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# Continuity and Variety of Neoliberalism: Reconsidering Latin America's Pink Tide

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For quite a while a fresh headwind blew from Latin America through a world gone mad. Following decades of neoliberal restructuring the tide seemed to turn with the new millennium. Country after country elected left leaning governments ranging from moderate left in countries like Argentina and Brazil or Chile to more radical Bolivarian left in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia or Ecuador (see Cannon, 2016 pp. 99, 100 for an overview). Quickly dubbed the pink tide in Western academia, governments embraced social policy agendas requiring tax increases on commodity exports and resource extraction and a new emphasis on regulatory intervention in the moderate countries, and nationalizations and more far reaching efforts of state led restructuring in the Bolivarian nations (see Chador's 2015 comparison of Brazil and Venezuela). Beyond the national level, some countries strengthened the resolve to resist the dominant neighbor in the North and the global financial institutions. Led by Venezuela and Cuba, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) was founded in 2004. Due to the windfall of rising commodity prices during the first decade of the new millennium, oil rich Venezuela was able to assist Argentina escaping from IMF conditionality, for example. In 2009, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela decided to found the Banco del Sur in order to create an alternative to the U.S. dominated international financial institutions, though this effort to institutionalize South-South financial cooperation was put on hold. Drawbacks like this and attempted coups in

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Venezuela (2002), Bolivia (2008), Honduras (2009) and Ecuador (2010) notwithstanding, the pink tide has also been discussed as “post-neoliberalism”.

The definition of the term remained vague, used interchangeably as a normative, descriptive or a heuristic concept. Emir Sader, for example, sometimes equated post-neoliberalism with “anti-neoliberalism” (Sader, 2009, p. 174), and sometimes he used the term as a descriptive category. Post-neoliberalism then appears as “hybrid solutions” of “hybrid social forces” in search of alternatives (Sader, 2008, p. 29, p. 81). While Brazil and Uruguay remained within the old model, tempering it with compensatory social policies, the general secretary of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) saw Venezuela, Argentina and the Andean nations on the way to construct a viable alternative. It almost appears that left-wing intellectuals like Sader and Atilio Boron (2003) used the idea as a political means to strengthen actors, discourses and policies that reject and move beyond the neoliberal model. Similarly, Grugel and Riggirozzi defined post-neoliberalism as “a call for a new kind of politics, rooted in, and responsive to, local traditions and communities and an attempt to forge a new pact between society and the state” (Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 3).

Contrary to the prefix “post” not all scholars using it want to suggest the era of neoliberalism is over and done with. At a CEDLA workshop in 2008, entitled “Post-neoliberalism – change or continuity”, the speakers were much more cautious in their assessments. After carefully explaining neoliberal restructuring in different areas, they pointed to obstacles for a structural and institutional change, i.e. vested interests, transnational capital and the international environment (CEDLA, 2009). In a similar vein, Claudio Katz (2015) stated that the concept of post-neoliberalism overlooks the persistence of the economic model generated during the previous decades. Beatriz Stolowicz even warned of a use of the term. For her it is nothing more than a means to conceal capital interests (see Stolowicz, 2016, vol. 2 for a discussion of new varieties of social market economy, social liberalism and social rule of law in Chile, México and Columbia, respectively).

Brand and Sekler (2009) in turn distinguished between three analytical levels of neoliberalism: firstly, its intellectual-ideological dimension; secondly, strategic elites attacking the (peripheral) “Fordist” compromises of the period of import substituting industrialization, and, thirdly, sometimes quite incoherent social practices. The third dimension

*“...is the starting point for our considerations of the term postneoliberalism, the intention being to discuss different responses to the (negative) impacts of neoliberalism and its growing inability to deal with the upcoming contradictions and crises. Thus the focus is not on the question of whether a new, postneoliberal era in general has begun and what might be the criteria supporting or contesting such an assessment. Rather, we propose to consider postneoliberalism as a perspective on social, political and/or economic transformations, on shifting terrains of social struggles and compromises, taking place on different scales, in various contexts and by different actors”* (Brand and Sekler, 2009, p. 6, italics in the original).

Contrary to an apparently quite coherent and unambiguous ideological and political project of neoliberalism, the authors thus identify a lot of space for variation and differentiation in the event of crises resulting from neoliberal restructuring on the one hand, and a surprisingly strong anti-neoliberal commonality in the DNA of opposition forces.

*“All postneoliberal approaches have in common that they break with some specific aspect of „neoliberalism“ and embrace different aspects of a possible postneoliberalism, but these approaches vary in depth, complexity and scope, as well as everyday practices and comprehensive concepts”* (ibid., p. 6).

Although the general historical understanding of society as a result of social struggle can certainly be appreciated, there are a few issues with perspectives such as the one of Brand and Sekler or Grugel and Riggirozzi. Firstly, it is difficult to read post-neoliberalism and yet to suggest it is not supposed to mean neoliberalism has become a constellation of the past. Secondly, on closer inspection, neither the intellectual-ideological dimension of neoliberalism is clear-cut nor is there just one overarching political elite project. Thirdly, if the range of neoliberal core concepts and key programs are not detailed, it is very difficult to judge the extent to which ideas and orientations of progressive or left-leaning governments can be considered in opposition to neoliberalism.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the widespread equation of neoliberalism and market fundamentalism it is important to acknowledge the dual confrontations that stand at the cradle of neoliberalism: the recognition of the need to

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<sup>3</sup> Ruckert, Macdonald and Proulx (2017, p. 1584) cite David Harvey’s (2005, p. 2) definition: “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.” Unfortunately, the authors do not relate the results of their comprehensive literature review back to this definition, which itself does not recognize the deeper philosophical beliefs that inform institutional and policy perspectives like those mentioned in this definition, but also provide flexibility and room for adjustment across time and space, which makes it difficult to define neoliberalism according to some fixed essentials (compare Plehwe 2009).

overcome laissez faire ideas prevalent in traditional economic liberalism and the need to constructively oppose what have been summarily labelled collectivist approaches. Neoliberalism is a theoretical perspective based on common principles and shared norms undergirding a form of social rule. Policy characteristic of neoliberalism include privatization, entrepreneurial freedom, cuts in public expenditure, deregulation of labor markets, and trade and foreign investments liberalization. These policies have been accommodated in quite diverse political systems and in a flexible way. Social minimum standards, for instance, are held to be compatible with neoliberalism if welfare schemes are designed in ways “not inimical to initiative and the functioning of the market” (Statement of Aims, Mont Pèlerin Society 1947). More fundamentally, neoliberalism differs from the laissez-faire liberalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by maintaining that some degree of governmental oversight was a *sine qua non* of contemporary capitalism. Parallel to the recognition of the need to *secure capitalist ownership and market relations* at the national level, neoliberals recognized the need to construct and fortify an international order conducive to capitalist “free market societies”. Such international alliances, institutions, rules and ordering techniques are needed to regulate trade and international investment in civil ways on the one hand. But they also serve to constrain competing economic systems and they can serve to impose market friendly regimes by way of military force. Cutting edge research on the Geneva school of neoliberals has shed new light on the history of neoliberal efforts to encase market economic order at the international level (Slobodian, 2018). If central neoliberal ideas like rule of law privileging property owners and primacy of market transactions both within and across borders (free trade treaties with Western powers), targeted social policies (conditional cash transfers), export orientation and concessions to transnational companies are shared by center-left governments, a declaration of post-neoliberalism based on government change and electoral politics can be clearly misleading. Rather than assuming the continuing validity of the traditional and comprehensive left-right distinction of parties, many scholars ask if, in which ways and why progressive governments continued with important tenets of neoliberalism (see, for example, Morais and Saad-Filho, 2005; Féliz, 2011; Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014, compare Ruckert, MacDonald and Proulx, 2017 for a detailed account of continuities in most countries and significant departures in a few countries only). In other words: how much neoliberal endurance is hidden by government change?

In his study of neoliberal hegemony in Latin America and the challenge from the

pink tide, Chodor (2015) distinguishes between a real challenge emanating from Venezuela and the Bolivarian perspective compared to what he described as a passive revolution in Brazil in reference to Gramsci's notion for the adaptation of peripheral countries to the hegemonic projects of the core. Contrary to a notion of united colors of anti-neoliberalism Chodor suggests thinking of the pink tide as a "contested phenomenon" (Chodor, 2015, p. 147). Chodor's contrast of Chavez's Bolivarian restructuring efforts and Lula and Rousseff's neostructuralism (or neo-developmentalism) combined with constrained social reformism provides rich details of different trajectories instead of conflating all center-left and left governments in a common anti-neoliberal bandwagon. While he also considered the interaction between the different projects as an important dimension of a possible evolution of a regional historical bloc in Latin America, he warned that even the Lula-Rousseff agenda and comparable projects in Chile of "globalization with a human face" operating in the framework of the "post-Washington-Consensus" do not need to generate continued support from the corporate sector (Chodor, 2015, pp. 179-180). When Hernán Ramírez scanned the neoliberal think tank networks in Brazil in August 2018, he was confident to observe "certain exhaustion" (Ramírez, 2018, p. 17). Public policies promoted after the removal of Dilma Rousseff were "showing signs of failure" (ibid. p. 17) according to the author, and Lula's popularity was strong. In spite of his deep insight in the far-flung neoliberal civil society networks that have been developed in Brazil in three waves since the 1960s, the author quite evidently underestimated both the resolve and the repertoire of action of the right (though, to be fair, many details of Bolsonaro's ascent to power were not yet in place (compare Anderson, 2019)).

