

INTRODUCTION



THE PINK TIDE

Egalitarianism and the Corporate State in Latin America

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The demise of the Pink Tide in Latin America has sparked much discussion as to whether this represents the end of leftist governmental experiments in the region and a return to what seems to be the status quo domination of right-wing conservative politics. Perhaps a more indicting implication of this debate is whether the Pink Tide represents an alternative to neoliberalism or whether it constitutes a particular typology of this system. Left-leaning scholars (Ackerman 2016; García Linera 2006; López Segrera 2016, among others) and activists counter this view by arguing that the Pink Tide has sufficiently overturned traditional structures of domination and provided many disenfranchised groups with the concrete possibility of accessing political power. While we share the perception that the Pink Tide has indeed effected long-lasting transformations in Latin American political imaginaries and opened concrete lines for change, we are here concerned with the processes of structural transformation that underpin the formation of the Pink Tide and its more recent destabilization. As a response to the excesses of neoliberalism in the region, the Pink Tide has incorporated alternative egalitarian ideologies to political power. However, it has not been able to counteract the increasing corporatization of state structures taking place in Latin America – as in Europe and North America (as well as China and Russia but in different configurations) – a process holistically affecting statehood, where neoliberalism is but one expression (as an ideology of the corporate state).

A variety of responses have emerged in Latin America to what we identify as global processes of state transformation that indicate the emergence of

new state configurations taking on corporate forms. Ethnographic studies across the region reveal the contradictions between shifting state structures and contesting and resisting egalitarian movements. As was the case with Operation Condor¹ (1968–1989), Latin America is once again a sociopolitical experiment where democratic and egalitarian processes clash with powerful and hierarchical corporate interests. We propose a re-examination of these experiments by taking as a point of departure the current apotheosis of a different configuration of statehood – the corporate state – flourishing particularly in the Global North but with its frontiers in the Global South. Latin America thus provides a propitious ground for examining the processes by which the corporate state operates, especially given the historic relation of the region to colonial and neocolonial interests. The undermining of democratic and egalitarian procedures by the corporate state has been at the core of the rise and crisis of the Pink Tide.

In order to explore these processes of transformation in ethnographic context, we ask the following questions: a) How do we understand egalitarianism? b) What do we mean by the corporate state? c) What manifestations do these take in Latin America? This book will analyse the contradictions between the corporatization of the state in Latin America and the consolidation of egalitarian movements across the continent, some within the structures of government, trying to break open the constraints of the state and seeking to build new forms of life or alternative governmental approaches.

The shifting political balance between left and right is considered through an ethnographically grounded and localized anthropological perspective of what is a regional (and in many ways global) crisis. At a time of crisis of the regular structures of political participation (political parties, elections, legal and parliamentary processes), the Latin American context reveals multiple expressions of egalitarian movements (indigenous struggles, ecological groups, new forms of feminism, students', teachers' and other types of social movements) that strive and sometimes momentarily manage to break through the constraining structures of state power. In fact, their emergence outside conventional political milieus and their anti-establishment tendencies are an indication of the atomization and crisis of conventional political structures, and are characteristic of the subversion of political processes to the economic concerns of the corporate state (Kapferer and Gold 2018). However, these egalitarian expressions also have the potential of being co-opted by corporate concerns and procedures. Shifts in labour and class relations and the blurring of the distinction between parliamentary right and left political positions are other indications of corporatizing state processes. The Latin American experience provides a unique opportunity to understand global processes of state transformation from the regional view of the Global South at a time when the left had managed to establish itself in regional politics.

The Pink Tide within the Neoliberal Wave

In the mid 2000s, three quarters of South America's population (350 million people) were under leftist governments. The Pink Tide refers to a group of left-leaning non-communist governments that rose to power at the end of the 1990s and in the new millennium in Latin America (Castaneda 2006). By 2010, there were leftist governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and Peru. The Pink Tide was by no means a unified block, and contested distinctions are drawn between the 'good' left of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile – more akin to the European social democrats – and the 'bad' left of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, more authoritarian and too close to Cuba in political ideology. However, Pink Tide governments are broadly characterized by a reaction against neoliberal economic practices implemented by the Washington Consensus and shared common policies of increased social spending, nationalization of important industries, regeneration of regional trade deals and in some cases the reformulation of constitutions to create more economies of solidarity. These governments were in many ways a response to the 1998 regional recession caused by neoliberal policies of austerity implemented by the World Bank and extreme privatization, potentially explaining the vote to the left not as ideological but as rationally economic. The rise of the left coincided with the commodities boom of 2003, which provided leftist governments with resources with which to govern (petrol, gas, mining, soy) and enabled redistribution policies to be implemented (Murillo 2016), but it did not challenge the command of capital and in many ways enabled the penetration of corporatizing forces through the deepening dependence on the global market of primary goods (Webber 2016).

