are in the establishment of the South American Council for Education, Culture, Science, Technology, and Innovation seeking to reinforce the objectives of quality, equity, and international competitiveness through harmonization of higher education programs. Although incipient, the council aims to facilitate the mobility of students and professionals in the region and formulate flexibility proposals and degree accreditation.⁷ Likewise, a new UNASUR Health Council was established to consolidate a space of cooperation in health provision and training.⁸

These institutional ambitions of UNASUR are laid out in the Constitutive Treaty of the UNASUR which also sets out analogous institutions to the EU, that is, an Executive Council of Delegates as well as a General Secretariat, a Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and a Council of Heads of State and Government. The Constitutive Treaty also provides for a parliament that is yet to be established. While these dimensions vindicate the tenets of the New Regionalist literature, it is important not to understate this regional arrangement as it represents a new perspective in the regional and global politics without being “washed away by the powerful waves of globalization” (Cooper and Heine 2009: 21). In other words, while the extent to which

⁶ Tratado Constitutivo de la Union de Naciones Sudamericanas. Available from http://www.comunidadandina.org/unasur/tratado_constitutivo.htm (April 3, 2011).

⁷ UNASUR ‘Operational Roadmaps 2009–2011’ and official declarations are available at <http://www.coseccti-unasur.org/web/educacion/new-page> (March 29, 2011).

⁸ Official Declaration available at <http://www.ocai.cl/unasur-english.pdf> (March 29, 2011).

UNASUR can reconfigure broader links in terms of political and social community is still embryonic, progress has been seen in the creation of alternative and fruitful economic and infrastructure projects bridging CAN and MERCOSUR, and as a block with extra-regional emerging powers such as China, India, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the South African Customs Union, and the EU (Tussie 2010: 12).

Unlike ALBA, UNASUR's instruments of regionalism are institutionalized, and its conception of development is based on a construction of reasserting the management of natural resources and infrastructure in support of autonomous development. What both UNASUR and ALBA share however is a redefinition of the regional space as a place for action, new practices, and consensuses that are framed regionally rather than globally expressing new collective concerns about growth, social development, and democracy. The politicized regional arena echoes a nebulous yet important spirit of change with important implications for inter-American relations. Theoretically, this also places a tall order for scholars. Current political and economic trends and the emergent regional institutional architecture suggest that the "old" and "new" characterizations of regionalism are insufficient to explain how states are currently responding to their own commitments within national areas of governance, and to new region-building projects that contest the politics and policies of established neoliberal architecture. Understanding the nature of this transformation also demands a reorientation of some of the prevalent ways in which the study of regionalism has been approached so far.

2.3. CONCEPTUALIZING REGIONALISM IN A CHANGE OF ERA

The political and academic significance of current transformations has been clearly described by Arturo Escobar (2010: 1) when he stated,

Latin America is the only region in the world where some counter-hegemonic processes of importance might be taking place at the level of the State at present. Some argue that these processes might lead to a re-invention of socialism; for others, what is at stake is the dismantling of the neo-liberal policies of the past three decades.

This statement about the transformation under way raises important questions about how to characterize and theorize changes in the political economy of the region and regional governance. Since the early 2000s the region has witnessed the articulation of models of development as a reaction to the excess of two decades of neoliberalism. The move away from neoliberalism combines an attempt to refocus the direction and the purpose of the economy in crucial ways through, for example, state spending or increased taxation (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009) with a political project for change. These articulations manifested in different ways across the region. A new political economy has been mainly geared by state leaders with support of social and grassroots movements in a parallel and complementary movement that has been characterized as "rebuilding the state" and "reclaiming the state (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2012)." In other words, the state takes control of the main tools of the economic

management observing at the same time widespread social demands for renewed democracy, accountability, local inclusion, and the creation of more effective institutionalized channels of representation. The redefinition of state-society relationships resonate with quite different social groups, along with economic programs for redistribution of political power away from traditional elites; but fundamentally it also proposes policy reforms that work with the grain of the global economy. From this perspective, *post-* rather than plainly *anti-*neoliberalism supports policies that are at odds with the dominant forms of US-sponsored liberalism, acknowledging other forms of social, political, and economic engagement.