Fast forward 2019. The counter-wave of right wing forces has swept away pink tide governments in Argentina and Brazil, and the Maduro government of the strongest Bolivarian nation, Venezuela, is embattled in a bitter fight to stay in power facing domestic opposition ready to take the presidency, supported by a wide range of countries in Latin America, in North America and Europe. The oil rich country suffers from a steep decline in commodity prices, strangulating sanctions from the main oil customer in the North and more than subtle threats of external intervention and murder of the elected president. Brazil's new president Bolsonaro has used right wing populist language in opposition to climate change mitigation and gender equality similar to Donald Trump in the United States, and openly professes to authoritarian measures not only to curb crime and corruption, but also to reign into academic

freedom and the media. Much like Trump, Bolsonaro has professed to strongly support business, and restrain the power of trade unions and the workers' party. If there still are post-neoliberal practices in Latin America in early 2019, the range and scope of such action appears to be severely circumscribed. Only Mexico, which was kept out of the pink wave, appears to once again experience an opposing trend with Andrés Manuel López Obrador succeeding to beat the center-right wing parties PRI and PAN on the third attempt with his new National Regeneration Movement.

In stark contrast to the fascination with the pink tide just a few years ago the literature is now replete with titles like "The resilience of the Latin American Right" (Luna and Kaltwasser, 2014), "The Right in Latin America" (Cannon, 2016) or "Crisis del posneoliberalismo y ascenso de la nueva derecha" (López Segrera, 2016). Already back in 2011, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser had pointed to a lack of attention to the right. The near exclusive focus on the turn to the left was mistaken because important countries like Columbia, Peru and Mexico were governed by right wing politicians in the 2000s, some countries turned right (e.g. Chile in 2009), and the strength of right wing parties in parliaments (in Brazil or Venezuela) received little attention.

Celebrating the pink tide, arguably even less attention was paid to the continuing strength of the right in corporate circles and civil society at large. Apart from the visible relevance of electoral cycles – a government change can hardly be considered the basis for the shift of an era in itself – the basis of the post-neoliberalism arguments needs to be addressed. If neoliberalism is considered a philosophical orientation and a political phenomenon only, social movements and political parties can be considered powerful enough to move a country rapidly towards and away from neoliberalism. If neoliberalism instead needs to be considered as a more profound structural transformation (of capitalism and society, with national and transnational dimensions, transformations that were and are informed by fundamental neoliberal norms and principled beliefs), the changes needed to move beyond neoliberalism have to run deeper. Political arguments relating fundamental change to political parties and electoral politics mainly will lead to a misinterpretation of the historical evolution of socio-economic eras. Latin American interpreters that expected from pink tide governments a structural transformation in some way just followed the assertions of third way social democrats in Europe, who had claimed to end neoliberalism in the course of the 1990s only to take the neoliberal transformation of the welfare state a notch or two further by way of

extending neoliberal concepts to the unemployed (“activation”, self-responsibility, entrepreneurship etc.), for example. Electoral and government change can be a starting point for more profound change. But contrary to widespread hopes, pink tide governments did not or could not take anti-neoliberal projects very far in Latin America either.

### **Political Sociology of the pink tide and the right**

A major shortcoming in the pink tide debate with regard to changes in power constellations so far is a strong focus on electoral change and central government action, and a lack of attention to the diverse and deeper sources of power in society. Fortunately we can rely on approaches of political sociology like those advanced by German political scientist Wolfgang Abendroth and the British sociologist Michael Mann. The former grew up in the turmoil of the Weimar Republic, where democracy stood on fragile pillars due to the power of the right in the institutions and in the streets. The latter has developed a model of sources of power, which offers a rich repertoire to analyze strategies of the contemporary right in Latin America.

Let us first tackle Wolfgang Abendroth to obtain a sufficiently broad view of political power. According to Abendroth, political science aims to examine the conditions of the genesis of political power, its institutions and effectiveness. The problem of political decision making is central. It is closely related to political theory because humans anticipate the results of their action in their head so to speak. So far, Abendroth seems to speak about the political and the ideological dimension of analysis. But in contrast to the general narrow understanding of politics, each social activity is considered political, which aims at changing or stabilizing the structure of society and the distribution of power between social groups. His understanding of political science thus is clearly not confined to decision making and the state narrowly conceived. The social scientific understanding is expressed by the adoption of the term political sociology. This approach is linked to political practice. It needs scholars to reflect in which ways the analysis supports particular practices or aims at changing them. Policy making is inevitably “controversial in essence since it serves either to maintain or to abolish rule” (Abendroth, 1967, p. 11). Such a perspective is highly skeptical with regard to the increasing differentiation of science and the emerging plethora of sub-disciplines since many important dimensions of the analysis are moved apart rather than being taken into consideration. An isolated discussion of elections and government constellations or social



practices appears to offer a good example of limited understanding. It is important to establish which structures of society need to be addressed in order to tackle efforts that aim at stabilizing or changing the distribution of power. Michael Mann's model of power offers exactly such an approach.

While Abendroth designed a general plow, Michael Mann's (1986) history of power supplies a set of finer tools, stick, shovel, rake and hoe maybe, to turn the ground for greater detail. His four sources of power emanate from economic relations, from military, from political institutions and, last but not least, from ideologies conceptualized in close proximity to organizations (like the Catholic Church, for example). Mann follows Weber in his analytical distinction of different spheres, but he also goes some way beyond Weber in his sophisticated understanding of ideology and ideological power, for example. While the economic, military and political sources of power are by and large contained in the nation state in his theory, Mann is explicit about the transnational dimension of ideological power (Mann, 1986, p. 23). He distinguishes what he calls a more autonomous form of ideology that is socio-spatially transcendent. This form transcends the other sources of power and creates social relations rather than serving merely to integrating and reflecting society. Mann refers to the major ideologies like Liberalism, Conservatism, Marxism, or Neoliberalism. The second dimension considered is an immanent morality related to a special social group. This dimension is more closely related to the social order of the (nation) state once again and allows specifying particular groups like British Conservatism, German Social Democracy or the peculiar ideological mix of the Brazilian Labor party.

The two dimensions co-exist, of course. Intellectual efforts of promoting post-neoliberalism have been projected to the pink tide, for example, and have become immanent moralities of specific groups, with notable differences between a confrontational Bolivarian spirit and compromise(d) adaptations to neoliberal hegemony designed to get along with opposition forces. Beyond Weber's famous *switchmen* metaphor that acknowledged an important role of ideas in certain points in history, Michael Mann elaborated on a *track laying* function of ideas and norms suggesting a constant effort to generate and maintain a shaping role of ideology (Mann, 1986, pp. 341-372, 376-9). The track laying function obviously matters for all ideological forces, right or left. Those who have developed a capacity to build infrastructures in the realm of ideas, knowledge and expertise would appear to have a decisive advantage in social struggles that after all are always struggles over interpretation of social

situations, events and perspectives. In terms of neoliberalism studies in Latin America much like elsewhere, particular attention thus needs to be paid to the transnational source of ideological power, its various domestic expressions, and the more or less deeply entrenched track laying capacities.

Fortunately, political sociology in general and Mann's model of power in particular did already inform important parts of the pink tide / postneoliberalism conversation and the return of the right. Luna and Kaltwasser (followed by López Segrera) distinguish between a non-electoral right which engages in interest representation via business organizations and think tanks, among others; an electoral right with a non-partisan strategy, and a right that is organized as a political party (Luna and Kaltwasser, 2014, pp.13-14; Kaltwasser, 2014, pp. 42-45). Although it is said that these three vehicles for rightist action might be complementary, the categories seem too exclusionary. This becomes evident on the example of Mauricio Macri in Argentina. He is characterized as an example of an electoral right based on a political party. His power base and political beginnings originated in a think tank (Pensar), however, and the formation of a political party (PRO) came later (Vommaro, 2014).

Barry Cannon (2016) unfolds his study on the basis of Michael Mann's history of power, providing us hitherto with the arguably strongest account of the Latin American contemporary situation. The next section will be devoted to critically engage Cannon. Based on Cannon's scrutiny of the different dimensions of social transformation and sources of power we will move beyond his important account afterwards in a section on transnational neoliberal think tank networks. Cannon missed most of this empirical material. Its consideration is necessary to throw new light on the interrelated areas of transnational civil society, ideology and state formation. Following the contested era of the pink tide, neoliberal forces have regained the upper hand and neoliberalism has taken a new breath of life in conjunction with social conservatives and aggressive neo-nationalists.

### **Latin American sources of power of the right**

Michael Mann's work has strongly inspired Barry Cannon's approach to study the advance of the right in Latin America. Nonetheless Cannon suggests a need to go beyond Mann's allegedly nation state focused concepts of sources of power. Although this is clearly mistaken with regard to ideology given Mann's record of studying transnational dimensions

of ideological power, Cannon is actually quite right with regard to Mann's last book in the four volume series on the history of social power dealing with the second part of the twentieth Century and the rise of neoliberalism. While we might suggest that Cannon forgot to read Mann's discussion of the transnational dimension of ideology, this appears to be a lesser sin than Mann's apparent forgetfulness of his own concept in his writing on neoliberalism. While Cannon emphasizes the transnational dimension of ideology in general and one network of neoliberal political parties and think tanks in Latin America (RELIAL) in particular, Mann offers a surprisingly narrow, U.S. centered and at best Anglophone analysis of neoliberalism (Mann, 2013, pp. 130f), missing the far flung neoliberal networks of think tanks and intellectuals and the important track laying functions within and across borders that need to be detailed.

