



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Montclair State University
**Montclair State University Digital
Commons**

Department of Political Science and Law
Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works

Department of Political Science and Law

1-1-2017

The Contribution of Hugo Chávez to An Understanding of Post-Neoliberalism

Tony Spanakos
Montclair State University, spanakost@montclair.edu

Dimitris Pantoulas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/polysci-law-facpubs>



Part of the [Law Commons](#), [Legal Studies Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

MSU Digital Commons Citation

Spanakos, Tony and Pantoulas, Dimitris, "The Contribution of Hugo Chávez to An Understanding of Post-Neoliberalism" (2017). *Department of Political Science and Law Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works*. 37.

<https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/polysci-law-facpubs/37>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Political Science and Law at Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Political Science and Law Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@montclair.edu.

The Contribution of Hugo Chávez to an Understanding of Post-Neoliberalism

by

Anthony Petros Spanakos and Dimitris Pantoulas

When Hugo Chávez was president, he pronounced the death of many things—the constitution, the old “partyarchy,” Venezuela’s “Fourth Republic,” and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, among others. Since his own death in 2013, scholars, activists, and citizens have contributed to a rich discussion of his legacy. Part of that legacy is an understanding of post-neoliberalism that recognizes its competing and contradictory components, some of them seeking to complement, improve, and reverse neoliberal policies or overcome neoliberal logics and others constituting important remnants of neoliberalism.

Durante su presidencia, Hugo Chávez declaró la muerte de muchas cosas: la constitución, el viejo “partiarquía,” la Cuarta República de Venezuela y el Tratado de Libre Comercio de las Américas, entre otros. Desde su muerte en 2013, un grupo variado de estudiosos, activistas y ciudadanos ha llevado a cabo una rica discusión sobre su legado. Una parte importante de su legado es el entender que el post-neoliberalismo tiene componentes contrapuestos y contradictorios, y reconocer que algunos de ellos buscan complementar, mejorar y revertir las políticas neoliberales o superar la lógica neoliberal y otros importantes vestigios constituyentes del neoliberalismo.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Post-neoliberalism, Citizenship, Chávez, Venezuela

When he was first sworn into office in 1999, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez swore on the “moribund constitution” that Venezuela would be reborn through a new constitution (Krauss, 1999). In the 14 years in which he was president, he pronounced the death of many things—the constitution of 1961, the old “partyarchy,” Venezuela’s “Fourth Republic,” and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, among others. Since his own death in 2013, scholars, activists, and citizens have contributed to a rich discussion of his legacy. This essay offers a contribution to this dialogue by considering one of Chávez’s favorite subjects, neoliberalism, through the prism of Venezuelan politics in the past two decades. Given the vitriol with which Chávez attacked neoliberalism, one might expect a fairly straightforward legacy for the former president on this issue,¹ but neither he nor neoliberalism is susceptible to simplistic analysis. Indeed, the rise of Latin America’s left—of which Chávez was a very important figure—demonstrates

Anthony Petros Spanakos is an associate professor of political science and law at Montclair State University. He is coeditor (with Mauricio J. Font and others) of *Reforming Brazil* (2004) and (with Francisco Panizza) of *Conceptualising Comparative Politics* (2015). Dimitris Pantoulas is a visiting researcher at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración and a political analyst based in Caracas. He has conducted academic research on institutional innovation during the Chávez era and since 2012 has participated in the international observation of various electoral processes. The authors would like to thank Steve Ellner and Dan Hellinger for their comments.

LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 212, Vol. 44 No. 1, January 2017, 37–53

DOI: 10.1177/0094582X16658242

© 2016 Latin American Perspectives

consensus on the value of post-neoliberalism and considerable disagreement about what it should look like.

Understanding post-neoliberalism to be an open and contested semantic terrain that—along with neoliberalism—has more rhetorical than analytical value, this essay highlights four overlapping spaces within post-neoliberalism. Post-neoliberalism may be “post-” in that it (1) follows neoliberalism temporally and attempts to correct and/or broaden it, (2) aims to go beyond neoliberalism in the way it conceives of politics and the state, (3) seeks to create an utterly new ontological and/or ideological project, and (4) includes spaces where neoliberalism remains significant if not dominant. This typology attempts to characterize the ideas, words, and actions of post-neoliberal political actors across Latin America, giving priority to the distinct ways in which such actors have positioned themselves (Schaffer, 1998).

WHAT IS NEOLIBERALISM/POST-NEOLIBERALISM?

Harvey’s (2005) critique of neoliberalism invites scholars to consider problematics within it. The apparent crisis of neoliberalism in the developed world seems to draw on political contestation that may have first emerged in Latin America (see Coronil, 2011). Most examinations of the initial scholarship on the subject focus on the rise of the new left and what it has done in power (Ellner, 2012), although there is increasing attention to questions of “post-neoliberalism” (Arditi, 2008; Grugel and Riggirozzi, 2012; Yates and Bakker, 2013).

“Post-neoliberalism” is no easy thing to define. Panizza (2009) discusses the various ideas, actors, and structures that contributed to a post-Washington Consensus but avoids defining it. In studying the contentious politics that sought to arrest and correct trends toward the commodification of land, labor, and capital, Silva (2009) avoids defining not only post-neoliberalism but neoliberalism itself. Coronil’s (2011) essay linking the 2008 financial crisis and the possible futures of the Latin American left defines neoliberalism only by its outcomes (a shrunken welfare state, greater inequality, more social polarization). If there is a post-neoliberalism for Coronil, it is some mixture of clarity about the need to be anti-neoliberal and ambiguity about the direction in which society should move (see also Lomnitz, 2006). Peck, Theodore, and Brenner (2012) are uncomfortable speaking of post-neoliberalism, preferring to study “neoliberalization,” which is unevenly distributed spatially and assumes hybrid forms.