Although the idea of a unified counter-hegemony to supplant neoliberalism is clearly an overstatement, the new continentalism represented by projects like ALBA and UNASUR is a dramatic departure from the region's more usual approach to regional integration. In contrast to proposals for "new" regionalism in the 1990s in which Latin American economies competed against each other to lock in deregulation and attract US investment, alternative regionalist projects propose a space of mutual exchange and cooperation that redraws the political map of South and Central Americas and the Caribbean on the basis of providing a platform for the extraction of shared resources and decentralizing power.

The current context of transformation creates a dilemma in the field of development studies and that of regionalism. For many decades, the approach known as New Regionalism captured the intellectual imagination of scholars concerned with regionalism beyond neofunctionalist understanding of integration based on EU studies (Warleigh-Lack 2010). Specifically, the evolution of the theoretical debate about regionalism since the 1980s has been driven by a proliferation of regional cooperation agreements that, unlike the previous experiences of (old) regionalism associated with post-war economic protectionism, were part of a broader process of neoliberal globalization. While the "old regionalism" of the 1950s to 1970s was a manifestation of regionalized forms of regulated markets and high tariffs, "new" regional formations were tied to the transnationalization of trade and production, and the progressive liberalization of markets in developing countries (Bøas et al. 1999; Hettne 1999: 7). In this context, many scholars understood these projects as "open regionalism," *conceived as and modeled by* the need of countries to engage efficiently in global market activity (Gamble and Payne 1996: 251–252). As a governance project, new regionalism unfolded as a state strategy to lock in market reforms of the Washington Consensus, driving processes that Phillips (2003b: 329) identified as "meso-globalization," or neoliberal strategies at a regional scale. Regionalism from this perspective was conceived as a building block to global liberalization through the interplay between state-led macro-processes of regulation and micro, and often informal, processes of regionalization led by non-state actors (Hurrell 1995, 2005; Bøas et al. 1999, 2005; Mittelman 2000: 113; Breslin and Hook 2002: 8).

This persuasive perspective broadened our understanding of formal and informal dynamics of regionalism as manifestations of global orders, adding new dynamism to Eurocentric and EU-specific studies of regional integration over-reliant on an

understanding that effective cooperation in one area will lead to the creation of supranational institutions that will in turn foster further cooperation in other areas—mitigating in the way sporadic and conflictual process that could affect further political integration (Warleigh-Lack and Rosamond 2010). However, New Regionalists have tended to overstate the role of informal, non-state agencies, embracing new forms of regionalization, which in Latin America have been weak and often coordinated under state initiatives (Phillips and Prieto Corredor 2011). If anything, the role of non-state actors in the shaping of new regionalism in Latin America was mainly seen in economic and business actors seeking to minimize the risks associated with global competition and insertion in the global economy (Phillips 2003a; Grugel 2004: 605; Phillips and Prieto Corredor 2011: 129). In this context, New Regionalist approaches brushed aside an enquiry about the extent to which the regional space can create opportunities for dissent and strategies that may challenge the regional-global liberalization relationship. This becomes a pressing dilemma in a period of rapid transformation of regional policies where political and economic circumstances that gave substance to new regionalism in the 1980s and 1990s—as a project and an approach—do not hold so firmly any longer. As a number of social and political inter-linkages are reflecting a new sense of purpose in Latin America, perhaps the most significant question about current regionalism is how we are to understand regional agreements that are grounded in different systems of rules that reconfigure open regionalism and that are part of a complex set of alternative ideas and motivations affecting politics and policies across the region.

