

Latin American Modernities: Global, Transnational, Multiple, Open-Ended²

Abstract: The analysis of modernity in Latin America has led to recurrent controversy and debate. In spite of its tension-ridden and even contradictory implications, it has been the relatively open-ended character of modernity and its élan of material and cultural progress and the promise of expanding autonomy and equality that has been a major asset for its endorsement in Latin America, a region that some have called the ‘farthest West,’ a name that hints at the ambiguous and sometimes conflict-ridden relationship of these societies with the poles and agents of Western expansion and hegemony. This article claims that the confrontation with Western modernity is in Latin America a confrontation with roots, discourses and institutions that turned out to be their own. Accordingly, the dynamics of expansion of modernity has been linked from very early on to global and transnational arenas, turning modernity into multiple yet truncated, leading to recurring attempts to reconstitute and attain the unfulfilled promises of modernity in the region.

As a concept used by academics, modernity has been associated with a series of sociological, political, economic and cultural trends that have altered the forms of space/time constitution of many societies worldwide. In the Western world, the concept became intimately connected with the increasing emergence – starting in the age of discoveries – of new forms of rationality, novel institutional frameworks, capital accumulation and capitalism, and later on such diverse developments as growing urbanization, bureaucratization, rapid transportation and communications. From a cultural perspective, modernity implies the development of a forward-looking attitude, shifts in the conception of human agency, the assumption of a stable self, a reflexive consciousness geared to the creation of new institutions and openness to multiple developments shaped by individuals and groups striving to shape their own future. As such, it involves both a cultural program and multiple institutional processes that affected personal and collective identities and have led to a reconstitution of the political domain, of civil society and public spheres. Modernity has had also its dark sides, evident in colonial expansion and domination of subjugated populations, imperialism and enslavement of non-Western populations, wars and genocide.

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In spite of its tension-ridden and even contradictory implications, it has been the relatively open-ended character of modernity and its élan of material and cultural progress, the promise of expanding autonomy and relative freedom from traditional and confined ties that has been a major asset for its endorsement in Latin America, a region that some have called the ‘farthest West,’ a name that hints at the ambiguous – and sometimes conflict-ridden – relationship of these societies with the poles and agents of Western development.

Even if the term ‘modern’ itself was seldom claimed by political parties or social movements in the area, the plethora of correlates of modernity as defined by the social sciences – ranging among others from openness to new ideas and rationality to appreciation of technical knowledge, procedural politics and the crystallization of new collective identities – has long attracted the imagination and shaped the multiple agendas of many Latin Americans.

At the same time, the analysis of modernity in Latin America has led to controversy and debate. As these societies crystallized as we know them today out of the Western European colonial expansion and, once independent, remained for long in a post-colonial bind, the discourse of modernity – or its translation into the promotion of civilization or development – has been often suspected to be an instrument of what Aníbal Quijano called the coloniality of power,³ i.e. a mechanism serving the expansionist drives of capitalism, imperialism and globalization. As such, it was argued, the discourse of modernity has served to disguise the exploitation and control by external powers and forces over the societies and economies of the region, which were placed until recently at the periphery and semi-periphery of the world system, to use the terminology of world-system theory, and whose domination of world circuits was replicated within the societies of the region, through a series of hierarchical controls aimed at dominating the subaltern classes, exploiting them and relegating them to the realm of the ‘traditional,’ where they were despised and marginalized.⁴

The debate on modernity in Latin America is also tied to the question of whether we can use a generic term as the latter to pool together the varied societies and distinct states of the region. Such an use is sometimes contested by those who claim that the divergent configuration, composition and institutional development of these societies does not merit their analysis as part of a supposedly ‘empty’ label created out of Western Europe. Thus, as we tackle the focus of this discussion, we need to address both the ways their modernity or lack thereof can be conceptualized, particularly in connection with globalization, as well as the analytical lenses through which the societies of Latin America have been categorized and interpreted. It is to this double task that we turn in this article.