The rise of the left to government shifted the configuration of political scenarios in Latin America to the point that even in 2013 and 2014 when governmental politics began to shift again to the right the elected conservative governments did not win with large margins (Peru, Argentina, Brazil). These partial victories reveal the effects of leftist distributive policies and a new political scenario where the left's access to government is now possible. However, they can be also interpreted as a symptom of the increasing indistinctness between left and right, as leftist governments in power often display policies that could well have been conceived by the right, blurring the platforms sustained by both political camps in the past.

The biggest critique levelled at the Pink Tide has been its undermining of democratic institutions through its association with large-scale corruption scandals (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay) and the increasing subversion of the legal structures to political purposes, seen for example in the subordination of socioecological concerns to extractivist policies (discussed by Ødegaard

and Fitz-Henry and Rodriguez Quinonez this volume). While there might be little doubt that corruption thrived, the historic tensions within traditional elites underpinning corruption scandals are often overlooked, as well as the long-standing role of corruption within Latin American politics and more globally (see Gledhill and Hita this volume). The backlash of traditional power groups (the military, Catholic Church and the oligarchy) against the newly empowered sectors of society (women, the poor, ethnic minorities, indigenous people), often through corruption accusations and legal procedures (see Fitz-Henry and Rodriguez Quinonez this volume), reveals corporate interests mobilizing bureaucratic institutions to subvert political power to its economic concerns (Kapferer and Gold 2018).

Neoliberalism, against which the Pink Tide emerged, is ‘a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms’ (Brown 2015: 17) and is embedded, we argue, within the structural dynamics of the corporate state, representing the ideological framework supporting the unregulated potential of capitalism. Neoliberalism ‘ideologically reflects and motivates the marked economization of the political and of the social (the economic as ontology)’ (Kapferer 2018: 11). Neoliberal reason penetrates statecraft and business, law, the production of knowledge (in primary and tertiary education), the reproduction of daily life through technology and so converts ‘the distinctly political character, meaning, and operation of democracy’s constituent elements into economic ones’ (Brown 2015: 17). That is, neoliberalism represents the subverting of the political by the economic, becoming ‘a dominant economic discourse across the class and political spectrum’ (Kapferer and Gold 2017: 34), one that has the capacity to bind its critics and proponents under the terms of market logic. Thus the right/left (governmental), public/private, democratic/autocratic (and other apparent oppositions) – constituting a dialectical unity of meaning – are internal to (and become internalized into) the logic of the corporate state and get mobilized in times of crisis, subverting egalitarian ideals and democratic processes. The demise of the Pink Tide, therefore, ought to be considered as a manifestation of larger transformations of the state – a historical process long underway – and not simply as a pendular movement between left and right claims over state power, nor a response to the commodity boom of the 1990s, a much too simplistic and economic understanding of a complex and on-going process of shifting state structures.

The Corporate State Formation

When we speak of the corporate state, we depart from older theories of state corporatism popular in the 1970s. There are certainly continuities between

early conceptualizations of the corporate state (see Thomson 1935), the state corporatism of Italian fascism and the current manifestations of the corporate state in Trump's America, but the corporate state we refer to is a more radical state formation than a corporatism of state or the corporatization of state sectors (through privatization, for example). Some elements of state corporatism have been re-popularized: the suspicion against liberal democracy; the idea that not all citizens are equal as a positive force for economic development; the prioritization of the economy in state concerns; anti-systemic and anti-establishment reactions; the technocratization of state practices; the retreat from society; the disjunction with 'nation'; the penetration of military law into the civic sphere and the internalization of war. However, there are new elements that have enabled an even more radical reconfiguration of state structures into what we, following Kapferer (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2010a, 2010b 2018), identify as the corporate state. We refer to a transmogrification of the nation state (that is, the corporate state is inherent within the structures and history of the nation state) into a new assemblage of people-state relations that radically reconfigures social life (Kapferer and Gold 2017).

Since the early 1990s, renowned authors like Zygmunt Bauman (1998), Jürgen Habermas (2001), Manuel Castells (1996) and Ulrich Beck (1999), among others, have proclaimed the crisis of statehood and predicted the possible disappearance of the nation state. Since then, theories of state weakening achieved such an outstanding popularity that they almost became a cliché. Governments from the left and right adopted these theories to justify widespread privatization campaigns. In the academic field, ideas of state weakness (Friedman 2005), failed state (Buscaglia 2013), retreat of the state (Strange 1996) and demise of the state (Dasgupta 2018) are quite popular, and rather transversal in the ideological spectrum.