While we agree with Phillips and Prieto Corredor (2011) that we are witnessing a transit from neoliberal politics to more diverse regional political economies, we disagree that regionalism is giving ground. Even accepting that projects of the neoliberal era, such as MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay plus Venezuela, Chile, and Bolivia as associates) or the Andean Community (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru), have failed to create sustainable levels of intra-trade and political commitment, a new focus needs to be placed on alternative processes, models, and tools of regionalism that are grounding regional consensus about policies and cooperation beyond what used to be the hub of “open” regionalism, namely markets, trade, and investment.

How far can we genuinely discern alternative regional governance in a post neoliberal regime? What sort of alternative social and political dynamics, institutions, and scope can be identified in new regionalist projects such as UNASUR and ALBA? How do these regionalisms represent themselves as a cohesive group? These are pressing questions as we are moving from neoliberal-led open regionalism to distinctive forms of regional consensus building, regional solidarity and integration, and identity formation. At the same time, these questions challenge the explanatory power of New Regionalist approaches which have often overemphasized globalization as a structure of constraints, and regionalism as a defensive mechanism of adjustment.

Furthermore, New Regionalist approaches contributed a great deal to understand how, in facing both demanding histories and outside pressures, states found that working together augmented/enhanced their survival and ability to gain economic and/or political advantages. This is in fact an important argument to explain the factors leading to regionalism and regionalist projects in Latin America. Nevertheless, this argument does not say much about how transformative and resilient a given regionalism is likely to be under changing political and economic factors. Open regionalism of the 1990s in many ways responded to an economically constructed reality, neglecting political, social, and ideological factors that affect the feasibility and sustainability of policy decisions. But to make sense of current changes in the regional architecture, and to compare this to previous experiences in the region and/or other regions, we need to place further attention to the material and ideational factors, the actors, and the networks and institutions that shape the contours and dynamics of specific forms of regionalism. Challenging the powerful assumption that governance, from a regionalist point of view, implies “market governance” to understand here how regional agreements are grounded in different systems of rules that are part of a complex set of ideas and motivations that affect policy making and strategies of development across the region.

Our argument supports that in the current climate of transformation progressive social and political actors, committed to find alternative ways of managing politics and the economy, will rediscover the regional space as one for contestation and maximization of political options. As we detail in the next section, in the case of ALBA the region became a space for political action and development of an alternative model of production and distribution that challenges conventional means of development. In this case, new practices come close to what has been identified as “neocapitalism” (Escobar 2010). In the case of UNASUR, the region became a space for redefining consensus and programs over regional resources, and a priority for autonomous management of natural resources as a tool for further economic autonomy and security. Both cases represent alternatives to pro-market reforms but fundamentally a change in discourse which became the new center of reference for politics (Arditi 2008: 71). ALBA and UNASUR are the two cases most clearly associated with a new political economy of regionalism. Both hold a strong critique to unmediated marketization reclaiming the region as a space for the provision of regional goods beyond trade and market competitiveness. Both are led by two strong regional actors, Venezuela and Brazil, two countries that also share a significant domestic level change, including significant popular mobilization, strengthening of the state as main actor in the management of the economy, particularly thorough redistributive policies, and a decisive will to play a different role in regional governance fending off external influence from the United States and the EU. In this context both ALBA and UNASUR represent the creation of new spaces to enhance these goals. Regionalism is, consequently, more than an outcome of interconnectedness and strategic cooperation but essentially a place for resignifying politics and maximizing public policies. The use of the region to introduce new practices and policies provides a chance for

political invention beyond the premises of development embraced by the neoliberal consensus.

The challenge for New Regionalist approaches, as we previously claimed, is to reach an understanding that supersedes binary notions of “old” and “new” regionalism that helped to explain current regionalism as a space for deliberation and implantation of political economic alternatives that are moving away from the neoliberal project as *the* hegemonic project. This does not mean that capitalism, liberalism, and trade-related forms of integration cease to exist or to move the regional agenda. What this means is that their centrality is being displaced. The realization of these regional alternatives, as imaginaries and arenas for new actions and practices, defines their sense of identity, belonging, and mission. In many ways, UNASUR and ALBA represent experiments that “take place at the edges of liberalism,” borrowing Arditi’s (2008) arguments, adding social development, community action, new forms of politics and organization, and a more active agenda-setting onto existing regional practices.