Debating Atlantic Modernity and Latin America

The discussion of the relationship between Latin America and the globalizing trends of modernity rooted in the West has a long tradition in sociology and history as well as in the humanities.⁵ On the one hand, there is strong ground to assess that the very rise of the West cannot be explained but in terms of the multiple interactions that for over three centuries the American world maintained with the West, initially under the aegis of the Western European powers and then under the rising hegemony of the US, which in its self representation claimed the name of America.

³ Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America”. *International Sociology*, 15, 2 (2000): 215-32

⁴ Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism”. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1, 3 (2000): 465-78.

⁵ See Jose Mauricio Domingues, *Latin America and Contemporary Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2008

The existence of an Atlantic modernity, to use Jeremy Smith's term,⁶ has been stressed time and again both by scholars of world history as well as by researchers of both colonialism and inter-civilizational encounters. Even though they differ in their analytical premises and lines of inquiry, claiming that the supporters of the other camp ignore the basic lines of structuring of interactions between the Americas and the centers of world development, these scholars usually converge in recognizing the centrality of such interactions in enabling or even triggering modernity. In other words, even if working from distinct perspectives, there is widespread support for the view that modernity as an expanding phenomenon – with all its new forms of space/time constitution – started with the 'emergence' of America.⁷

Contrastingly, the uneven development and socio-political configuration of the region leads many to question the seemingly globalized and modern/Western physiognomy the societies of Latin America are claimed to exhibit and often their leaders have professed to announce. This awareness has recently brought a number of scholars to challenge the truisms about Latin America being part of a universal mode of modernity and ask the question in a bold way: "when [and where] was Latin American modern?"⁸ Historian Alan Knight even challenged that, as a heuristic device for understanding Latin America, modernity is not much help, unless we define it in terms of a discernible set of ideas associated with the Enlightenment: rationalism, secularism, humanism, materialism, and measure how these survived in Latin America, 'like galaxies in the void of space'.⁹ Other scholars, such as political scientist Laurence Whitehead, have claimed otherwise; i.e., that Latin Americans self-constructions as belonging to the West and accordingly as wide open to modern innovations, have made a difference in distinguishing this region from others, in that notions and expectations associated with what we understand as modernity have "become part of the 'tacit knowledge' used by local actors and their external interlocutors alike in their routine praxis."¹⁰

Likewise, debate has also developed on the very term we use to address a region of fluid boundaries and whose connotations have shifted time and again in the course of the last two centuries. Latin America is an umbrella term usually used to refer to Brazil, Haiti and the eighteen Spanish-speaking states of the Americas. Writ large, the term – first voiced by exiles living in Paris in the mid-19th century as they represented discursively and in some cases diplomatically their home countries in the intellectual and political circles of Europe – could also be applied to Puerto Rico and the French-speaking territories of Canada (mainly Quebec and parts of New Brunswick), the US (primarily in the South, as is the case of Louisiana) and the former French colonies in the Caribbean sea.

Moreover, almost half of continental USA is territory was conquered – and its population annexed – in the Mexican-American war (1846-1848), a war that started in the wake of the 1845 U.S. annexation of

⁶ Jeremy Smith, *Europe and the Americas. State Formation, Capitalism and Civilizations in Atlantic Modernity*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

⁷ Thomas E Skidmore and Peter H Smith, *Modern Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004 (6th edition); Lawrence A Clayton and Michael Conniff, *A History of Modern Latin America*. Belmont: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2005 (2nd edition); SN Eisenstadt, "The First Multiple Modernities: Collective Identity, Public Spheres and Political Order in the Americas", in Luis Roniger and Carlos H Waisman, eds. *Globality and Multiple Modernities*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002, pp. 7-28; Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A Jáuregui, eds. *Coloniality at Large. Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

⁸ Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart, eds. *When Was Latin America Modern?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

⁹ Among other things, Knight bemoans the danger of conflating the subjective perceptions of actors with the analytical concept used by social scientists and historians, indicating that only rarely and recently did the term become 'emicized' and used as a popular notion or in political discourse, whereas progress or civilization figured prominently in the vernacular. Alan Knight, "When Was Latin America Modern? A Historian's Response", in Miller and Hart, *When Was Latin America Modern?*, pp. 91-117.