Recently, Alain Badiou (2015) has provocatively observed that the Marxist theme of the 'withering away of the state' – the idea that after the eradication of the capitalist state a stateless society would be created, defined by Marx as 'free association' – has now become a key tendency of globalized capitalism. Given its transnational scope, this system has no particular interest in the subsistence of territorially based national states. These conditions, Badiou argues, generate processes of 'weakening of the state', which he identifies as a crucial tendency today.

It is irrefutable that there are transnational economic processes and institutions like markets, large corporations and supranational poles of power that transcend state jurisdiction. However, ideas of state weakening seem to be themselves influenced by the dominant economic doctrine of neoliberalism – to the point that they corroborate a conception of global economic forces as free, detached and autonomous. However, we argue, neoliberalism

is more than an economic doctrine, as it takes on an ontological force behind the reconfiguration of state structures that gives rise to the corporate state. It also appears that ideas of ‘state weakening’ tend to identify statehood with a specific configuration or typology of the state, which is currently undermined by global tendencies but does not embody or represent statehood as such.

Statehood not only transcends concrete historical forms of the state; it also plays an active and key role in the expansion of capitalism, which, according to Polanyi (2001), is facilitated by state structures tying their logic to specific territories. For Wallerstein, a system resting on unlimited accumulation needs to be grounded in ‘structural mechanisms by which those who act with other motivations are penalized in some way, and are eventually eliminated from the social scene, whereas those who act with the appropriate motivations are rewarded’ (Wallerstein 2004: 228). Thus, global capitalism needs ‘a multiplicity of states, so that [capitalist initiative] can gain the advantages of working with states but also can circumvent states hostile to their interests in favour of states friendly to their interests’ (Wallerstein 2004: 228).

We develop the idea that, rather than weakening or disappearing, a historical transmutation of statehood is under way, albeit one that was inherent in the structures of the nation state and could result in a new paradigm of the idea of the state. In his recent work, Bruce Kapferer (2010b, 2017) and Kapferer and Bertelsen (2009) articulate the problem in terms of a transition towards a ‘corporate state’, a configuration of statehood where the economic logic becomes ‘ontologically foundational, permeating all social and political relations’ (Kapferer 2010a). In the corporate state formation, the market does not exist as a separate entity, but it becomes ‘the principle of social processes’ (Kapferer 2010a). This happens under the effect of political tendencies ‘that in themselves recognize their own constitution in the dynamics of the economy and the market. The idea of . . . corporate state . . . suggests that the market and the conceptualization of the economic are not so much re-submerged in the social and the political but become their very constitution and form’ (Kapferer 2010a). Neoliberalism is the ideology of the corporate state, which makes the economic a foundational force in the formation of social worlds.

Highlighting the increasing assimilation of the dominant economic logic by the state, ‘the influence over or capture of its political executive and controlling mechanisms by corporate interests’ (Kapferer 2017), allows us to understand the two entities as akin, somehow overlapping – and not as opposing, excluding or weakening each other.

Starting from the Mexican case, Zagato (2018) identified three main related tendencies (or symptoms) of state corporatization observable through-

out Latin America. Namely, the disintegration of a sense of collectivity and public institutionality – the disappearance of what Habermas (1991) has described as the ‘public sphere’,² – an increased tendency to internal warfare, and widespread forms of dispossession related to extractivism (Zagato 2018). More concretely, in a phase of transition towards a corporate state, warfare seems to turn into a form of governance for its capacity to deeply shape realities and mould subjectivities and forms of life (see Zagato this volume). A hint of this tendency is seen in securitization policies implemented in the name of fighting terrorism. Corporatization seems to require aggressive forms of social fragmentation and the disarticulation of the state’s civil functions.

State corporatization is a global tendency. In Latin America, it has undergone a tremendous acceleration since the end of the 1980s. The ‘Washington Consensus’ promoted liberalization of the markets, economic openness and the elimination of trade barriers, reinforcing the role of market economy. Following this trend, the majority of the governments of Latin America negotiated their debt and signed asymmetrical free market treaties with the United States. Through this strategy, identified by Naomi Klein (2007) as ‘Shock Doctrine’, the United States attempted to bond Latin American societies to their economy, ensuring the free movement of capital, goods and services and the bondage of people to an indebted government through austerity policies in corporate interests. This had a decisive impact on Latin American statehood and radically shaped its societies.

Privatization and deregulation policies usually described as neoliberal are not, however, simply ‘economic’. These governmental interventions alter the structure of the state, including its territories and forms of life. For example, the free market treaty signed by Mexico involved constitutional changes in terms of land rights, which had a structural impact on territory, sovereignty and collective forms of land tenure. Such changes inaugurated the extractivist model that is currently shaping Mexican corporatization. This process has also variably affected land rights in Chile and Argentina.