Beyond reclaiming the transnational dimension of ideology of the right in Latin America, Cannon also proposes to add a new fifth source of social power, namely the transnational dimension in terms of political and economic institutions such as trade agreements and regional integration projects. Apart from the Southern Common Market (Mercosur)<sup>4</sup> and ALBA, which are efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation, many countries are partners in free trade agreements with the United States and four highly internationalized economies (Chile, Columbia, México and Peru) have formed the Pacific Alliance in 2011 to promote an ambitious free trade and liberalization agenda quite different from both Mercosur and ALBA (Cannon, 2016, pp. 83-85).

Operationalizing a general political sociology approach this way turns out to be highly productive. In order to establish the threat from the Left of the Pink Tide, Cannon establishes the key concerns of the neoliberal right wing forces in the area of economic, political, ideological, military relations and the transnational dimension mentioned above. The right wing bill of rights prominently highlights ownership of key economic sectors and market freedoms, control of the parliamentary system (polyarchic institutionalism), media ownership, think tanks and liberal freedoms of the press, military alliances and trade agreements. Indicators of a serious threat from the pink tide left in the various fields include

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<sup>4</sup> Founded at the heyday of neoliberalism in 1991, Mercosur was constructed as an export platform aiming at the integration of national economies into the international market. Between 2003 and 2014 the governments of Uruguay and Argentina tried to transform the trading bloc into a more development oriented economic community. Under the leitmotiv "integración productiva" (productive integration) they promoted manufacturing and South-South cooperation.

nationalization or increasing social control of economic sectors and market activities, election wins of left wing parties and reversals of liberal structures of democracy, increasing state and community ownership of the media, control of think tanks and limits to liberal media dominance, distancing from US policy priorities, presence or absence of free trade agreements with the United States. Cannon uses data provided by the neoliberal Economic Freedom Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, Freedom House Press Freedom Index, distribution of U.S. bases and FTAs as proxies (Cannon, 2016, p. 94). Although these indexes are partisan efforts to promote neoliberal and other agendas in support of capitalism and market-conforming versions of democracy and the media, the use of such measurements is smart as it allows looking at the countries from a neoliberal vanguard point. If countries are found to slip in the ranking based on the Economic Freedom Index, neoliberals clearly perceive of a threat to their cause, for example (Stanford, 1999; Ram, 2014).

Based on the empirical material generated this way, Cannon convincingly distinguishes three groups of countries in the *economic dimension*: conservative, centrist and left. With regard to the left, only a few Bolivarian countries and Argentina account for significant nationalization efforts. More than 80 percent of nationalization is in the oil and gas industries and Venezuela's nationalization of the heavy-oil field in the Orinoco Belt in 2007 accounts for the major part of the activity (Cannon, 2016, p. 96); Argentina nationalized an energy company and private pension funds. Some countries and once again Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela additionally introduced prize controls and pursued other strategies to more effectively regulate economic exchange (exchange controls, land reform, support for cooperative sector etc.). Apart from Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela Brazil scored low in the Economic Freedom index due to a traditionally high involvement of the state in the economy. But "Venezuela poses the greatest threat, largely because of its oil wealth and its willingness to use this to subsidize and encourage such policy deviance in other countries..." (Cannon, 2016, p. 98).

In the *realm of politics*, the democratic challenge from left wing parties was directed at the traditional understanding of liberal (procedural) democracy. A stronger emphasis on popular participation relied on the executive to constrain traditional forms of (parliamentary and interest group) representation in some countries. Historically excluded populations were included, in respect of political and social rights. Constitutional reform through constituent assemblies occurred in many states; local-level participatory elements were introduced (see,

for example, Moreira, 2017 and Goldfrank, 2011). Because of the resulting restrictions of civil liberties of privileged strata and weakening of certain institutions, Bolivarian countries were classified as “hybrid democracies” exhibiting a mix of liberal and authoritarian elements according to the Democracy index (Cannon, 2016, p. 101).<sup>5</sup> Many more countries simply maintained the traditional political system (and with it the centralist and presidential power structure) and posed a threat to the right because of policy continuity. Since many of the policies of the right were carried forward, there was little room for confrontation from the opposition. The relationship between the left and the right thus differs dramatically depending on the character of the left with regard to the political dimension (Nueva Sociedad, 2014).

With regard to the *ideological dimension*, the dual process of neoliberalism and democratization is important for the contemporary conflict constellation. Contrary to the earlier experience of authoritarian neoliberalism under military dictatorship, the 1980s “Washington Consensus” era ushered in a second phase of neoliberal development also supported by domestic political parties, coalitions and elites.

“Crucial to the formation of these neoliberal polyarchies in the Latin American...region, were intense and continuous „democracy assistance” programmes. These programmes aimed at promoting and sustaining polyarchy as the preferred system of government throughout the hemisphere, and, less overtly, ensuring sufficient political and social stability for neoliberal market societies to survive and thrive” (Cannon, 2016, p. 102).

These programs were carried out with funding from the United States, Canada and European states like Spain and Germany. Apart from resources from intelligence communities, money was channeled through development and democracy promotion agencies and philanthropic and political party foundations. “Of particular interest and utility,” writes Cannon, “are „think tanks” with their privileged access to state, political and media agents at a transnational, regional and national level” (Cannon, 2016, p. 103). Strategies aim at strengthening elite forces in political and social arenas and at undermining popular movements, at constructing “liberal citizens” and at keeping grassroots movements within the limits of polyarchic structures. Support for these efforts came from the media, which is

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<sup>5</sup> In order to deal with the power struggles in such societies it is not useful to rely on categories like “liberal” or “authoritarian” without further ado due to their normative connotations (liberal = good, authoritarian = bad). Some of the groups that have been restricted by central government activities execute control over vast channels of influence, for example. Changes in government configurations thus need to be complemented by an analysis of the shift in social power relations within society. In order to reform democracy in Germany at the end of the 19th Century, for example, the power of the Prussian gentry had to be curtailed.

strongly concentrated in private hands, elite controlled and heavily biased towards neoliberalism (ibid., p. 104). In this field much like in the economic and political dimension, only the Bolivarian countries made somewhat stronger efforts to counter private media by way of strengthening public media by way of supporting community media and by way of setting up Telesur at the regional level. In Argentina, the regulation of private media conglomerates spun them into fierce opponents of the government. Unsurprisingly, the media in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Argentina were judged “partly free” by Freedom House, which is unconcerned by the issue of private media concentration. Although other countries like Columbia, Paraguay and Mexico received the same assessment, this was due to high levels of violent conflict in these countries, which was by and large absent in the former nations except for Venezuela.

The military discussion is most ambiguous since the war on drugs and its use to repress dissent and opposition has been subject to increasing criticism from a number of actors across the political spectrum. But a close relationship between economic and military cooperation can be observed. With the exception of Nicaragua, the ALBA countries do not have FTAs with the United States, nor do they have military bases. The same is true for Brazil and Argentina.

Last but not least, the *transnational dimension*. Brazil took the lead to set up the BRICS development bank in 2014. For this project in opposition to the global financial institutions Brazil joined forces with Russia, China, India and South Africa. As mentioned before, the parallel plan to set up Banco del Sur as a regional development bank for Latin America stalled in 2016. Mercosur admitted Venezuela as a new member in 2012. Brazil was instrumental in setting up UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) in 2008, complementing the Council for Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC). CELAC itself was formed as a counter-weight to the Organization of American States headquartered in Washington, DC. The Bolivarian countries formed ALBA, committed explicitly to develop measures against neoliberal forms of regionalism. The alliance is devoted to supplying cheap oil, health and literacy programs. All these developments seem to indicate a reduction of U.S. influence in the region and “...the emergence of a new regional hegemony, at least in South America, centered on Brazil” (Cannon, 2016, p. 109). But Cannon does not fail to mention the counter-development of the Pacific Alliance, which is guided by the principles of open regionalism. Their members – Chile, Mexico, Columbia, and Peru – keep a distance from the

Bolivarian and Mercosur strategies and look for close relations with the United States. It is already clear that not much remains of the regional cooperation and Brazil centered hegemony as plans to merge Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance reveal (Tornaghi, 2018). The regional cooperation in the framework of UNASUR has also been challenged by the creation of the new Forum for the Progress of South America (PROSUR) by seven right wing South American presidents in March 2019. If there was a need to speak about the pink tide as a contested phenomenon, we now need to speak of the right wing counter tide as a phenomenon that will likely lead to an even higher degree of contestation with regard to regional cooperation, for example.