Thus, there are many reasons to avoid defining post-neoliberalism, the most obvious being the difficulty of defining neoliberalism. Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) reviewed 148 journals discussing neoliberalism published between 1990 and 2004 and found that almost 70 percent did not even give a summary definition of neoliberalism. Beyond this, they found that the term was unevenly used in the literature and generally applied to many different phenomena (policies of economic reform, a holistic development model, an ideology, or even an academic paradigm).

The problem of definition is endemic in the social sciences, where most key concepts are “fuzzy” (Schmitter, 2009). Democracy, neoliberalism, populism,

and legitimacy, among other terms, are regularly invoked by scholars and political actors in multiform ways. This leaves scholars with two possibilities: crafting a concept with as few components as possible to eliminate ambiguity (Schedler, 2010) and recognizing that the inconsistency in the concept is fundamental to its capacity to represent real-world phenomena and motivate political action (Freedon, 2004). This essay takes the latter approach, giving preference to the multiple ways actors have used differing elements of the concept of post-neoliberalism in their communication and action.

Like other key political concepts, “neoliberalism” seldom exists in its pure form but coexists with other discourses embedded in economic and political institutions. It should therefore be conceived not as a closed totality of ideas diffused across nations and through time but rather as “a loosely connected set of concepts, distinctions and arguments that gained meaning as they were articulated and then stabilized in specific ways, depending on the particular discursive and political contexts in which this occurred” (Panizza, 2009: 9). It has been both a utopian project with a grand vision and a practical piecemeal political process. This is why it is so important to contextualize neoliberalism and post-neoliberalism. Indeed, Panizza’s preference is to think of neoliberalism not only as a set of policies but as “an ideational frame . . . in a loose set of beliefs associated with *laissez-faire* capitalism.”

Challenges to neoliberalism that claim to be post- and/or anti-neoliberal share certain characteristics even though they channel protests through locally meaningful modes and institutions and use discourses of rebellion appropriate to the subnational and national issues at stake (Ellner, 2012; Silva, 2009). Often using language that claims to be socialist, they are characterized as neostructuralist and extractivist (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013), anti-neoliberal but still capitalist (French, 2009).

Grugel and Riggirozzi (2012) find that the term “post-neoliberalism” is most meaningful in terms of understanding changes in the way citizenship is conceived—the deepening of democracy and the socialization of citizen-market relations. Yates and Bakker (2013) offer an excellent ground-up analysis of post-neoliberalism in Latin America. This essay departs from theirs in a few important ways. First, whereas for Yates and Bakker post-neoliberalism is a rejection of neoliberalism, we argue that “inclusive neoliberalism” (the effort to improve it) is part of post-neoliberalism and that excluding it would disqualify the demands and changes in Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil and perhaps elsewhere. Second, whereas Yates and Bakker recognize that neoliberalism persists, they do not include it in post-neoliberalism, but we suggest that it continues to offer meaningful logics to various actors despite their operating in a “post”-neoliberal environment. Yates and Bakker recognize this in their reading of Brazil under the Workers’ Party (see also Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013), but their conceptualization of post-neoliberalism does not allow for such potentially contradictory tensions. For Bebbington and Bebbington (2011), many “post-neoliberal” governments continue to exercise neoliberal policies in the extraction of natural resources and therefore cannot truly be so called.

Grugel and Riggirozzi and Yates and Bakker focus on new state-society-market relations that aim at a more social economy and a greater role for the state and local political groups in defining democracy. This is indeed

fundamental, but it does not distinguish traditional state-driven efforts (often funded by extraction and/or high commodity prices) to empower citizens and encourage participatory innovation in the present political institutional framework from more ambitious efforts to rethink political ontologies. Yates and Bakker hint at such a distinction when they confess that *sumak kawsay* (living well) is not entirely anti-neoliberal, but they do not believe that it constitutes an additional category within post-neoliberalism. We do.

In the new typology we propose, “post-neoliberalism” may, first, be “post-” in that it follows neoliberalism temporally and, with differing levels of awareness and incisiveness, recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of neoliberal-inspired policies and aims to complement and correct them. It sees neoliberalism as incomplete and in need of either a second or a third generation of reforms (Krueger, 2000) or an extension of benefits to a broader class of beneficiaries (Stallings and Peres, 2000). It recognizes the value of the price stability and the improved export profile brought by neoliberalism but aims to correct its economic concentration, trade imbalances, and capital account vulnerabilities (Ocampo, 2011). This post-neoliberalism softens the rougher edges of neoliberal policies in an effort to institutionalize its administrative mechanisms. Overall, it aims to maintain price stability while encouraging growth and reducing macro- and microeconomic vulnerabilities. It relies on a notion of politics as administration that favors expertise and a continued distinction between government and citizens.² This approach is associated with readings of Chile’s Concertación governments (Castañeda, 2006; Navia, 2010).

Second, “post-neoliberalism” may refer to a politics that is beyond neoliberalism. Here “politics” is invoked not as mere administration but as a space of representation, agency, and autonomy. This approach to post-neoliberalism does not aim to correct, complete, or complement the politics of the neoliberal era. It holds that neoliberal politics fetishizes problem solving, does not give enough attention to building community and agency, and reduces the state to an impotent referee. In contrast to the previous approach, this one emphasizes the impact of globalization in reducing the autonomy of the state. Grugel and Riggirozzi (2012: 4) refer to “an evolving attempt to develop political economies that are attuned to the social responsibilities of the state whilst remaining responsive to the demands of ‘positioning’ national economies in a rapidly changing global political economy.” While its relationship with neoliberalism is contentious, post-neoliberalism still operates within a space that favors state capitalism. Exemplary of this sort of post-neoliberal politics is a project that leverages extraction to recover the sovereignty lost during the neoliberal era, defend the socially and economically vulnerable and marginal, endorse a more powerful government to rebalance power relations in society and create public wealth (through nationalizations), and encourage social justice. As Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera explains, “the state is the main wealth generator in the country. That wealth is not valorized as capital; it is redistributed through society through bonuses, rents, direct social benefits to the population, the freezing of utility rates and basic fuel prices, and subsidies to agricultural production” (quoted in Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013: 83).