State corporatization in Argentina has followed the same principle of reducing as much as possible the freedom of manoeuvre of public policies that do not pursue structural neoliberal reforms. This process covers the dictatorship phase (1976–1983) and the years between 1989 and the financial crisis of 2001, under a constitutional government. The military coup and the assassination of Allende as well as the dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile were also aimed at crushing processes of widespread politicization and the democratization of the Chilean state. This process turned Chile into an unprecedented neoliberal experiment, where state corporatization was enforced through structural adjustments that later contributed to shaping the Washington Consensus. These included the promulgation of a new constitution

facilitating denationalization and the imposition of extractivist policies and privatization (see also De la Maza Cabrera this volume). Peru under Fujimori was another instance of purposefully reformulating social and political processes through the neoliberal model under the 'Fujimori shock' (see Ødegaard this volume). An analysis of state corporatization in Latin America should always consider the priority that the region constitutes for the United States in military and economic terms. 'Weakness' and 'strength' are relative concepts when applied to a state like Mexico, for example, whose unconditional subordination to the will of the northern neighbour couples with solid internal military and oligarchic domination.

The emergence, since the early 2000s, of so-called progressive or Pink Tide governments in the region might be interpreted as an attempt at containing and limiting the effects of widespread state corporatization, through the introduction of egalitarian elements in the functioning of the corporate state. This was indeed a phase of egalitarian experimentalism at the level of governmental politics. As a general tendency, these governments reconfigured national economies through reforms that attempted to correct the negative effects of the markets, redistributing national wealth and retaking control of strategic economic sectors. This allowed them to redirect funds towards internal social policies that contributed to alleviate poverty and marginality. In Argentina, for example, following the crisis of 2001, some workers' movements took over the factories in an attempt to re-create labour relations in more egalitarian ways, away from patronage government policies and as an alternative to the docile neoliberal subject (Monteagudo 2008).

Since 2014, the fall of the prices of oil and other commodities has had a negative impact on the Latin American region.³ Its consequences have been particularly deleterious for Pink Tide governments and their social policies that depend on the sale of those natural resources. This crisis has amplified many of the critiques that were already targeting these experiences – predominantly on what concerns their reliance on extractivism as the base of national wealth. The main critique is that they failed to eradicate a persisting neocolonial model of exportation of raw materials and that there was no real attempt to radically question or dismantle the model that they were declaring to oppose (see particularly Oikonomakis this volume).

Referring to his government's experience in Bolivia, Alvaro García Linera (2006) summarizes the model as follows: 'A strong state that regulates the expansion of the industrial economy, extracting its surpluses and transferring them to the community in order to promote forms of self-organization and a typical Andean and Amazonian trading model.' He adds that 'Andean-Amazonian capitalism is the way that . . . better adapts to our reality, improving the possibilities of labour and community emancipation in

the medium term. This is why we conceive it as a temporary and transitory mechanism.’

On the one hand, the pervasiveness of this mechanism is still to be empirically demonstrated. Not just because structural change in a (single) national economic paradigm is something very complicated – even when one of the pillars of governability, the high international prices of commodities, comes down – but also because the social and ecological effects of extraction are frequently irreversible, to the extent that critical points of view consider extractivism as an authentic ‘war against the people’.

On the other hand, the use of the economic surplus by these governments to improve the living conditions of the population brought objective improvements and opened the possibility for the development of forms of egalitarian political and social organization. For instance, the Venezuelan *comunas* are radical popular experiments, in many cases independent from the state apparatus, and are meant to persist even in the case of governmental change (Ciccariello-Maher 2016). In Cuba, the increase of self-employment and cooperative ventures has also served as experiments (even while state-sanctioned) for new configurations of labour and class relations at times of severe crisis, and in often contradictory ways as egalitarian movements contesting the accumulation of resources in the hands of the state or other powerful groups (see Gold this volume).

Progressive governments of the Pink Tide could not, we argue, overcome corporatization. They merely implemented policies to limit privatization and partially redistribute national income. They introduced egalitarian elements into the structure of the state, which was however almost entirely preserved. Through access to political structures, the new right-wing⁴ parties are rapidly dismantling the social politics and the processes of regional integration that their predecessors initiated. However, an indication of the pervasiveness of the corporate state is the blurring of distinctions between governmental right and left as the interests of capital take over political ideologies. This is evident in Argentinean politics, as the Peronists – transmogrified into Kirchneristas – became a vehicle for state power but along their history have represented both social programmes and austerity measures. Early 2018 protests organized by the Venezuelan right appropriated forms of action, slogans and symbols that are typical of the left (particularly of the anti-globalization movement), projecting a very ambiguous image of themselves in appealing to ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights’.