### **The right-wing counter tide: basic strategies**

Based on this account, Cannon distinguished three counter-strategies developed by the right to meet the different challenges or threats emanating from the various center-left pink tide governments. He identifies electoral strategies, mobilizations beyond the electoral level in order to prepare the removal of left wing leaders from power (media campaigns targeting particular politicians, for example), and semi- or extra-constitutional strategies to oust political leaders, sometimes relying on the military (Cannon, 2016, pp. 118-9). Considering the three most important countries that have also presented (or still are presenting) the strongest threat to neoliberalism and elite control or polyarchic democracy in the region, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, we can easily see this distinction makes sense. Argentina's Cristina Fernández de Kirchner lost the elections to the right wing candidate Mauricio Macri in 2015 following the tax revolt of agribusiness against the increase of export taxes and middle class protest against foreign exchange restrictions. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff followed on the heels of a massive mobilization of protest against moderate price hikes in public services, though the right wing media and political elites only jumped the bandwagon when they realized they had a chance to turn the protest against Rousseff and the PT. Ground was prepared by corruption investigations targeting a whole range of politicians, but the media focus was on the most popular target from the perspective of the neoliberal right: former president Lula. Last but not least, Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaidó declared himself president of the country in the hope the presidency of Nicolás Maduro would implode due to the impact of sanctions and popular unrest. Guaidó's move yielded a surprisingly quick and large amount of support from a number of European states in addition

to the United States and Canada. But the opposition leader still appears to have miscalculated the resolve of the army and the majority of the population which appear to stand by the Bolivarian project so far regardless of mounting pressure from outside and inside. Due to the turmoil in Venezuela, the Bolivarian project appears to be significantly weakened and in any case unlikely to expand beyond the small core of the ALBA countries. It has also become involved in the larger global conflict structures with support for Venezuela now arriving mainly from Russia and China. Instead of the earlier emphasis on popular representation, the power struggle appears to privilege a stronger executive backed by military power. Instead of focusing on accomplishments and strategies in the economic and ideological sphere directed against neoliberalism (public service, social housing, social equality etc.), the country has been increasingly under attack for a lack of democracy. The importance of international media can hardly be overestimated. Widely reported shortages are blamed on the inept regime rather than on the loss of export income and sanctions, for example. But this international media effort leads us to the one complaint we can bring forward regarding Cannon's rich and insightful study. Exactly with regard to the dimension of transnational ideology he fails to account for an important factor that helps explaining the surprising continuity, versatility and strength of the neoliberal right in Latin America.

### **Parapolitical mobilization and transnational political technocracy of the right: think tank networks<sup>6</sup>**

The central position of key aspects of neoliberalism, namely support for private property, freedom of contract, free market and free trade has been duly noted in many accounts comparing quite diverse countries and right wing parties that can otherwise differ in a range of political questions related to issues like diversity and indigenous rights, religion or family (Becker, 2019). In Latin America, Cannon does suggest that ideological regimes "...are controlled through highly concentrated and oligopolized media ownership structures which show heavy editorial bias in favor of maintaining the neoliberal status quo." Cannon goes on claiming that "[n]etworks of neoliberal think tanks ... are found throughout the region often established with financial support from transnational organizations" (Cannon,

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<sup>6</sup> The following survey of five neoliberal think tank networks in Latin America is based on the most recent information available on the web sites of the respective organizations (as of May 2019). The subsequent analysis of the individuals involved in all the think tanks (staff and board members, CEOs) instead is based on our dataset on the individuals from 2016. It was not possible to update the larger dataset for this article, unfortunately. The different count of think tanks in the various networks is due to this time lag.



2016, p. 59). While he supplies interesting data on media ownership in Chile, Columbia, México and Peru including foreign capital (from Spain in particular), he remains at the national level except for mentioning the *RELIAL* network (Liberal Network of Latin America) (Cannon, 2016, p. 70).

The RELIAL network was founded in 2004 with the help of the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty and maintains an office in Mexico City. It is a network related to liberal political parties, which are historically rather weak in Latin America. In addition to five political parties, 35 think tanks are part of the network<sup>7</sup>. But Cannon is missing a whole range of neoliberal networks that have been set up earlier than RELIAL, and need to be considered when talking about the forces in defense of and promoting neoliberalism. Also, while Cannon mentions the Catholic Church and Opus Dei in particular in the case of Peru (*ibid.*), he does not speak about these organizations in the other countries.<sup>8</sup> The account falls way short of a presentation of the transnational dimension of think tank networks in Latin America, which we can speak about next (compare Fischer and Plehwe, 2017).

The Atlas Economic Research Foundation, in short *Atlas Network*, is the largest neoliberal think tank network operating around the globe, and the second largest trans-regional network of organized neoliberalism on the Latin American continent. Since its foundation in 1981, Atlas has launched or nurtured some 495 institutions in over 90 countries worldwide, including 85 think tanks in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>9</sup> The Virginia based

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<sup>7</sup> See <<http://www.reliat.org/>> (29-03-2019).

<sup>8</sup> Conservative Catholics and elements of catholic social teaching such as subsidiarity were important forces behind the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, for example. Jaime Guzmán, one of the intellectual leaders and the architect of the legal and constitutional framework of the military regime (which was largely kept in place after the transition to democracy) based his ideological project on corporatist ideas, anti-statism and ultraconservative Catholic values. Rather atypical for adherents to corporatism, he defended capitalism – and Catholicism helped him to argue this ideological amalgam: In the social doctrine formulated by Pope John XXIII, Guzmán perceived private property rights and private enterprise as timeless and permanent values. Guzmán strongly invoked the principle of subsidiarity that is held to protect families and communities from interference by state authority. He thus shared the anti-etatism and references to self-organization with neoliberal perspectives (Fischer, 2009; Romero and Bustamante, 2016). Subsidiarity is a subject of intensive discussion among the new right in Chile (Ortúzar, 2015). Beside the Chileans, the longtime head of the Heritage foundation, the catholic Ed Feulner, Robert Sirico, whose Acton Institute is dedicated to the fusion of catholic teaching and neoliberal political thought, and Latin American neoliberals like Alejandro Chafuen from Argentina, himself a member of Opus dei, are important leads in a closer investigation of the catholic element of neoliberalism (compare Stoliczka, 2016, vol. 1, pp. 153f.).

<sup>9</sup> See Global Directory and members in Latin America and the Caribbean at <<https://www.atlasnetwork.org/partners/global-directory>> (21-03-2019).

Foundation functions like an umbrella organisation. On the one hand, Atlas provides think tank entrepreneurs with significant sums of start-up money and advice and connects them with donors. On the other hand, Atlas integrates its members through joint events, e.g. the Regional Liberty Forums, travel grants, and awards. Moreover, Atlas enhanced the professional character of think tank activities and personnel by developing leadership training programs and an MBA course for think tank executives. Most of the think tanks under study now count on a solid and academic, often foreign trained management team (Djelic, 2017; Fischer, 2018).

Atlas overlaps with further transnational think tank networks in Latin America or – put another way – Atlas has members that are themselves networkers. One of them and at the same time the largest is the *Hispanic American Center for Economic Research (HACER)*, established in 1996 and located in Washington DC. HACER focuses on the Hispanic Americans in North and South America. 108 think tanks belong to HACER, 89 of them in Latin America, seven in Spain and 12 in the U.S. – all of them dedicated to “the core values of personal and economic liberty, limited government under the rule of law, and individual responsibility”.<sup>10</sup> HACER takes a “regional” – as opposed to a country-specific – perspective to these issues. Atlas president Alejandro Chafuen serves on the board, among others. HACER’s Latin American News section provides country reports, news and public policy papers, distributed in English and Spanish. In an extensive online library HACER offers neoliberal classics in Spanish from authors like Ayn Rand, Mises, Menger and Hayek as well as contemporary literature from neoliberal thinkers from the continent like Peru’s Mario Vargas Llosa, Cuban-born Carlos Alberto Montaner and Carlos Sabino from Venezuela. The organization also awards funding to political leaders and writers, e.g. through its Giancarlo Ibagüen Freedom Award named after HACER’s long-standing board member, president of the Francisco Marroquín University in Guatemala City and member of the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS), the global network of neoliberal intellectuals founded by Hayek and others in 1947 (Plehwe and Walpen, 2006; Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009).

Another trans-regional network, the *Fundación Internacional para la Libertad* (FIL/International Foundation for Liberty), emerged on initiative of the Spanish right. It was founded in 2003 in Madrid, when think tanks from Latin America, Europe and the U.S. came together on initiative of the Fundación Iberoamérica Europa, a think tank strongly linked to

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<sup>10</sup> See the list of complete list of allied think tanks <<http://www.hacer.org/chico-1/>> (21-03-2019).