Third, “post-neoliberalism” may be ontological and/or ideological. Here politics is neither about administering public goods nor about reimagining the

link between state and citizen but about reconceiving the worlds that political actors inhabit. In this view, politics institutes the process of changing politics itself, destroys the distinction between ruler and ruled, and not only takes stewardship of public goods out of the hands of experts and places it in the hands of the multitude (with or without institutions) but reconceives the notions of “public” and “good.” It insists on both holding constituent assemblies and maintaining constituent power as an open source of political legitimacy (Azzellini and Sitrin, 2014; Negri, 2009). It reconfigures institutions and makes the street a—perhaps *the*—legitimate or legitimating space of politics (Spanakos 2015). It offers no clear economic policy prescriptions but establishes new moral categories. Seeing politics in terms of *sumak kawsay* is somewhat representative of this approach in that it calls for an entirely new way of looking at the relation between politics and place, one that must be expressed in Quechua and can only be *translated* into Spanish. It offers not simply a set of policies but a fundamentally new reality that is at odds with neoliberalism as an ontological project. While such “anti-developmental and decolonial disputes have the least public presence in Venezuela” they are not absent (Azzellini and Sitrin, 2014; Escobar, 2010). They are an important part of the justification for many of the demands of the previously “excluded” and contribute to a plastic institutional-ity that favors constituent power over constituted power (see Spanakos, 2013).

Finally, within “post-neoliberalism” there is neoliberalism—preference for efficient governments, mistrust of state machinery, concern that political rents will distort markets, interest in “getting the prices right.” In neoliberalism efficiency is understood in terms of minimizing possible costs through marketization rather than maximizing social good (see Johnson, 1982). Thus the shift away from neoliberalism does not mean the elimination of any particular policy, framework, or mode of reasoning. Despite the remarkable popularity he achieved during and since his second term as president, Lula da Silva’s first term in office (if not his second) often followed neoliberal logics (Burbach, Fox, and Fuentes, 2013; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005). There were some noteworthy places where his government was more progressive and supported alternatives to neoliberalism, but his government was correctly praised by the International Monetary Fund for its commitment to “achievable” fiscal surplus targets, and this gained credibility for his policy-making team in the eyes of investors in Brazil’s capital markets (see Sola, 2006; Spanakos and Renno, 2009). The long-time Brazilian activist Emir Sader (2011: 43) writes that Lula may have been a “supreme administrator of neoliberalism.” It is significant that Lula governed not in the 1980s or early 1990s but at the time of the World Economic Forum and the World Social Forum. Post-neoliberalism is capable of straddling these two worlds.

THE MANY FACES OF POST-NEOLIBERALISM IN VENEZUELA

BROADENING AND IMPROVING NEOLIBERALISM

Ever since the 1998 campaign in which an anti-neoliberal but moderately neostructuralist and participatory agenda was favored by candidate Hugo

Chávez, Chávez made a clear effort in rhetoric and politics to correct and tame “savage neoliberalism.” Responding to the consequences of globalization, Chávez explained, would require “profound changes” in the “corporate-economic world” such as a shift toward “the possibility of a new capitalism with a social and environmental sensibility” (Chávez, 2005). Yet, the first Chávez government (1999–2000) did not offer a political economic plan consistent with its radical political discourse. Instead, it was defined more by what it opposed (American imperialism and savage neoliberalism) than by a positive agenda (Gott, 2008: 1356).

Buxton (2003) argues that Chávez’s policies were aimed primarily at challenging the party-centric political system of the Punto Fijo period (beginning with the elite-pact-organized first democratic government in 1958). Rather than conforming to a radical political economy agenda, she argues, the new administration was largely responding to the organized resistance to the new government of the main actors of *puntofijismo* (political actors, business, and organized labor). Indeed, even in his inaugural speech Chávez (1999) explained, “Our project is not statist. Neither is it extreme neoliberalism. No, we are looking for an intermediate point, as much state as is necessary and as much market as is possible.” Building on this vision, Chávez argued for a mixed economic model that emphasized state activity in order to restore the “balance” between state and market, particularly in strategic state sectors where he felt neoliberal restructuring had gone too far (oil, mining, heavy natural resources industry, and military high technology).

The national economic and social development plan for 2001–2007, launched as political tensions were intensifying, offered a first break from the past but was neither purely neoliberal nor clearly anti-neoliberal (PDESN, 2001). Rather, it could easily be read as a Polanyian double movement correcting the perceived excesses of neoliberalism (Silva, 2009). It denounced the structural problems of the past, especially the rentist character of the economy, and proposed developing a more productive and export-oriented one. This program involved leveraging macroeconomic stability and fiscal prudence to procure foreign and national investment that would diversify economic production and reintegrate the country into the global economy (PDESN, 2001: 16–17). The state would maintain its right to protect sectors of national industry and agriculture in the event that they faced unfair competition and preserve its presence in the strategic sectors of the economy (13) but had to become more efficient and productive (17). Despite calls for increased production and efficiency, the plan emphasized social justice. The basic outline was consistent with the plans promoted by the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean for a “balance between the State and the market established by Latin American neostructuralism . . . ‘a strategy of free market aided by the government’” (Sunkel, 1993: 394).

Increased state spending was one of the more visible consequences of this approach. Social spending increased as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) from 11.34 percent in 1998 to 16.7 percent in 2001 and 18.1 percent in 2004. The bulk of this increase was in public education and health, which at their nadir in 1996 received 2.9 percent and 1.5 percent of public investment, respectively, increasing to 6 percent and 3.2 percent by 2004. The

increase in social spending was juxtaposed with a diminished priority on balancing fiscal accounts, which were in deficit from 1999 until 2004 (ranging from -1.7 percent to -4.4 percent of GDP). Underlying the increase in public spending were two concerns: improving the conditions of Chávez's poor base and recovering the state's capacity to deliver welfare to its citizens. Neither of these goals was particularly revolutionary, and in many ways they represented a continuation of the social democratic and neostructural approaches that were typical of Venezuelan politics for much of the second half of the twentieth century.