However, crucially, the sharpest critiques to the ‘Pink Tide model’ did not come from right-wing formations but from new egalitarian tendencies embodied in groups (frequently of an indigenous background, or other minorities), who are producing different forms of collectives – that is, forms of life that go beyond corporatization because they are totally incompatible

with the state form. This is important, as it might represent a more radical response to the spread of neoliberalism, which has penetrated left and right political ideologies and amalgamated political differences under economic models of management.

The Contradictions of Egalitarianism

Latin America has undergone an intense period of crisis and transformation since the 1990s, which has seen the rise and apparent demise of what looked like alternatives to the global neoliberal model. Indigenous movements, cooperative ventures and state-led redistribution practices have represented reactions against global elites and corporate interests. Nevertheless, Latin American societies remain profoundly hierarchical (along class and race), as egalitarian movements have not completely broken up class stratification and oligarchic groups. One must not – particularly in the Latin American context – confuse egalitarianism with equality or sameness.⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville's (2003 [1835]) wishful critical conception of American democracy as guaranteeing equality of conditions does not apply to the rest of the continent. Egalitarianism as we understand it does not refer to economic or political equality nor does it stand in a dualist opposition to hierarchy, as De Tocqueville perceived.

We understand egalitarianism as the inner logic of a particular ideological form that manifests in modern issues, including nationalism (Kapferer 2012), but is also present in other movements of rupture, such as indigenous movements, anti-establishment social movements, or labour protests, for example. Kapferer does not position egalitarianism above hierarchy or vice versa; he understands hierarchy as a potentiality of egalitarianism and not a transformation of it. Dumont conceives of hierarchy as the social obverse (and underlying force) of egalitarian individualism, which he understands as the atomistic reverse of the same coin (Dumont 1992: 85). That is, egalitarianism and hierarchy define and produce each other. As a reaction to Rousseau, who saw the individual as the basic element of all value, existing prior to social relations (Rousseau 1762), Dumont instead understands value not as absolute but as given by the relation: the whole is the structure of that relation, and it grants the parts their value. Different structures are determined by their own hierarchies of value. It is the relationship between power and values or ideology that determines these structures (Dumont 1977). Hierarchy, crucially, is not understood by Dumont as power, rank or stratification but rather as a value⁶ relation within a totality (Kapferer 2010a). These hierarchical value relations encompass their own opposition, which is overcome in their very encompassment. Therefore, the totality must be in constant

redefinition, given that it is redefined in the process of encompassment of difference. Beyond what critique might be levelled at Dumont, we rescue the importance of the relational conception of egalitarianism to hierarchy,⁷ which in Latin America is crucial to understand race, class, labour and ethnic relations, in the contradictions between western egalitarian values and the different hierarchies within the American continent. The relationship between the hierarchical force of state structures and the rupturing intentions of egalitarian social movements is a key analytical focus of this collection. This crucial historical moment is witnessing the radical reconfiguration of global structures of power – which we understand in terms of corporatization. Furthermore, we warn that while egalitarianism holds a liberating promise, it can also have dehumanizing potentiality, as Rousseau had envisioned (1762).

In western history, nationalism has proven as an instance where the destructive potential of egalitarianism is realized, through particular conceptions of nation, state and person. It is important to note that the idea of the destructiveness of nationalism comes from a very western, particularly European, perspective. Nationalism in Latin America has arguably also manifested regenerating potentials: pan-Americanism, Bolivarianism and some forms of Andean nationalism. Simultaneously, however, the egalitarian potential of nationalism has also resulted in exclusionary hierarchies along class, ethnicity and political lines in the multiple military regimes that have harnessed nationalist passions.

A foundational characteristic of Euro-American egalitarian ideology is the conception of the individual as of fundamental value: autonomous and free, self-determining and a moral unit (Kapferer 2012: 15). This dates back to Hobbes and Rousseau's explorations of the nature of the individual in relation to the state. For Rousseau, the individual was a moral ideal that was to be realized as individuals freely subjecting themselves to the common good, making the political the emancipatory force of egalitarianism. Natural man, by contrast, was undifferentiated, free in an equal sense but unable to fully develop its potential (Dumont 1992: 87). The individual is at the centre of the social construction in the western egalitarian sense, and there is a constant concern that the individual not be consumed by the totality, which would cause it to lose its identity. There is indeed an unresolved friction between the ideas of freedom (more linked to the individual dimension) and equality (which necessarily anchors on collective grounds) – and which 'fraternity' attempts to somehow smoothen in the French Revolutionary motto.

Dumont's analysis of the development of the ideology of individualism in the west in *Essays on Individualism* (1992) and in *From Mandeville to Marx* (1977) reflects the historic developments that turned the medieval holistic man slowly into the ideal of the individual as imbued with value and at the

core of modern conceptions of the human in the west. Through Dumont's historic analysis, it is possible to see that egalitarianism is not so much a set of principles in themselves – these have changed throughout history as has the conception of individualism – but more specifically a reaction against confining orders, such as the Church, the state, colonial structures and aristocratic hierarchies (Dumont 1992).