José Aznar and the Partido Popular. FIL is headquartered in Rosario, Argentina, and the writer and public intellectual Mario Vargas Llosa leads the organization. The academic board assembles neoliberal economists from three continents. We find key figures such as Alberto Benegas Lynch and Ricardo López from Argentina, Carlos Sabino and a strong Chilean fraction (Büchi, Cáceres, and Fontaine). Many of them are MPS members. FIL's entrepreneur's advisory board comprises more than 50 representatives of big business in Latin America and Spain, coordinated by Álvaro Vargas Llosa, like his father a writer and neoliberal propagandist. Currently the FIL network comprises of 24 Latin American think tanks; US and European (all Spanish except the German Naumann Foundation) organisations are equally represented (each with six).<sup>11</sup>

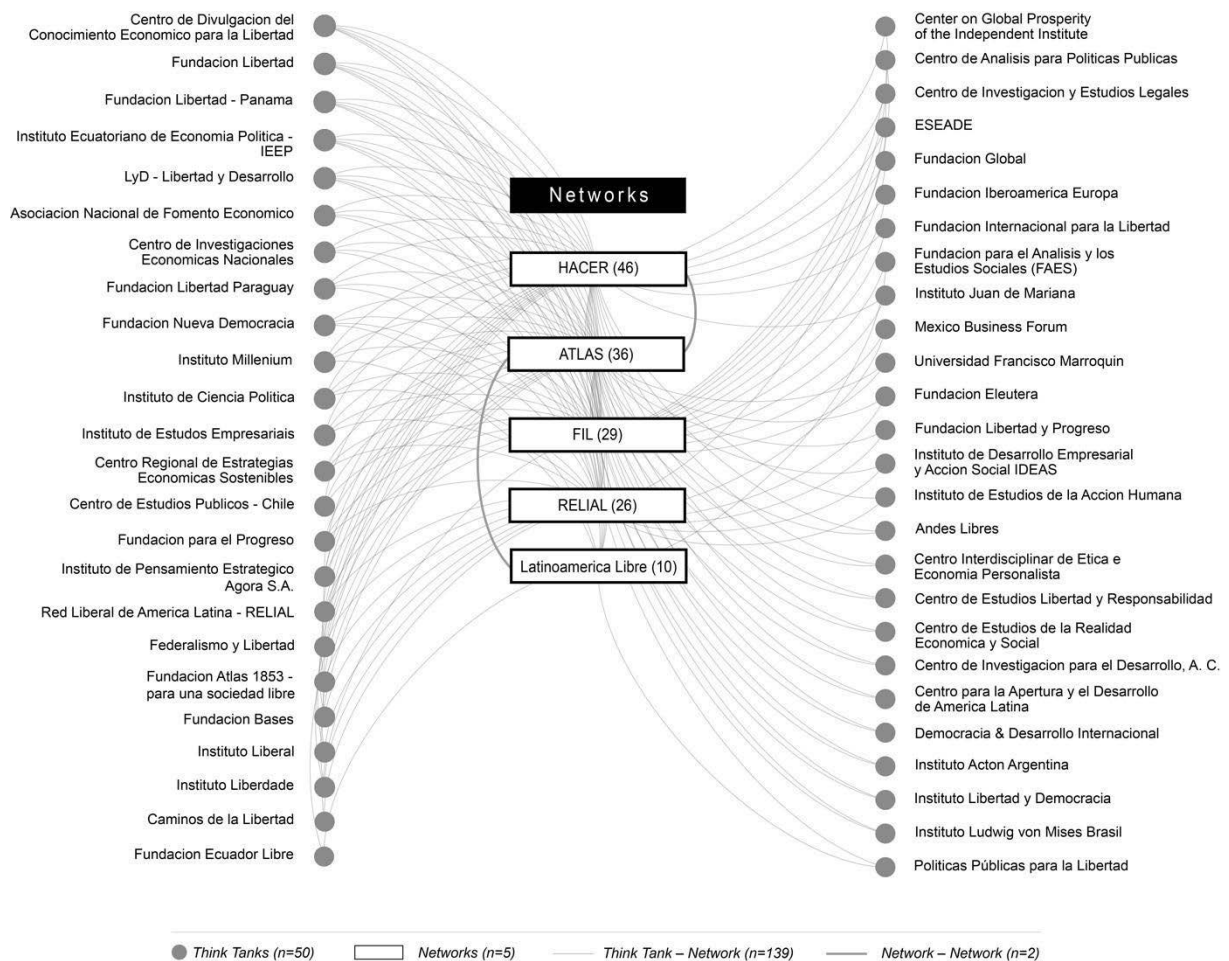
The fifth and final transnational think tank network we discovered is *Latinoamérica Libre*. It is the “counterpart” of RELIAL and unites the followers and supporting institutions of the Unión de Partidos Latinoamericanos (UPLA). UPLA is the regional spin-off of the International Democrat Union which was founded by Margret Thatcher, George Bush, and Helmut Kohl, among others. Both, the party and the think tank network are headquartered in Santiago de Chile. UPLA currently increases in significance. It gathers 20 reactionary right-wing parties that are linked to former dictatorships, traditional conservative parties, and new parties and movements from the (neoliberal) right. Party members include the far-right ARENA (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista) from El Salvador, Chile's Renovación Nacional and Unión Demócrata Independiente and recent formations like Mauricio Macri's PRO (Propuesta Republicana) from Argentina, the Movimiento CREO from Ecuador or the Movimiento Demócrata Social from Bolivia. In sum 17 Latin American think tanks are part of the think tank network; it receives international support from the German Hanns Seidel Foundation and the International Republican Institute.<sup>12</sup>

The following graph represents the five networks (based on data from 2016). Think tanks are represented only if they belong to at least two of the five networks, reducing the number from 105 to 55 organizations. This highlights the transnational dimension and allows focusing on the organizational integration of the Latin American think tank networks.

<sup>11</sup> See <<https://fundacionfil.org/consejo-academico/>>, <<https://fundacionfil.org/consejo-empresario-asesor/>> and <<https://fundacionfil.org/entidades-adheridas/>> (20-03-2019).

<sup>12</sup> See <<http://uplalatinamerica.org/>> (20-03-2019).

**Diagram 1: Think Tanks affiliated to more than one of the five Networks in Latin America**



Source: thinknetworkresearch.net; we are grateful to Ramona Almen and Moritz Neujeffski who have supplied the network graph.

While the think tanks in the five networks studied are united in general by a normative world view, individual think tanks perform quite different tasks. There are think tanks that produce and popularize “pure doctrine” and keep some distance from concrete politics. Good examples in this regard are those who base their “war of ideas” on the Austrian school of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. Others are public policy oriented “do tanks”, which engage in consultancy and still others go beyond intellectual activities. This is especially true for the “freedom fighters” in Brazil that sparked the cultural war against the Worker’s party and left-wing intellectuals. Atlas-affiliated groups like Come to the Street (Vem Pra Rua/VPR), Students for Liberty (Estudantes Pela Liberdade/EPL) and the Free Brazil Movement (Movimento Brasil Livre/MBL) successfully converted the 2013 street

demonstrations into marches against Dilma. Their bloggers, columnists and Facebook campaigners have themselves garnered a mass of supporters, using violent rhetoric, defamation and fake news. Social media, high-circulation *Veja* magazine, private radio and television shows became the platform for aggressive, young freedom fighters many of whom went through leadership courses and several training programs at Atlas. Fábio Ostermann, the coordinator of the Free Brazil Moment, was a Summer Fellow at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, for example (Amaral, 2015).<sup>13</sup>

Altogether they form a neoliberal think tank universe which is characterized by quite common forms of division of labor among these groups. What Bailey stated in 1965 is still accurate: “Whereas one society will be activists, engaging in civic action, pressure tactics, and/or direct action against the enemies, another group will be concerned with propaganda and education.” (Bailey, 1965, p. 201) They share common principles such as limited government, low taxes, individual freedom, free enterprise and the rule of law; their common bogeyman is “populism” and the pink tide governments, being built up to be “a communist threat”.

### **Cadres of neoliberal mobilization**

Studying the organizations populating the various think tank networks leads us to the most important assets: the cadres of organized neoliberalism. Studying think tank networks allows us to study other important elements of organized neoliberal civil society both in the different countries and across borders. Because neoliberalism is a global movement we can also benefit from comparing the ways neoliberal networks are organized in other world regions. Due to the large number of individuals involved in the transnational neoliberal think tank networks, both qualitative and quantitative research has to meet considerable challenges. We focus here on individuals who link think tanks across borders and thereby form the nucleus of transnational neoliberal elite. This work on think tank professionals and (transnational) civil society formation is presently still at an early stage. But the focus on think tanks can help us to understand the larger (neoliberal) coalitions of business, media, and academic, political and other civil society forces. If these coalitions align, they form (transnational) expert, consulting and lobby or advocacy networks (on TECLANs compare

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<sup>13</sup> For instructive case studies on the role and relevance of individual neoliberal think tanks and think tank networks in Peru, Chile and Argentina see Mitchell, Tim (2009), Fischer (2009) and Plehwe (2011), for example

Plehwe, 2014). Think Tank analysis allows tracking and tracing individuals from the various fields important to the sources of power who are all invested in think tank politics as staff members or in supporting and funding functions on advisory or supervisory boards. The five Latin American networks studied comprise of more than 1,300 individuals (compare table 1 for details).

**Table 1: Think Tanks and their affiliates within the five networks**

TT Networks	Nr. of think-tank Members (international)	Nr. of think-tank Members (Latin-America only)*	Nr. of individuals affiliated**
Atlas Network	485	***63	770
FIL	37	24	387
HACER	88	61	986
Latinamericano Libre	14	10	88
RELIAL	33	27	329
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>185 (105)</b>	<b>2560 (1352)</b>

\* Think-tanks are often part of more than one network. Therefore, if think-tank membership per network is counted we derive at 185 think-tanks positions, which are composed by 105 individual think-tanks.  
 \*\* This is true for the individual affiliates as well. There are 1352 individual persons in total, which are affiliated to the 105 think-tanks. If counted per network, they make up for 2560 positions.  
 \*\*\* Atlas currently lists 83 think tanks in Latin America, 20 more than 2016, our last update of staff, board members and CEOs.