As did many others in the region, Chávez understood political and economic marginality as being connected, and he felt that the state played a critical role in inclusion and incorporation. Although the Chávez governments became more radical over time (Buxton, 2009; Ellner, 2008), neostructural approaches persisted, among them his efforts to formalize the informal market in 2007. The informal street vendors (*buhoneros*), unrepresented by Punto Fijo politics, were natural Chávez supporters. While neoliberals saw informal-sector workers as proof of the inefficiency of bloated states, Chávez's response was typical of neostructural and social democratic efforts to improve neoliberal systems. The 2001 development plan discussed the need to incorporate the informal sectors into the formal sector to reduce transaction costs while offering low tax rates and professional training to facilitate informal-sector-worker compliance (PDESN, 2001: 71). By 2007 Chávez, through an executive decree pronounced on his weekly television show, *Aló Presidente*, sought to remove street vendors from key intersections and install them in shopping mall complexes where they would be able to sell their wares more formally. The idea was to use the state to include groups that were seen as "excluded." This plan was by no means novel, and elements of formalization had been articulated by previous politicians and governments. Setting aside the reasons for street vendors' resistance in 2007, what is relevant here is that the approach of the Chávez government was consistent with efforts to fill in the gaps of neoliberalism. This was not an anti-neoliberal strategy. Rather, Chávez was trying to redeem capitalism by making it more inclusive. The problem was not capitalism as much as informality, which in this case was to be resolved by capitalism moderated by state intervention.

The inclusion of the informal vendors in the formal sector underpinned another trend that persisted during the Chávez era: consumerism. The revolutionary rhetoric of a society based on values of social inclusion, solidarity, and equality maintained a somewhat uneasy relation with an economy based on imports and commerce in which market relations prevailed. By the time that Chávez decided to include street vendors in the formal sector, trade and consumption had been increasing significantly for many consecutive years; private final consumption expenditure reached a historic high in 2008 (BCV, 2011: 129), indicating that more Venezuelans (and especially the poor) had access to goods but at the same time the economy was becoming less productive and more dependent on oil rent for imports. In this context the concern of the state was to incorporate the street vendors into the formal sector by giving them incentives to continue operating in the commercial sector as was outlined in the development plan.

GOING BEYOND NEOLIBERALISM

As Grugel and Riggirozzi (2012) suggest, what is most characteristic of post-neoliberalism is a form of citizenship that aims to go beyond neoliberalism's emphasis on "social participation" (Ellner, 2012). Perhaps most representative of these efforts is the communal council, which first appeared in public life in 2002 as local forms of sociopolitical organization and became part of national public administration by decree in April of 2006. The decree tied the communal councils to the presidency but was not clear about their relations to other components of the national and municipal administration.

Although there had been a number of attempts both before and under the Chávez governments to "democratize democracy" through greater participation (Goldfrank, 2011), the communal councils were considered by Chávez and others as a deliberate effort to reconfigure the geography of power in a way that would empower a "protagonistic" democracy.³ A group of 150-400 families in urban areas (20 in rural and 10 for Indigenous groups) needed to function as councils—filling out paperwork, applying for recognition, setting up boards, and holding elections—before they could be recognized and become eligible to receive state funding. The councils were to decide on, design, and execute projects related to the community's organization and connect the community with the central government's social policies (such as overseeing the local distribution of goods to families, the creation of educational and sport facilities, and the management of water and sewage). Their primary goal was to make citizens protagonists of their lives by giving them the right and the mechanisms to participate directly in local decision making and action in a very broadly conceived sphere of political and social life. However, their participatory nature often created tensions with governmental organizations; the logic of organization between state's representative institutions and hierarchical bureaucracy was in clear contrast with the democratic, participatory, and horizontal logic of the councils.

The failed constitutional reform of 2007 had proposed giving "popular power" constitutional equivalency to the municipal, state, and national governments: "The people are the depositories of sovereignty and exercise it directly via popular power. This is not born of suffrage or any election but of the condition of the human groups that are organized as the base of the population." Popular power was to be organized and expressed via various different local, social, and working councils (Wilpert, 2007). Some scholars argued that this was consistent with the organization of power in the Paris Commune and Marxist visions of direct democracy (Muhr, 2012).

Although more radical groups within Chavismo (which Ellner [2012] associates with anarchism) see the communal councils as spaces of authentic "constituent power," which is contrasted with the power of the community council, this is partially the result of central government transfers of money and recognition (see Azzellini, 2010; Ciccariello-Maher, 2013). The idea is for citizenship to be broadened (by extension into previously depoliticized spaces) and deepened (as more citizens directly participate in actions that impact their lives). The state is to be used to spur such citizenship, but participation is expected to be external to the state and the elected administration.

The intention here is not to romanticize the communal councils or to suggest that they consistently meet their goals (see García-Guadilla, 2007). Rather, it is

only to highlight that they were designed primarily to build a robust form of local citizenship. They do not promote an improvement or extension of neoliberal citizenship but aim at its replacement with a more vigorous form characterized by a broad sense of the political, deep local participation, and state intervention—in other words, a form of citizenship that goes beyond neoliberalism.