The different conceptions of the self, emerging within national spaces, represent an affront to the individual of Euro-American egalitarian traditions. However, paradoxically, they are also intrinsic in the reproduction of that individual, which needs an 'other' against which to conceptualize the self. This is also the case with Marxism, the last great occidental egalitarian ideology, where individuality is subsumed into the idea of class (and class develops its subjectivity in contradiction to another class), and where the realization of egalitarianism consists in the eradication of class division. Importantly, while egalitarianism in Latin America has been influenced by western philosophical thought, it does not share to the same extent the profoundly individualistic sense of the Euro-American tradition, especially in contexts or movements shaped by indigenous cosmologies that privilege the collective over the individual.

In general, due to the weight of processes like colonialism, and the perpetuation of a regime of coloniality in the independent states, egalitarian thought and practices in Latin America have been shaped by peculiarities (and complexities) that are not always contemplated by occidental (universalist) traditions. Conventional conceptions of class and nation are frequently reductive when applied to the concrete social historical contexts of this region.

Latin American Egalitarian Thought

An obvious observation – but an important one nonetheless – is that egalitarian ideologies do not have the same content or intensity throughout the region. A distinction can be made between countries that were more rapidly industrialized and received large European immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Cuba) and those in which less European immigration and a more rural and indigenous population delayed the formation of a working class consciousness, as the proletariat was conformed by displaced indigenous people, craftsmen and farmers (Bolivia, Peru, Central America). Therefore, indigeneity, race and class radically determined egalitarian thought and struggles throughout the continent.

Early expressions of egalitarian movements in Latin America date back to indigenous forms of resistance to colonization and then to the struggle for liberation under colonial rule – a struggle to which many contemporary indigenous movements still relate. Later movements more directly linked with occidental ideologies that emerged, like the mutualist societies created in Mexico in 1872 (el Gran Círculo de Obreros) and Peru in 1884 (La Unión Universal), which emerged even before syndicates. When these emerged, the anarchic branches within them rapidly gained traction: Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA) in 1904, Federación Obrera Regional Uruguaya (FORU) in 1905, Federación Obrera Regional Brasileña (FORBE) in 1906 and la Casa del Obrero Mundial in Mexico in 1912 (Vilaboy and Chaves 2011). By the early twentieth century, the first socialist syndicates and political parties appeared (as early as 1896 in Argentina and 1906 in Chile). Juan B. Justo, the leader of the Argentinean socialist party, would become an influential forger of Latin American critical thought.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910, with its agrarian, indigenous and anti-imperialist profile, and its leader Emiliano Zapata, became central to most revolutionary struggles throughout the continent, even when its indigenous character was not always completely embraced. The Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui tried to fuse indigenous struggle with Marxist ideas in an attempt to produce an autochthonous critical thought. The influence of the Russian Revolution was strong in the Latin American left, and the ideological divisions that plagued the European struggle also crossed the Atlantic. Nicaraguan Augusto César Sandino, for example, contested the mandates of the Third International as not appropriate for the Latin American realities. Divisions between socialist and newly emerging communist parties were common in the 1930s (in Brazil, Cuba and Chile, for example), giving rise to a strong anti-imperialist character of egalitarian struggles in Latin America. Amongst the leading thinkers and militants that contributed to the formation of Latin American (Marxist-influenced) revolutionary ideologies are the Peruvian Mariátegui, the Argentinean Aníbal Ponce, the Ecuadorian Manuel Agustín Aguirre and the Cuban Julio Antonio Mella. These men, amongst others, aimed to unpack the structures that framed the life and history of Latin American peoples across the continent, not only in industrialized urban centres of the Southern Cone but also in rural, peasant and indigenous communities in the Caribbean.

The history of peasant and workers' struggles materialized in the 60s and 70s into the Cuban Revolution (1959), the Sandinista Revolution (1979) in Nicaragua, the democratic election of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970 and the short-lived revolution in Granada under Maurice Bishop. These different concretizations of egalitarian ideologies provided for Latin America the

hope that an alternative was possible – even while none of these instances represented absolute egalitarian possibilities for everybody involved. They were, however, experiments in emancipation that pushed existing political structures to the limits. The ideological propositions of the various Latin American thinkers that shaped the independence struggles of the nineteenth century and the workers and peasant struggles of the twentieth century have been taken up again in the twenty-first century by governments aiming to implement an alternative to neoliberalism. Herein lies the complication that seems to have plagued the Pink Tide governments in the last decade. The egalitarian dynamic of movements and ideas that contests the hegemonic structures and hierarchies can achieve its opposite potential (a totalitarian effect) when institutionalized in governing elites – regardless of left or right inclination. Egalitarian processes emerge as responses against different hierarchical orderings and result in the break up, even if momentarily, of those ordering structures. This did not stop egalitarian passions from taking on destructive expressions themselves, like in the Europe of the Reformation (Cohn 2004 [1957]) and in the Reign of Terror after the French Revolution (Marx 1995 [1858]). Both Cohn and Marx consider the ambiguous power of moments of crisis within which egalitarian forces break through the established structures of power.