Contrasting Latin America to Europe helps to shed more light on the local relevance of think tank networks in Latin America and on the peculiar composition of transnational neoliberal elites. Latin American neoliberal think tank networks appear to be more durable and cut more strongly across political party boundaries than European networks, for example (Fischer and Plehwe, 2017). Interesting differences emerge if we take a closer look at staff and board members.

If we count the individuals who are engaged in these five think tank networks in Latin America, we arrive at a total of 1352 individuals, comprising staff and board members (research on staff and board members last updated in October 2016). Staff members are think tank professionals who devote much if not all of their career to think tank efforts. Board members are members of advisory boards or supervisory boards. They usually come either from the academic world or from corporations, although some can also hold jobs in the media

or hold political offices. Think tank staff and board members are often affiliated to more than one think tank, they make up for 1517 positions,<sup>14</sup> though less than ten percent of the staff and board members hold multiple positions.

Common to both regions is the phenomenon of interlocking think tank positions held by 106 individuals (of the total of 1352 individuals affiliated to the 105 think tanks) in Latin America and 149 individuals in Europe. Interlocking positions can be held by board and by staff members. Of the 106 individuals who held positions in at least two think tanks in Latin America, 37 held positions in at least two think tanks in different countries (51 in Europe). The latter group in particular is of considerable interest since we can assume these people to be important intermediaries between the different national constellations. Let us take a closer look at this nucleus of transnational neoliberal elites in Latin America.

The top members of the 37 hold up to 9 positions in different think tanks. The group is led by Carlos Sabino. His career brought the Argentina-born MPS member and prolific writer to neoliberal academic bastions in Venezuela, Guatemala (Francisco Marroquín University) and to the US (George Mason University). Second is Alberto Benegas Lynch and Gerardo Bongiovanni, both are also academic power brokers from Argentina. Benegas Lynch is the founder of the ESEADE Business School in Buenos Aires, Bongiovanni initiated Fundación Libertad, Fundación Iberoamérica Europa and Fundación Internacional para la Libertad. Among the top ten linkers we furthermore find the exiled Cuban writer Carlos Alberto Montaner and Alejandro Chafuen, long-time head of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation network also from Argentina. Following his career at Atlas, Chafuen moved to the important catholic neoliberal think tank Acton Institute in 2018. The list also includes Peru's think tank scholar Enrique Gherzi and Alvaro Vargas Llosa, son of Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, and Cato-affiliated Ian Vásquez, who served at the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations and is an MPS member. The only woman among the top ten is antichavista Rocío Guijarro, co-founder of one of the oldest and most active think tanks on the continent, CEDICE in Venezuela.

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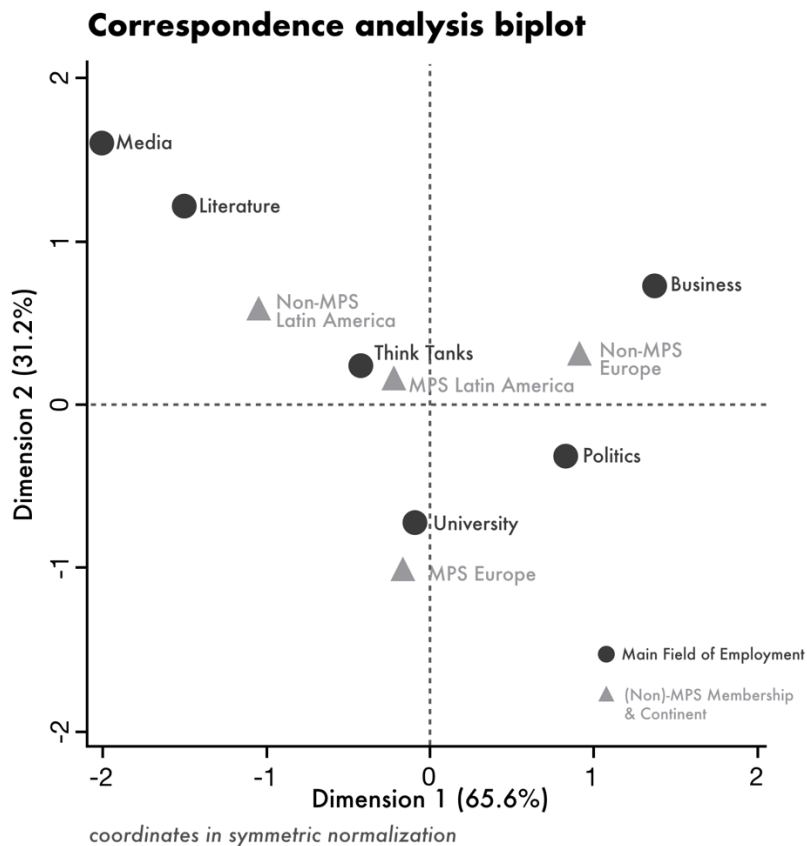
<sup>14</sup> In our chapter "Neoliberal think tank networks in Latin America and Europe: strategic replication and cross national organizing" (Fischer and Plehwe, 2017) we speak of 3384 positions. This discrepancy results from two factors. (1) a different calculation, in which positions are counted per network: Since many think-tanks hold membership in more than one network, this results in different numbers of positions. (2) We have also included think tanks in these five Latin-American networks, which are based outside Latin-America. The numbers provided here focus on Latin America only and count think tanks that are part of different networks only once.

Biographical analysis reveals further details about the transnational neoliberal elite members. We discover a high number of members of the Mont Pèlerin Society: 51 % of these transnational linkers take part in the global neoliberal elite network. Apart from a high number of interlocks held by MPS members in general, MPS members clearly outnumber others when it comes to occupying positions in three or more think tanks. We therefore consider them a key element of transnational neoliberal knowledge power elites in C. Wright Mill's sense of occupying organizational leadership positions.

If we take a closer look at the groups of MPS and non-MPS members who are in interlock positions across borders, we can establish some interesting descriptive particulars for transnational elite members. Correspondence analysis is helpful to establish association between categorical variables in a given dataset and singles out different "types" of actors. Contrasting Latin American and European neoliberal elites (sub-divided by MPS membership and the group of non-members) helps realizing the specificities of the Latin American Think Tank networkers.



**Diagram 2: Correspondence Analysis – Macro-Region and MPS/nonMPS-Membership with Main Employment**

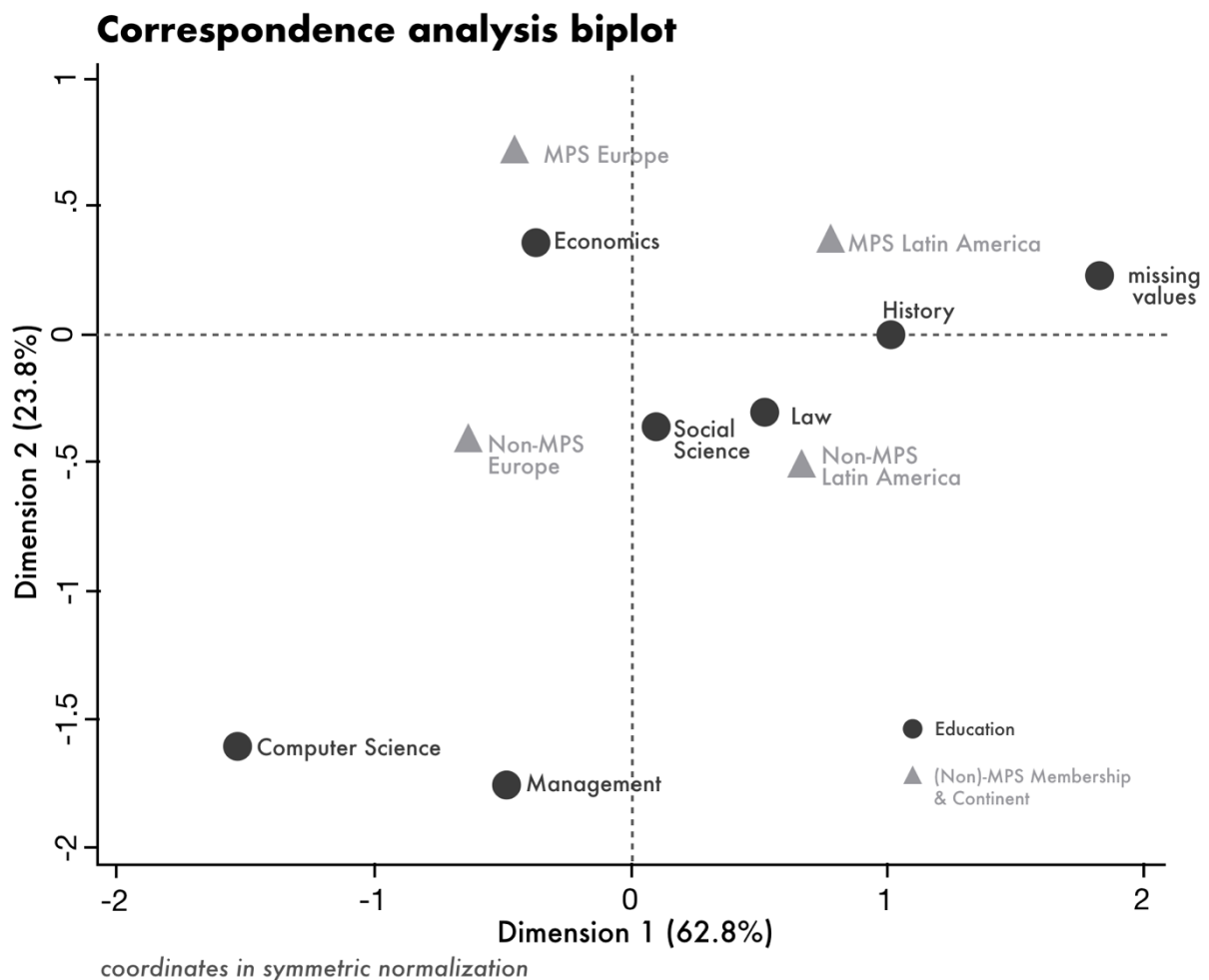


*The corresponding results are listed in the annex (Table 2)*

In contrast to Europe, Latin American members of the Mont Pèlerin Society are working for think tanks rather than universities, and those interlocking board members who are not part of the MPS network are closer to the media and think tank field compared to the Europeans who are closer to the business and think tank field. Compared to Europe, the transnational cadres of neoliberal networks are more closely based in the ideological sphere of think tanks and the media.