NEW POLITICAL ONTOLOGIES

Critics and supporters alike agree that during the presidencies of Hugo Chávez the practice and experience of politics changed significantly. This has often been interpreted in terms of possible regime change (see Corrales and Penfold, 2011; McCoy and Myers, 2004), but it may be more fruitful to think of it in terms of a change in citizenship. Indeed, “one of the most important legacies of Chávez may be that the new form of citizenship he promotes shapes how citizenship is understood within Venezuela and other countries in the decades to come” (Spanakos, 2008: 522). The protagonistic citizenship he envisioned was repeatedly expressed as a response to the neoliberal citizenship of the Fourth Republic.⁴ Whereas neoliberal citizenship has been characterized by tendencies to see citizenship in terms of voluntarism, political but not economic/social rights, and individualism and consumption (see Lechner, 2007; Yashar, 2007), under Chávez both opposition and supporters began to think of citizenship differently. This was not simply a matter of improving neoliberalism or replacing it with a more developmentalist, state-centered citizenship but a wholesale effort to see the citizen and politics in a new way.

As Fernandes (2010) notes, the Bolivarian project has always involved not just political and economic but also cultural components. Rather than simply a matter of facilitating inclusion for certain groups (Afro-Venezuelans, indigenous groups, women) it has been part of a broader effort to build a new citizenship. Chávez’s constant invocation of history “from the perspective of the social and popular movements,” a collection of struggles with protagonists explicitly identified as heroic, is illustrative of this (Rein, 2012: 295). The effort to include the struggle of previously marginal citizens in history gives a central normative role to street politics and the struggle against powerful interests. While this clearly serves as a means of encouraging sympathy among the underrepresented, it is part of a broader project to (re)politicize citizenship. Indeed, whether in mass marches in public squares or in constant discussion of politics, since Chávez’s first electoral victory in 1998 Venezuelans have thought of citizenship as an activity from which one could not withdraw. Citizenship necessitated making political choices—even if it was to be neither Chavista nor opposition—and had consequences that were not limited to the political realm narrowly construed.

The emphasis on activity relies on a fundamental reshaping of the prevailing notion of citizenship. Whereas an effort to deepen or correct neoliberal citizenship might be characterized by programs to complement market forces or to involve the state more directly in citizenship-enabling practices (such as improved law enforcement and the addition of ombudsmen), Chávez’s legacy is not limited to such ideas. It is more confrontational with than complementary to previous modes of citizenship. Between 1986 and 1998 public figures privileged technical expertise in public affairs, and between 1958 and 1994

(possibly 1998) decision making was primarily produced by and within parties and then communicated publicly. After 1999, political communication and decision making became more “public” in that they involved more people, more public places, and more popular language and reasoning. Of course, many decisions were top-down, but what was remarkable was that the “street,” the public plaza, and many other places were dominated by political discussion and organizing—that people normally alienated from politics felt that they had become agents (Spanakos, 2008).

In addition to the framing of politics largely by technically trained experts, neoliberal citizenship relied on rights that were invoked only when they were challenged. Under the assumption of universal applicability of legal status, neoliberal citizenship assumes that the state need only defend the rights of citizens, rights that are contained in constitutional and legal statutes. For Chávez, citizenship relied upon not only struggle but also regular invocations of the existence of rights by people who felt that their rights were constrained. Personal testimony of the way a previous government (and periodically a poorly managed Chavista agency or municipality) had abused such rights was a recurring theme in *Aló Presidente* and other pro-Bolivarian productions. Here citizenship involved not invoking rights when they were threatened but reminding the public of past violations of rights whose existence could not be guaranteed solely by constitutional decree. Remembering past restrictions on citizenship became fundamental to citizenship’s politicization. For all the comical portrayals of *Aló Presidente*, Chávez’s occupation of the airwaves on Sundays, his constant travels throughout the country, and the popular language he used made politics unavoidable. Respondents asked whether and how often they spoke of politics generally laughed before replying, “All the time” or “Is there anything else?”, this sense that politics is “all” or at least always present a decade and a half later was largely shared by those who supported and those who opposed Chávez as well as those who identified themselves as neither.

In that sense politics is not a vocation for some or a lifestyle chosen but part of life for everyone. One may decline to participate, militate, or even discuss, but one cannot avoid the participation, demonstrations, or discussions of others. As one teacher in Barquisimeto (quoted in Spanakos, 2008: 528) expressed it,

The process has affected the ordinary citizen. Never before has there been so much protagonism in the political process. Here the people were mute; they voted and went home. . . . Now you are not only an observer of politics, you are participating in politics. . . . Now [the people] think, “I am a protagonist in my own process.”

Members of the opposition expressed similar sentiments. Indeed, virtually all the subjects interviewed—regardless of political preference, education, class, or any other marker—responded that they talked about politics “all the time” or “daily.”

In addition to politics’s attaching itself to the way the Venezuelans not only practice citizenship but understand their lives, citizenship has taken on new spatial dimensions. Although the Chávez governments have been heavily critiqued for their vague desire to change the geography of power, for their efforts

at decentralization, and for their relationship with institutions more broadly (see Corrales and Penfold, 2011; Goldfrank, 2011), the area of politics has changed in very visible ways. Caracas and other urban areas contain countless formally and informally commissioned political murals and graffiti. The citizen who walks through the city cannot avoid politicizing messages. Similarly, the missions set up offices that are designed to be spaces for both the community and the government, not simply neutral state institutions. During one event in which many governmental services were offered to residents in Petare, a government official interviewed at a Barrio Adentro mission said proudly, "Now the institutions are in the street" (quoted in Spanakos, 2008: 528). This commonly expressed refrain is representative of a new way of seeing the geography of the city, one in which the political and the state are present and the citizen has the right and the obligation to contribute to both. This is not an improved neoliberal citizen or simply a return to a more state-centric matrix but an effort (not without problems and contradictions, of course) to develop something new and distinct.