To analyze current developments in South America regionalism is to be confronted with a conceptual puzzle: for decades critical approaches in the study of international political economy stressed how multilateral governing arrangements were established and must then be seen as sites for North-South conflict; vehicles to advance the interests of the powerful developed countries; weapons for coercion of the weak; and structural frameworks of policy restraint. But the current transformations suggest that emerging regionalist projects must be seen as the space where regional (as opposed to global) consensuses are redefined and advanced by means of new models of development, cooperation, and policy making. Although the extent to which new regional initiatives can consolidate coherent and resilient projects is still to be seen, they need to be taken as part of valid transformative arrangements shaping new spaces for political and academic reflection.

2.4. RESILIENCE IN POST-NEOLIBERAL REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The analysis of UNASUR and ALBA suggests that to recognize the particularities of the societies and their regional arrangements we need to be aware of not only the constraints they face but also the alternative spaces they open, for both (regional) consensus building and policy implementation. Despite different rhetoric and political styles, UNASUR and ALBA are manifestations of alternative regionalist projects built on the bases of redefinitions about what development is and what the region is for.

New practices of cooperation in areas of social policy, and social and natural resources, are reinforcing alternative programs, networks, and institutions that are at the same time stretching the possibilities of development policies and politics. From this perspective we consider UNASUR and ALBA as models in the construction of post-hegemonic integration based on alternative modes of social and

economic integration while strengthening a new sense of mission and regionalism. It is true many programs are part and parcel of proactive actors, in particular Brazil and Venezuela, that seek to redefine their positions within the region and outside. However, in both cases specific practices are creating new spaces and even a different narrative about regional interaction and development that affect larger populations beyond national state's interests.

Likewise, both ALBA and UNASUR contest the role of geography as a signifier of region. The regional space in ALBA is based on a sense of legacy, solidarity, and collective action that exceeds geography. In this case, for instance, transnational social welfarism integrates a regional society with low levels of institutionalization but with high levels of socioeconomic impact. In this case, welfare regionalism constitutes a central dimension to understand the type of mission advanced by ALBA and the development of transnational political spaces with new levels of interdependence and trans-local relationship which to date is not only led by Venezuelan/Chávez political calculations and oil diplomacy but also by civic organizations of doctors, educators, and builders that are recapturing collective action in the process of regionalization. In UNASUR, on the contrary, geography is key for the reconstruction of what South America is and is for in relation to natural resources and security.

Certainly, the resilience of UNASUR and ALBA as alternative regional constructions and models of governance is still to be seen. Beyond ideological standpoints and the diversity of new regional institutions there are elements that have the potential to derail the embryonic political economy in Latin America. On the one hand, there is the apparently "technical" debate about how to finance autonomous political projects, regionally and domestically. New models of growth and politics are politically and financially far from stable. In both regional spaces, many economies are still vulnerable to the volatility of commodity prices and energy export prices. In places such as Argentina and Bolivia, this has opened up a range of distributional tensions that are not easily managed and that certainly affect the position of the governments at different levels of authority (Grugel and Ruggirozzi 2010). Regionally, this attempts against the establishment of long-term resilient projects of cooperation and integration. On the other hand, there is a "political" debate about the extent to which rhetoric and symbolic politics may radicalize the delivery of alternative projects in a post-neoliberal era. Will regional actors such as Venezuela and Brazil be able to stand as brokers of collective concerns or will they observe their national interest? Latin America is a continent of contrasts and alternative mind-sets are not unfolding without differences. Nonetheless, what unites most actors in the search for new forms of regionalism is a real need to re-found the nation state, to re-embed socially responsive models of development and social justice, and to distance themselves from the United States over a number of key issues. Exploring emerging forms of regionalism thus needs to readdress the relationship between regionalism-integration-globalization.

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