In terms of training, we also find interesting differences between organized neoliberals in Latin America and in Europe. The following graph shows the members of the interlocking communities placed in the field of academic and professional training.

**Diagram 3: Correspondence Analysis – Continent and MPS-Membership with Educational Background**



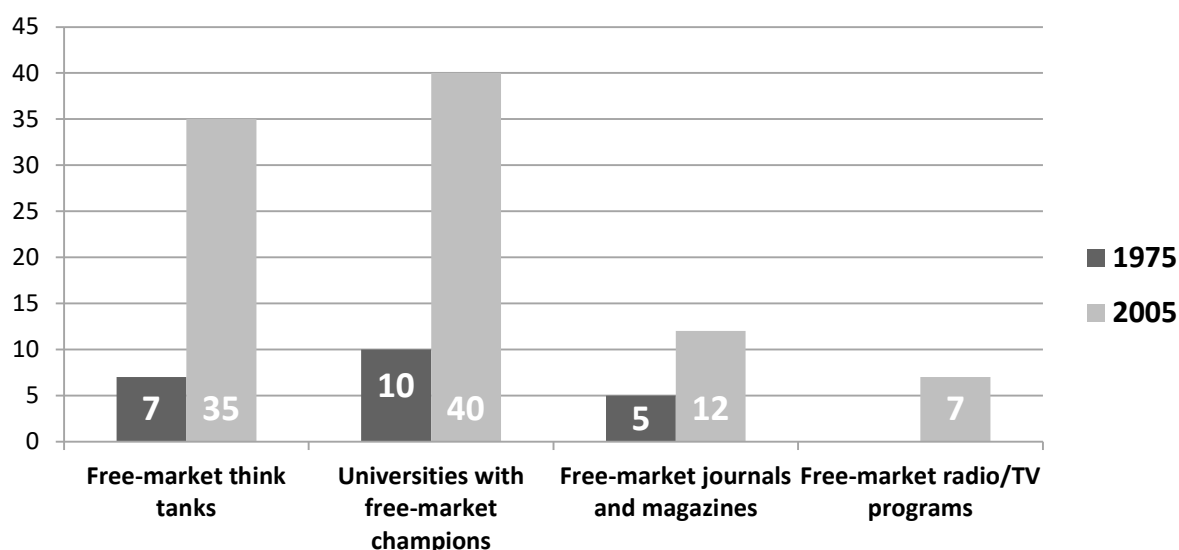
*The corresponding results are listed in the annex (Table 3)*

European MPS members in interlocking positions are typically economists. The profile of Latin American neoliberal intellectuals is more diverse. In addition to economists we also find more traditional fields like history or literature. The proportion of women is low in the inner circle, in Latin America it is slightly higher (13.5%) than in Europe (12%). In terms of country of origin, the biggest group of transnational cadres is from Argentina followed by Peru and Chile. Although their *space* of activity is of course transnational, only a small group has moved their *place* of activity elsewhere or abroad.

How important are these networks? When many of the right expressed fears in the advent of Lula's rise to the presidency in Brazil, the head of the Atlas Economic Research

Foundation, Alejandro Chafuen, countered the worries with a table compiled to document the strength of the neoliberal civil society organizations in his world region (see diagram 4).

**Diagram 4: Neoliberal Capacity Building: MPS Latin America Think Tanks**



Source: Chafuen, 2006, p. 6, based on estimates from Atlas Economic Research database and [www.hacer.org](http://www.hacer.org)

Commenting on the pink tide, the mentor of the freedom fighters in Brazil said: “And after 25 years of Atlas investing in the region, we have many more think tanks, universities and media outlets championing the principles of the free society. The prospects for Latin America to rebuild their institutions in a manner favorable to liberty are quite strong, especially if our think tank allies can continue to move beyond narrow research and familiar audiences (...).” (Chafuen, 2006, p. 1) In addition to the need to observe the right wing political parties in opposition it is clearly necessary to pay closer attention to neoliberal civil society networks in Latin America.

### **Conclusion: the limits of the pink tide and the prospect of “post-neoliberalism”**

In this article we are siding with those who have argued that the “pink tide” has been a contested process rather than a break with neoliberalism (Chodor, 2015). Although the term can be useful it needs to become much clearer where and how economic, political and social relations develop in ways that allow speaking about a departure from neoliberalism rather

than evolution under considerable if not overarching influence of neoliberal social forces and principles let alone the structural constraints, domestic and international.

Drawing on a revised version of Michael Mann's model of social power we relied on Barry Cannon's (2016) work to demonstrate the limits of the departure from neoliberalism in political-institutional, economic, ideological and military terms. Contrary to the emphasis on political shifts by scholars advocating the intertwined development of the pink tide and post-neoliberalism, we have argued the need for a deeper analysis of different socio-economic and ideological dimensions and the wider distribution of power in capitalist societies. The pink tide movement ultimately failed to fundamentally contradict, confront and undermine neoliberal varieties of capitalist development in Latin America in all but a few countries or domains. Institutional reforms were often the result of opportunities rather than the result of a systematic effort and only pursued in a given period of time when the international conditions were favorable.

Even the most ambitious Bolivarian countries and to a lesser extent Argentina and Brazil failed to deepen and institutionalize a new "post-neoliberal" model. This also applies to the international level. South-South cooperation in the framework of ALBA, UNASUR and the Latin American Investment Bank stalled, and has recently been undermined by the new phalanx of right wing governments committed to rescinding the Bolivarian revolution. Instead of ALBA's focus on south-south cooperation, the Pacific Alliance model of corporate globalization and partnership with the North once again tops the agenda. "Productive integration", caught up with difficulties in any case, is off the table. Industrial strategies will be limited to upgrading efforts within global value chains.

Taking the argument of the need to take the transnational sources of power further our analysis of transnational think tank networks and neoliberal elites in Latin America shows the extent to which these networks have been developed across borders. The extent to which neoliberals in different countries, political parties, corporate headquarters, churches and other civil society organizations rely on the input originating in neoliberal think tank and expert networks can hardly be over-estimated. At the same time it is necessary to recognize that a lot of research remains to be done. We still need to know much more about the funding of think tanks, about the profile of the think tank professionals and their leadership, and about the range of tasks carried out by these para-political cadres. Links to both the media, to the

corporate sector and to other civil society organizations like the churches in particular need to be examined more closely in order to more fully comprehend the track laying capacities and the variety of catholic neoliberalism in Latin America (compare Fischer and Plehwe, 2013). The closer look at nucleus of the transnational neoliberal elite underlines the relevance of think tank networks in Latin America. Much more can be found out in greater detail once we, firstly, expand the group biographical analysis of think tank professionals to the larger group of individuals who are present in more than one think tanks, and, secondly, to the whole group of individuals serving as staff and board members. A more comprehensive study of board members in particular will help to shed light on components of the neoliberal discourse coalitions and expert, consulting and lobby or advocacy networks beyond the think tanks, namely the corporate, media, civil society and party political elements.

In terms of ideological change, the new varieties of neoliberalism under construction in the present time combine key tenets of economic freedom with social and cultural conservatism, including more pronounced nationalism. Conservative catholic social norms like personality, solidarity in extended family and community circles and subsidiarity are of particular relevance in this regard. In terms of policy making, the populist mask is quickly taken off and offers plain visibility of the radicalized neoliberal content of the new right wing formations as we can see in the case of Brazil or Venezuela. The softer varieties claiming social market economy professing liberal values with regard to gender, sexuality, diversity etc. are meeting the objections of the more authoritarian varieties that combine neoliberalism and social and cultural conservatism. In Chile, for example, different fractions of young neoliberal intellectuals set out to build a program for a renewed right for Chile and beyond. Newly founded think tanks and a lively stream of publications substantiate this endeavor in which communitarian, cosmopolitan and authoritarian currents confront one another (Alenda, Gartenlaub and Fischer, 2019).