THE PERSISTENCE OF NEOLIBERAL THINKING

Finally, post-neoliberalism coexists with politics and thought associated with neoliberalism. Fernandes (2010: 25) is especially keen in detecting this, examining the "complex dynamics of power and contestation as urban social movements clash with the instrumental rationalities of the post-neoliberal state" and finding a surprising presence of what she calls neoliberal governmentality in Bolivarian Venezuela. Indeed, her book identifies a recurring struggle between social movements, with their "place-based consciousness, historical memory, and oral narrative to justify claims over public space and access to resources," and administrators "who deploy instrumental and qualitative approaches in their management of community-based programs and organizations" (233). That both supported Chávez, for Fernandes, was a sign not only of plurality within the movement but of the persistence of neoliberal rationality in governmental administration even when it was controlled by anti-neoliberal politicians. Although supporters write off administrative conservatism as a reactionary bureaucratic response of the "internal opposition" or of people not yet on board with twenty-first-century socialism, and critics see this as proof that beyond the smoke, mirrors, and rhetoric not much has changed, neoliberal governmentality is still important in Bolivarian Venezuela. This should not come as a surprise, given the "stickiness" of the institutional patterns that constrain otherwise apparently significant and transformative political developments (see Skocpol and Pierson, 2002; Thelen and Steinmo, 1992).

Early in his first administration, President Chávez surprised many observers by adopting a relatively moderate, if not careful, macroeconomic approach, retaining for a short period the finance minister appointed by the previous president, Rafael Caldera, Maritza Izaguirre. Although this was strategic behavior, moderating in the area of macroeconomics while posing a more radical political agenda (in the form of a constituent assembly and broad enabling powers), and the planned privatizations were eventually abandoned, it fit within neoliberal assumptions about policy constraints and tradeoffs in a tough

moment for Venezuelan crude oil prices. Deputy Finance Minister Jesús Bermúdez (2002) demonstrated the acceptance of neoliberalism when there was “no alternative,” explaining:

We hope to control this [economy’s contraction] with a privatization and concessions plan that has already begun. PDVSA has started by offering gas concessions to investors. PDVSA will have to take a 51 percent share in the first concession, but in the following ones the private investors can take 100 percent shares, and this includes foreign companies, which are likely to be the main investors.

The declarations of Bermúdez (who was later accused of corruption) were representative neither of all supporters nor of all members of the government in 2002, but that is precisely the point. Within a broad post-neoliberal coalition, particularly in moments of crisis, actors inside the government returned to a neoliberal toolkit to resolve recurrent problems. Despite the president’s declaration of the death of neoliberalism, it survived in actors that occupied some important positions in his governments.

The high-profile spending on missions and other sociopolitically oriented projects did not truly take off until after the failed coup in 2002 and the oil strike in 2003 and also, critically, after petroleum prices (globally) had opened up spaces for policy autonomy (see Weyland, 2011). Despite the immediate damage to key supporters and challenges for redistribution, the Chávez government also oversaw devaluations of the bolivar at moments in which “there was no alternative,” an expression associated with neoliberal governmentality that presents the rationality of the speaker as the only one that is viable (see Panizza and Philip, 2013).

Whereas the constraints imposed by material conditions (say, petroleum prices) might be explained by something other than neoliberal administrative techniques, it is harder to argue this for political matters. One of the repeated demands of Chavismo has been for a more participatory democracy, and critics have found the government inconsistent, particularly over time, on this matter (see Goldfrank, 2011; López and Lander, 2011). Fernandes (2010) notes that while the Bolivarian governments have increased cultural funding, actively supported public and community media, recognized marginalized sectors of society, and critiqued neoliberalism (all elements of a broad post-neoliberal agenda), they continue to employ neoliberal governmentality even in the administration of anti-neoliberal programs. The community councils are seen as a fundamental space for the transformation of geographies of power and for establishing constituent power among the people, but they require government recognition, which means responding to logics that activists often consider bureaucratic, managerialist, and neoliberal.

For many of the people of the base who believe that movement politics are at the root of the Bolivarian Revolution (“We created Chávez,” in the words of one of Ciccariello-Maher’s [2013] informants), the idea of boards is antithetical to the more organic assemblies that characterize their politics. Indeed, long-term neighborhood-association activists often find the structure of community councils yet another top-down state form that limits their autonomy and democratic potential. Similarly, state agencies and officials often have predetermined

views on issues that contradict the views of the communities, such as the case of cultural production during the Bolivarian Revolution (Fernandes, 2010: 144–148). In many cases, people see their decision-making processes as revolutionary, plastic, creative, and in constant confrontation with state agents who are arteriosclerotic, conservative, and neoliberal.

Fernandes discusses a typical case in which a middle-class government official met with community activists to discuss cultural production. Although the government view was that culture was locally produced by “the people,” the facilitator, having divided the activists into groups and heard the reports of each, framed their comments in a pre-packaged notion of cultural production. It was as though culture produced by the people were the result of a mandate from above rather than a response to activity from below. More troubling still was that recognition of the producers required meeting the requirements of the administration (a board of directors, etc). The irony of the organic production of revolutionary art’s being stymied by the same government that praises it is significant.

The concern about survivals of neoliberalism among political activists within Bolivarianism has been accentuated since the death of Chávez. Many activists at the base level fear that the post-Chávez PSUV and government leadership are moving toward greater centralization and institutionalization—that they are returning politics to the technically trained bureaucrats and elected officials. This means a decided movement against the creative and more free-flowing politics of the street (post-neoliberalism as ontological project), and this has important implications for the legitimacy that key support groups accord the government. In August of 2013, the candidates for the PSUV municipal elections were announced. Dario Azzellini (2013), a longtime follower of base politics in Venezuela, writes, “They were not elected by the bases. They were named by Maduro and his buddies in the PSUV. Nefarious practice. Serious mistake.” Considering that the PSUV is a political party that has trumpeted its use of primaries to choose candidates, this was a very serious reversal, one that many at the base feel is an indication that the government is being taken over by more conservative interests.