Egalitarianism is, therefore, an ideology that determines the constitution of the person in its relationship to the state and the nation. However, it is simultaneously a dynamic of power. It describes a set of relations and ideas that define reality and are in a relation to a hierarchy of values. Equality is but one expression of egalitarianism as an ideological element, as are the French Revolution's tenants of fraternity and liberty, today expressed in the notion of freedom, the concept of which can radically vary.⁸ However, more recently, egalitarianism in the west has increasingly represented economic equality of opportunity. These are values that become ingrained in the definition of the human in western societies, strongly embedded in education systems, nationalist ideology and political and normative structures, such as human rights legislation. However, there is another element to egalitarianism that is more dynamic and perhaps emerges from its original intention as a response to totalizing powers. It is the latter that can shed light on the recent transformations in Latin America, the issue on which this collection aims to focus.

The Contributors' Arguments

The contributors to this volume consider the different responses to the further encroachment of neoliberalism, only partially regulated by the Pink

Tide. By looking at the relations between local communities and the state, these different case studies reveal the contradictions in the dynamics between egalitarian processes and the increasing power of the corporate state. Contributors discuss within their geographic location – but considering the larger regional geopolitical orders – the apparent demise of the Pink Tide as a moment of intensifying contradictions.

The chapters that compose this collection are grouped by common themes into three different sections. The first section deals with processes of corporatization related to extraction and shaped by heterogeneous political trajectories like in Mexico, Brazil and Bolivia. These contributions represent large countries with economies based on the extraction of primary resources and dependent on the global cost of commodities. They are, however, three very different national contexts, with differing colonial histories and dissimilar configurations of population. They also represent three very different settings within corporate state dynamics, as Brazil has shifted to the far right, and Bolivia is an iconic representative of the Pink Tide. However, their extractivist economies generate ripe conditions for the expansion of the corporate state, albeit to varying degrees and through multiple manifestations.

The second section focuses on states working ‘in the name of the common good’, considering contexts where egalitarian struggles aim to guarantee common goods against the privatizing tendencies of corporate states like Ecuador, Chile and Venezuela. The focus in this section is not only on state dynamics but also on other egalitarian movements that are not always within the main state spheres. The three very different contexts (Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela) show how corporate state dynamics operate in right and left-wing contexts alike. Delving into development discourse, democratic ideologies and expectations on the state, these three chapters represent how the corporate state can work against the common good by subverting democratic practices in the interest of capital.

Finally, the third section focuses on forms of social organization in the margins of the corporate state. It aims to consider the multiple expressions of social and not necessarily political organization, whose existence develops alongside the corporate state but also clashes with its general tendencies. By focusing on the cases of Cuba and Peru, this section contemplates how different social structures can also act as reservoirs for corporate logics as well as a source for their contestation. These sections represent one of many possible underpinning threads that connect the different contributions, which together offer a snapshot of a crucial historic period on the brink of transformation. While the situation that is described in these chapters has already changed, this does not invalidate the observations of the underlying dynamics that these authors consider. This is particularly significant for the cases of

Brazil and Venezuela, which have undergone the most radical changes since the authors' contributions, but the sharp analysis of Angosto-Ferrández and of Gledhill and Hita is still relevant to understand the current situation.

The different authors identify particular elements of the proliferation of the corporate state in leftist governments (like Cuba and Venezuela), the more moderate left of Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia and the right-wing governments of Chile, Mexico and Peru. They capture emerging tensions between the still powerful governing elites and the ever disenfranchised marginal populations (indigenous people, rural villages, urban poor, precarious labour, workers movements, women, etc.) in concrete ethnographic studies of the lives and struggles of ordinary people and their claims on local and national authorities to deliver their promise of emancipation.

However, despite the section groupings, the chapters in this book correlate in different ways, and common arguments are often identified by the authors in each chapter. In Peru, the development of entrepreneurial activities by indigenous people in the margins of state-sanctioned activities represents the making of a subjectivity that is not quite neoliberal, not quite traditional and supported by the resurgence of social networks and socialities of the Peruvian Andes, contesting state hierarchies (see Ødegaard). In a similar contradictory process, Cuban self-employed ventures (both cooperatives and activities in the home, influenced by matrilineal and matrifocal ties) can contest state centralization while potentially becoming corporate groups themselves, susceptible to corporatizing influences from émigré Cubans, NGOs and financial organizations providing credit, redefining revolutionary subjectivity (see Gold). From a contrasting perspective – thus one that illustrates the contradictions embedded in the processes underpinning state corporatization – Angosto-Ferrández considers the expectations of a social subject that demands the state to resist corporatizing processes and remain the representative of a collective subject against the exploitations of neoliberal political disorder.