Neoliberal core beliefs like property rights, freedom of contract, rule of law and the need to defend and stabilize the capitalist order have been translated in different programs and models depending on socio-economic circumstances, power constellations and social struggles. Neoliberals are willing to compromise with their opponents if need be, but the threats emanating from countries like Venezuela, Argentina or Brazil also demonstrate the range of counter-strategies employed to defend the basic tenets of neoliberal order. Counter

strategies involved mobilizations that relied on media channels and think tank infrastructures in addition to party political, electoral and legal strategies. Beyond legal strategies, the right pushed new targeting and defamation strategies, which prepared the ground for semi-constitutional action (e.g. one-sided anti-corruption campaigns), which require significant support from media and media behind the media, namely coordinated campaigns via think tank networks, for example. Instead of focusing only or mainly on the left or on the right, a *relational* perspective is required to assess the process of contentious politics and the direction of social transformations.

To take a relational perspective serious also means analyzing the frictions and divisions within the right and the “limits of the possible”. New right wing governments across the regions will remain extremely vulnerable to the volatility of the global commodity markets. Progressive forces across Latin America are called upon to engage (again) in an ideological battle in order to reflect and possibly re-direct social struggles. Progressive think tanks, transnationally coordinated, might come to play a role here.

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## **Continuity and Variety of Neoliberalism: Reconsidering Latin America's Pink Tide**

### **Abstract:**

In this article we critically engage with the term and concept of "post-neoliberalism", delineate different meanings in the literature and arrive at the conclusion that the term leaves more questions open than it answers. In order to clarify the continuity and variety of neoliberalism in Latin America, we draw on literature that investigates the departure from and the persistence of neoliberalism. Barry Cannon's work on the rise of the right in Latin America can be considered particularly useful to carefully study both social power relations within the various countries, and international power relations of great relevance to the region. In taking his arguments further we present and examine transnational neoliberal think tank networks that are active in Latin America in comparative perspective. We show the extent to which these networks have been developed across borders and investigate the key linkers within these networks. In comparison with European neoliberal networks, the role of think tank professionals as transnational coordinators stands out. In conclusion we situate the main neoliberal currents within the contemporary constellation of right wing political ideologies. The article strengthens a relational perspective in the study of varieties of neoliberalism and its counter-forces. Last but not least research desiderata are indicated with regard to think tank professionals and organized civil society and in the field of historical institutionalism related to the rise of transnational ideological power structures at large.

**Keywords:** varieties of neoliberalism, pink tide, post-neoliberalism, think tanks networks.

## **Continuidad y variedad del neoliberalismo: reconsiderando la marea rosada de América Latina**

### **Resumen:**

En este artículo nos comprometemos críticamente con el término y el concepto de "posneoliberalismo", delineamos diferentes utilizaciones en la literatura y llegamos a la conclusión de que el término deja más preguntas abiertas que contestadas. Por lo tanto, recurrimos a la literatura que investiga la desviación (o la persistencia) del neoliberalismo en un estudio cuidadoso de las relaciones de poder social. Más concretamente, nos basamos en el trabajo de Barry Cannon sobre el auge de la derecha en América Latina. Al profundizar sus argumentos, examinamos, desde una perspectiva comparativa, redes transnacionales de think tanks neoliberales que están activas en América Latina. Mostramos hasta qué punto estas redes se han desarrollado a través de las fronteras e investigamos los actores clave dentro de estas redes. En comparación con redes neoliberales en Europa destaca el papel de los profesionales de los think tanks como coordinadores transnacionales. Para concluir, situamos las corrientes principales dentro de la constelación contemporánea de ideologías políticas de derecha. El artículo fortalece una perspectiva relacional en el estudio del neoliberalismo y sus fuerzas opuestas. Por último, indicamos desiderata de investigación en el campo de los profesionales de think tanks como actores de la sociedad civil y de las estructuras de poder ideológico transnacional en general.

**Palabras clave:** variedades de neoliberalismo, marea rosa, post-neoliberalismo, redes de think tanks.

## **Continuidade e Variedade do Neoliberalismo: Reconsiderando a Onda Rosa da América Latina**

### **Resumo:**

No presente artigo, debatemos criticamente a expressão e o conceito de pós-neoliberalismo. Ao delinear diferentes utilizações na literatura, chegamos à conclusão de que deixa mais perguntas do que respostas. Neste sentido, recorremos à literatura que investiga o desvio (ou persistência) do neoliberalismo em um estudo cuidadoso das relações de poder social. Mais especificamente, nos baseamos no trabalho de Barry Cannon sobre o auge da direita da América Latina. Ao aprofundar seus

argumentos, analisamos, desde uma perspectiva comparativa, as redes transnacionais de *think tanks* neoliberais que estão ativas na América Latina. Mostramos até que ponto estas redes se desenvolveram por meio das fronteiras e analisamos os atores chave dentro destas redes. Em comparação com as redes neoliberais da Europa, o artigo destaca o papel dos profissionais dos *think tanks* como coordenadores transnacionais. Para concluir, situamos as correntes principais dentro da constelação contemporânea de ideologias políticas de direita. O artigo fortalece uma abordagem relacional no estudo do neoliberalismo e das suas forças opostas. Por fim, apontamos a necessidade de uma pesquisa no campo dos profissionais de *think tanks* como atores da sociedade civil e das estruturas de poder ideológico transnacional em geral.

**Palavras-chave:** variedades de neoliberalismo, maré-rosa, pós-neoliberalismo, redes de think tanks.

## Annex:

**Table 2: Correspondence Analysis – Continent and MPS-Membership with Main Employment**

Correspondence analysis	Number of obs	=	87
	Pearson chi2(15)	=	35.55
	Prob > chi2	=	0.0021
	Total inertia	=	0.4086
6 active rows	Number of dim.	=	2
4 active columns	Expl. inertia (%)	=	96.75

Dimension	singular value	principal inertia	chi2	percent	cumul percent
dim 1	.5177196	.2680336	23.32	65.59	65.59
dim 2	.3568486	.1273409	11.08	31.16	96.75
dim 3	.1152071	.0132727	1.15	3.25	100.00
total		.4086471	35.55	100	

Statistics for row and column categories in symmetric normalization

Categories	overall			dimension_1			dimension_2		
	mass	quality	%inert	coord	sqcorr	contrib	coord	sqcorr	contrib
MainJobs									
Business	0.138	1.000	0.409	1.399	0.838	0.522	0.741	0.162	0.212
Literature	0.034	1.000	0.140	-1.474	0.679	0.145	1.220	0.321	0.144
Media	0.011	0.780	0.108	-1.998	0.539	0.089	1.608	0.241	0.083
Politics	0.080	0.992	0.081	0.851	0.911	0.113	-0.304	0.080	0.021
Think Tank	0.414	0.943	0.111	-0.403	0.768	0.130	0.232	0.175	0.062
University	0.322	0.990	0.152	-0.065	0.011	0.003	-0.728	0.979	0.478
Cont_Member									
MPS-Europe	0.241	0.996	0.234	-0.175	0.040	0.014	-1.030	0.956	0.717
MPS-Latin	0.218	0.432	0.043	-0.222	0.319	0.021	0.159	0.113	0.015
NON-MPS-Eu~e	0.333	0.995	0.378	0.914	0.933	0.538	0.286	0.063	0.076
NON-MPS-La~n	0.207	0.984	0.346	-1.034	0.811	0.427	0.574	0.172	0.191

**Table 3: Correspondence Analysis – Continent and MPS-Membership with Educational Background**

Correspondence analysis	Number of obs	=	87
	Pearson chi2(18)	=	23.22
	Prob > chi2	=	0.1822
	Total inertia	=	0.2669
7 active rows	Number of dim.	=	2
4 active columns	Expl. inertia (%)	=	86.66

Dimension	singular value	principal inertia	chi2	percent	cumul percent
dim 1	.4094997	.16769	14.59	62.83	62.83
dim 2	.2522289	.0636194	5.53	23.84	86.66
dim 3	.1886889	.0356035	3.10	13.34	100.00
total		.2669129	23.22	100	

Statistics for row and column categories in symmetric normalization

Categories	overall			dimension_1			dimension_2		
	mass	quality	%inert	coord	sqcorr	contrib	coord	sqcorr	contrib
Studies									
sysmiss	0.069	0.908	0.406	1.858	0.899	0.581	0.231	0.009	0.015
Computer Sc~e	0.011	0.795	0.086	-1.511	0.468	0.064	-1.612	0.328	0.118
Economics	0.506	0.999	0.174	-0.377	0.633	0.176	0.365	0.366	0.267
History	0.046	0.577	0.130	1.030	0.577	0.119	0.003	0.000	0.000
Law	0.057	0.567	0.052	0.522	0.460	0.038	-0.320	0.107	0.023
Management	0.034	1.000	0.112	-0.469	0.104	0.019	-1.759	0.896	0.423
Social Sci~s	0.276	0.986	0.039	0.068	0.050	0.003	-0.374	0.936	0.153
Cont_Member									
MPS-Europe	0.241	0.882	0.207	-0.446	0.355	0.117	0.692	0.527	0.458
MPS-Latin	0.218	0.849	0.289	0.811	0.763	0.350	0.346	0.086	0.104
NON-MPS-Eu~e	0.333	0.932	0.266	-0.619	0.736	0.312	-0.407	0.196	0.219
NON-MPS-La~n	0.207	0.802	0.238	0.661	0.583	0.221	-0.517	0.220	0.220