CONCLUSION

Neoliberalism has been a somewhat elusive target. Even when it was most influential in Latin America, it was never a single thing (it was always easier to classify as a whole only in opposition [Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, 2012]). Now that neoliberalism may seem wholly discredited (Bresser-Pereira, 2013) and almost a decade after the Pink Tide in Latin America, it is an opportune moment to think about what postneoliberalism is and what is “post-” about it. The legacy of one of Latin America’s most strident anti-neoliberals, Hugo Chávez, provides a valuable opportunity to do that. Analyzing post-neoliberalism during and following the presidencies of Hugo Chávez confirms what careful observers have noted: that anti-neoliberal movements are clearer about what they oppose than about what they propose (Coronil, 2011; Lomnitz, 2006). This paper has tried to clarify post-neoliberalism as a semantic space via a

typology that makes visible various overlapping and at times contradictory tendencies in post-neoliberal Venezuela. This may help scholars, practitioners, and citizens better appreciate the legacy of Hugo Chávez, who is too often identified as the Chávez of a particular group—supporters, opponents, activists, ministers, sympathetic/critical scholars, and so on. It may also provide insight into the way scholars appraise other, less high-profile efforts to construct a post-neoliberal politics.

NOTES

1. Although, as Buxton (2009) notes, many of the policies of the first Chávez government were not especially anti-neoliberal, his campaign and rhetoric were (see Gates, 2010).

2. This may include neodevelopmentalists and neostructuralists who give considerable weight to fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability.

3. The fourth motor of the revolution out of five, as set out in 2007—the others being the enabling law, the constitutional reform, an educational campaign called Morales y Luces (Lights and Morals), and the explosion of communal power.

4. Chávez's rhetorical characterization and periodization of Venezuelan political systems helped distinguish a project of citizenship (and democracy) that he saw as going beyond that of the previous regime.

REFERENCES

- Arditi, Benjamin
2008 "Arguments about the left turns in Latin America: a post-liberal politics?" *Latin American Research Review* 43 (3): 59–81.
- Azzellini, Dario
2010 "Constituent power in motion: ten years of transformation in Venezuela." *Socialism and Democracy* 24 (2): 8–31.
2013 "Elecciones, control obrero, conferencias." <http://www.azzellini.net> (accessed on 13 August 2013).
- Azzellini, Dario and Marina Sitrin
2014 *They Can't Represent Us! Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy*. New York: Verso.
- BCV (Banco Central de Venezuela)
2011 *Informe económico 2010*. Caracas: BCV.
- Bebbington, Anthony and Denise Humphreys Bebbington
2011 "An Andean avatar: post-neoliberal and neoliberal strategies for securing the unobtainable." *New Political Economy* 16 (1): 131–145.
- Bermúdez, Jesús
2002 "Tending both sides of the budget" (interview). LatinFinance. <https://business.highbeam.com/435591/article-1G1-89649768/tending-both-sides-budget-venezuelan-government-needs> (accessed June 22, 2016).
- Boas, Taylor C. and Jordan Gans-Morse
2009 "Neoliberalism: from new liberal philosophy to anti-liberal slogan." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44 (2): 137–161.
- Bresser-Pereira, Luis Carlos
2013 "Five years later." Folha de São Paulo, October 21. <http://www.bresserpereira.org.br/view.asp?cod=5473> (accessed November 4, 2013).
- Burbach, Roger, Michael Fox, and Federico Fuentes
2013 *Latin America's Turbulent Transitions: The Future of Twenty-first Century Socialism*. London: Zed Books.
- Buxton, Julia
2003 "Economic policy and the rise of Hugo Chavez," pp. 113–130 in Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Class, Polarization, and Conflict*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- 2009 "The Bolivarian Revolution as Venezuela's post-crisis alternative," pp. 147–173 in Jean Grugel and Pia Riggirozzi (eds.), *Governance after Neoliberalism in Latin America*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castañeda, Jorge G.
2006 "Latin America's left turn." *Foreign Affairs* 85 (3): 28–43.
- Chávez Frías, Hugo
1999 "Es el momento de oír a la nación." Speech presented at Palacio Federal Legislativo, Caracas, February 2. <http://www.analitica.com/bitblo/hchavez/toma.asp> (accessed September 10, 2012).
2005 "Cinco Ejes de Desarrollo. Plan de gobierno del ciudadano Hugo Chávez Frías, para el período 2000–2006", in Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela, Dirección de Investigación y Asesoría Histórica, 2005, Venezuela 1999–2005. Memoria de una Revolución, Caracas. Ediciones Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela.
- Ciccariello-Maher, George
2013 *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coronil, Fernando
2011 "The future in question: history and utopia in Latin America (1989–2010)," pp. 231–264 in Craig Calhoun and Georgi Derlugian (eds.), *Business as Usual: The Roots of Global Financial Meltdown*. New York: New York University Press.
- Corrales, Javier and Michael Penfold
2011 *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chavez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Ellner, Steve
2008 *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict, and the Chávez Phenomenon*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publications.
2012 "The distinguishing features of Latin America's new left in power: the Chávez, Morales, and Correa governments." *Latin American Perspectives* 39 (1): 96–114.
- Escobar, Arturo
2010 "Latin America at a crossroads: alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development?" *Cultural Studies* 24 (1): 65–95.
- Fernandes, Sujatha
2010 *Who Can Stop the Drums? Urban Social Movements in Chávez's Venezuela*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Freeden, Michael
2004 "Editorial: Essential contestability and effective contestability." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9 (1): 3–11.
- French, John D.
2009 "Understanding the politics of Latin America's plural lefts (Chávez/Lula): social democracy, populism, and convergence on the path to a post-neoliberal world." *Third World Quarterly* 30: 349–370.
- García-Guadilla, María Pilar
2007 "Democracia participativa y ciudadanía en una sociedad polarizada: la sociedad civil postconstituyente," in Gregorio Antonio Castro and Colette Capriles (eds.), *Debate por Venezuela*. Caracas: Alfar SA Ediciones.
- Gates, Leslie C.
2010 *Electing Chávez: The Business of Anti-neoliberal Politics in Venezuela*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Goldfrank, Benjamin
2011 "The left and participatory democracy: Brazil, Uruguay, and Venezuela," pp. 162–183 in Steven Levitsky and Kenneth L. Roberts (eds.), *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gott, Richard
2008 "Venezuela under Hugo Chávez: the originality of the 'Bolivarian' project." *New Political Economy* 13: 475–490.
- Grugel, Jean and Pía Riggirozzi
2012 "Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: rebuilding and reclaiming the state after crisis." *Development and Change* 43 (1): 1–21.