Taking a more general perspective, Oikonomakis presents an analysis of the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) and its initially egalitarian process that managed to (at least temporarily) overturn the hierarchies of class and political power, even if it was then once again co-opted by the dynamics of the corporate state and subverted to the interests of economic elites. The situation in Ecuador is in some ways comparable to that of Bolivia, in that the current moment is revealing that the initial processes of subversion produced by Correa and his twenty-first century socialism have now been tamed by the interests of corporate elites. The case study of Ecuador Estrategico developed by Fitz-Henry and Rodriguez Quinonez reveals the contradictions between egalitarian movements and their potential to be co-opted by hierarchical powers – in this case of development discourse, legal procedures

and centralizing government organizations. De la Maza Cabrera presents an interesting contrast, given the Chilean historical association with neoliberalism, where she analyses the demands of the Mapuche indigenous community and its interconnections with environmental discourses and the co-option of these discourses by governing and economic elites in order to enable further penetration of neoliberal policies in the name of the common good. Gledhill and Hita's analysis of the Brazilian 2016 coup captures the effect on democratic processes as corporate interests undermine political structures to the detriment of social interests. In Mexico, corporatization is tightly related to the praxis of internal warfare, which facilitates the implementation of structural reforms, dispossession of communal lands and goods, social fragmentation and the formation of a disenfranchised, vulnerable and fully exploitable workforce.

Despite the different perspectives from which the contributions to this volume are tackling issues of egalitarianism and state corporatization in the Latin American continent, the historical and global nature of some of the described processes provide a point of convergence and a possible connection with similar studies to be developed in other regions. The particularity of the Latin American context has to do with the wave of left-wing governments that have shaped the region, the processes of change and political debate they made possible, and the current return of their conservative opponents into governmental positions. We are concerned with 'corporatization', the processes of structural transformation that underpin both the formation of the Pink Tide and its more recent destabilization – a process that goes beyond the alternation between left and right claims over state power. We argue that the nature of corporatization has to do with the process by which economic logic becomes ontologically foundational of social relations. This is particularly evident in a context and a time where the left has managed to establish itself in regional politics, sometimes with a strong anti-neoliberal discourse, but has failed to subvert the main tendencies brought about by corporatization and its neoliberal ideology.

Egalitarian claims and movements have developed alongside – both within and outside – these structural processes of transformation. We consider egalitarian tendencies as highly unstable and haphazard instances that might have, from time to time, an impact on hierarchical structures, managing to reshape or temporarily suspend them.

The egalitarian instances brought about by Pink Tide governments have definitely produced changes in how the field of the 'possible' might be perceived by subordinate groups (even those who were critical towards progressive governments) and in their 'empowerment' within society. Such egalitarian energies will persist and shape the actions of antagonist groups and movements in the coming future.

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NOTES

1. Operation Condor, a result of the Cold War, was an agreement established in the 1970s until the late 1980s between the different military governments in South America (Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador) and the United States, prepared by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) to suppress the emergence of leftist governments in the region (such as Salvador Allende’s government in Chile).
2. The public sphere does not correspond to the national sphere (or the sense of nation – nationalism), which tends to persist and even grow in the current phase as a spectacular and false opposition to corporatization (See Zagato’s chapter in this volume).
3. Between January 2011 and October 2015, the fall of the prices of raw materials and energy (oil, gas and carbon) was close to 50 per cent. Countries exporting hydrocarbons and metals like Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela Chile and Peru were particularly affected.
4. These are not really ‘new’ and do not respond to traditional divisions between Right and Left, as the current political landscape is characterized by the collapse in these

- distinctions and a tendency towards a moderate, but weakened, coalition that undermines the capacity of the political to enact significant and long-term changes.
5. Studies of egalitarianism based on Norwegian society (Bendixsen, Bente Bringslid and Vike 2018; Gullestad 2002) imply that it is a tendency to conceptualize people as the same and thus inherently establish exclusions based on different markers (ethnic, class, racial).
 6. The notion of value is intended here anthropologically, rather than economically.
 7. This has also been stressed by Turner in his analysis of the dialectical relation between structure and *communitas* (Turner 1969).
 8. Perhaps an interesting comparison is that between the North American conception of freedom of the individual and a Swiss understanding of liberty as a political communion, whereby citizens find their liberty in their compromise to their local community. See, for example, Frenkel (1993) for the Swiss context and Patterson (1991) for the context of freedom in the United States.

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