



WERKGEMEENSCHAP LATIJNS AMERIKA EN CARAIBISCH GEBIED

NETHERLANDS ASSOCIATION OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

## Latin America and the Caribbean: Beyond Neoliberalism?

University of Groningen, The Netherlands, November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

International Conference organized by the Netherlands Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (NALACS), in collaboration with the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) and the Centre for Mexico Studies (CEM) of the University of Groningen, and the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA).

The past three decades in Latin America and the Caribbean can be called the age of neoliberalism. The region went through a profound and multifaceted process of social transformation triggered by the adoption of neoliberalism, a worldview that privileges market solutions and individualism for a great variety of problems and challenges. As a consequence, the relationships between state, market and civil society have drastically changed. In the cultural domain, Latin America and the Caribbean have become more fully integrated into a globalized US-dominated consumerist culture, while also managing to export their share of cultural products.

However, these transformations have not eliminated some of the region's long standing features, such as the rigid class and racial stratification, the personalist and clientelist political culture, nor has it meant an end to political currents like nationalism, populism, socialism and indigenismo. At a time when the global financial and economic crisis is questioning the neoliberal paradigm, it seems appropriate to ask questions about the meaning and significance of the last three decades of neoliberalism in Latin America and the Caribbean. How profound have the social, economic, political and cultural transformations been? What are the ruptures and the continuities of the social processes of the current neoliberal era with those of the past? How should we understand the present moment? Are we witnessing a movement away from neoliberalism? How are the cultural and social changes represented in the arts, especially in literature, documentary and film? How are the Arts participating to these transformations?

Across the region, market liberalization, deregulation and privatization allowed for the emergence of regional corporate giants in several sectors, often in spatially delineated tourism or export-processing enclaves. But in terms of economic growth, stability and employment creation, neoliberalism did not fulfill its promises. With the partial exception of Chile, it has instead generated a spectacular growth of the informal sector, recurrent financial crises, increased inequalities and growing violence and insecurity, undermining the ability of the state to enforce the rule of law and protect human rights. Throughout the period, migration became a key survival strategy of ever broader sectors, who see it as the only viable option due to the lack of opportunities at home. These questions have even made their way in the regional cinema and literature. In the domain of cultural politics, the once dominant project of national identity constructed around mestizo or creole nationalism and the central state are being challenged by demands for the right to self-determination or autonomy by indigenous peoples and multicultural contestations, as well as by transnationalized identities.



university of  
 groningen

Centre for  
 Development  
 Studies

Centre for  
 Mexico  
 Studies





WERKGEMEENSCHAP LATIJNS AMERIKA EN CARAIBISCH GEBIED

NETHERLANDS ASSOCIATION OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

Opposition to neoliberal policies has been widespread but not always effective. In general, apart from some indigenous movements, traditional collective organizations, such as unions and parties, have not managed to resist the tide. Collective rights have been undermined, as the neoliberal hegemony managed to discredit collective action and celebrate individual achievement. Unionization has for instance been extremely difficult in export-processing zones in Central America and the Caribbean. Some authors have pointed to the rise of a depoliticizing individualistic consumerist culture that characterizes the experience and ambitions of most sectors of society. Others have celebrated the re-emergence of social, cultural and ethnic movements as new responses that not only challenge neoliberalism but also the traditional state-centric politics, by building power within civil society and re-inventing cultural practices.

Organized popular responses to neoliberalism have varied from acceptance and accommodation to riots and uprising, and recently from successful cycles of protest to the election left-wing political coalitions in several countries. But is the election of left-wing coalitions a real challenge to neoliberal hegemony? How are these new movements related to past movements? Where some might see a triumph of market society combined with a profound process of social dissolution and class fragmentation, others detect a promising trend of re-politicization proposing alternative development models, headed by movements such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, the Piqueteros and the Occupied Factories movement in Argentina, the Landless in Brazil, and indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants across the region. What is certain is that the increased mobility of populations, the new cultural movements and the changing forms of doing politics are challenging conventional understandings of culture, identity, nationality, and citizenship.

This conference seeks to explore the current neoliberal conjuncture in Latin America and the Caribbean in the light of its historical legacies and contemporary trends. We invite interdisciplinary panel and individual paper proposals on the following three clusters:

1. Neoliberal sectoral reforms, public policy and state restructuring
2. Responses and resistances to neoliberalism
3. Artistic, cultural and ideological transformations in the era of (or beyond) neoliberalism

We welcome panel proposals that include representatives of NGOs or social movements. Unfortunately, funds for the conference do not allow us to provide funding for travel and accommodation expenses (a list of affordable hotels will be provided to the accepted panelists). Registration to the conference is free of charge and the language of the conference is English, but we will consider panel and paper proposals in Spanish.

Please fill in the attached form, make sure you mention the language of your presentation and send your panel proposals or proposal for individual paper to the coordinator of the organizing committee:

Dr. Leandro Vergara-Camus, CDS, University of Groningen, [l.a.vergara@rug.nl](mailto:l.a.vergara@rug.nl) before **June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010**.



university of  
 groningen

Centre for  
 Development  
 Studies

Centre for  
 Mexico  
 Studies