- Harvey, David
2005 *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Chalmers
1982 *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Krauss, Clifford
1999 "New chief to battle Venezuela's 'cancer.'" *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/03/world/new-chief-to-battle-venezuela-s-cancer.html> (accessed August 10, 2013).
- Krueger, Anne O.
2000 "Introduction," in Anne O. Krueger (ed.), *Economic Policy Reform: The Second Stage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lechner, Norbert
2007 *Obras escogidas*. Vol. 2. Santiago de Chile: LOM.
- Lomnitz, Claudio
2006 "Latin America's rebellion: Will the new left set a new agenda?" *Boston Review*. <http://bostonreview.net/claudio-lomnitz-latin-america-leftist-new-agenda> (accessed November 13, 2013).
- López Maya, Margarita and Luis E. Lander
2011 "Participatory democracy in Venezuela: Origins, ideas, and implementation," pp. 58–79 in David Smilde and Daniel Hellinger (eds.), *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy: Participation, Politics, and Culture under Chavez*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- McCoy, Jennifer L. and David J. Myers
2004 "Introduction," pp. 1–8 in Jennifer L. McCoy and David J. Myers (eds.), *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Muhr, Thomas
2012 "(Re)constructing popular power in our America: Venezuela and the regionalisation of 'revolutionary democracy' in the ALBA–TCP space." *Third World Quarterly* 33: 225–241.
- Navia, Patricio
2010 "Living in actually existing democracies: democracy to the extent possible in Chile." *Latin American Research Review* 45 (4): 298–328.
- Negri, Anotio
2009 *Insurgencias: Constituent Power and the Modern State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ocampo, José Antonio
2011 "Latin American development after the global financial crisis," pp. 133–157 in Nancy Birdsall and Francis Fukuyama (eds.), *New Ideas on Development after the Financial Crisis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Panizza, Francisco
2009 *Contemporary Latin America: Development and Democracy beyond the Washington Consensus*. New York: Zed Books.
- Panizza, Francisco and George Philip
2013 *Moments of Truth: The Politics of Financial Crises in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- PDES (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Económico y Social)
2001 *Lineas generales del Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social de la Nación, 2001–2007*. Caracas: Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo.
- Peck, Jamie, Nik Theodore, and Neil Brenner
2012 "Neoliberalism resurgent? Market rule after the Great Recession." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111: 265–288.
- Petras, James and Henry Veltmeyer
2005 *Social Movements and State Power: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador*. London: Pluto Press.
- Rein, Raanan
2012 "From Juan Perón to Hugo Chávez and back: populism reconsidered," pp. 289–309 in Mario Sznajder, Luis Roniger, and Carlos Forment (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers of Citizenship: The Latin American Experience*. Leiden: Brill.
- Sader, Emir
2011 *The New Mole: Paths of the Latin American Left*. London and New York: Verso.

- Schaffer, Frederic
1998 *Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schedler, Andreas
2010 *Concept Formation in Political Science*. Documento de Trabajo del CIDE 219. Mexico City: CIDE.
- Schmitter, Philippe C.
2009 "The nature and future of comparative politics." *European Political Science Review* 1 (1): 33–61.
- Silva, Eduardo
2009 *Challenging Neoliberalism in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skocpol, Theda and Paul Pierson
2002 "Historical institutionalism in contemporary political science," pp. 693–721 in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds.), *Political Science: State of the Discipline*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Sola, Lourdes
2006 "Financial credibility, legitimacy and political discretion: The Lula da Silva government," pp. 237–268 in Lourdes Sola and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Statecrafting Monetary Authority: Democracy and Financial Order in Brazil*. Oxford: Centre for Brazilian Studies.
- Spanakos, Anthony Petros
2008 "New wine, old bottles, flamboyant sommelier: Chávez, citizenship, and populism." *New Political Science* 30: 521–544.
2013 "Latin America's left: between demos and kratos." Public Books. <http://publicbooks.org/nonfiction/latin-americas-left-between-demos-and-kratos> (accessed on October 15, 2013).
2015 "Institutionalities and Political Change in Bolivarian Venezuela," Anthony Petros Spanakos and Francisco Panizza (eds.), *Conceptualizing Comparative Politics*, Routledge.
- Spanakos, Anthony Petros and Lucio R. Renno
2009 "Speak clearly and carry a big stock of dollar reserves: sovereign risk, ideology, and presidential elections in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela." *Comparative Political Studies* 42: 1292–1316.
- Stallings, Barbara and Wilson Peres
2000 *Growth, Employment, and Equity: The Impact of the Economic Reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Sunkel, Osvaldo
1993 *Development from Within: Toward a Neostructuralist Approach for Latin America*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Thelen, Kathleen and Sven Steinmo
1992 "Historical institutionalism in comparative politics," pp. 1–32 in K. Thelen, S. Steinmo, and F. Longstreth (eds.), *Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics: State, Society, and Economy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Weyland, Kurt
2011 "The left: destroyer or savior of the market model?" pp. 124–139 in Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts (eds.), *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wilpert, Gregory
2007 "Venezuela's constitutional reform: an article-by-article summary." <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com>. <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2889> (accessed November 5, 2013).
- Yashar, Deborah J.
2007 "Citizenship regimes, the state, and ethnic cleavages," pp. 59–74 in Joseph S. Tulchin and Meg Ruthenburg (eds.), *Citizenship in Latin America*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Yates, Julian S. and Karen Bakker
2013 "Debating the 'post-neoliberal turn' in Latin America." *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (1): 62–90.