¹⁰ Laurence Whitehead, "Conclusion. When Was Latin America Modern?", in Miller and Hart, *When Was Latin America Modern?*, pp. 191-209.

Texas, a state whose secession in the 1830s Mexico refused to recognize. If it were, the Latin presence persisted throughout these territories in people's names and sites; in food, customs and practices; in historical records and personal memories. More recently, the waves of transnational migration from Latin America – primarily from Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America – into the United States have recreated the meanings of being Latino and the boundaries of the 'Latin American' region in novel ways.¹¹

In order to fully assess what modernity denotes in Latin America we need to look first in greater detail at the analytical constructs and images we attribute to the area, addressing subsequently the frames and perspectives on modernity in the region and their relationship to global processes taking place in the world scene.

Analytical Constructs and Images

Since the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, the image of Latin America was constructed as distinctive in terms of cultural traditions, often romanticized mainly in opposition to the rising economic star and expansive geopolitical position of the USA, interpreted as derived from the materialistic perspective endorsed by the US elites and institutions. Interestingly enough, such perspective was shared by both Spanish American thinkers – e.g. José Enrique Rodó in its renowned work *Ariel* which impacted generations of Latin American intellectuals – and widespread voices in Quebec geared to resist the pull of Anglophone Canada and the USA.¹² As James Dunkerley has shown in *Americana*, from very early on, there were mutual flawed constructions of these societies' images, both across the Atlantic and along the North-South axis in the Americas.¹³

Toward the mid-twentieth century views crystallized that prioritized the geopolitical standing of the region at the margins of the West and its critical defiance of capitalism, as expressed by academics and students and embodied in the revolutionary Left inspired by the example of the Cuban revolution and the figure of the Che, among other models of insurgency – all these reinforced by the outrage many felt vis-à-vis the lopsided and unequal socio-economic structures of Latin American societies. After the decline of the reform options led by the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s and the defeat of the revolutionary option amidst repression and gross human rights violations in the late phases of the Cold War,¹⁴ the region returned in the late 1980s and early 1990s to democracy.

Many of the countries embraced at that stage the Washington Consensus with high expectations, hoping to join the First World, only to be disappointed once again by the results of the neoliberal policies of economic restructuring, privatization and state retreat and persisting huge inequalities – all these leading to the renewed appeal of populist visions of political order and social solidarity, presented once again as standing up to US policies and denouncing imperialist designs.¹⁵

¹¹ For a fascinating example of such cultural presence see Coco Fusco, *English is broken here. Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*. New York: The New Press, 1995.

¹² On Rodó and the modernists see Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1970. On Quebec see Gerard Bouchard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du Nouveau Monde*. Montréal: Editions du Boréal, 2001.

¹³ James Dunkerley, *Americana*. London: Verso, 2000.

¹⁴ Luis Roniger, "U.S. Hemispheric Hegemony and the Descent into Genocidal Practices in Latin America", forthcoming in Marcia Esparza, Daniel Feierstein and Henry Huttenbach eds. *State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold War Years*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

¹⁵ Luis Roniger, "Global Times Once Again: Representative Democracy and Countervailing Trends in Iberoamerica". *Iberoamericana* (Berlin), 17 (2005): 66-85.

In this latter stage, there is also a new type of transnational, diasporic and post-cultural Latinamericanism, which is linked to the aftermath of the Latino diaspora(s) in the United States and the emergence of a critical consciousness going back to the 1960s and fully articulated since the 1990s.¹⁶

We know that, due to their constructed character, regions are highly contested analytical concepts, and the succinct notes above are enough proof of the pitfalls of attributing an essential nature to them. Area studies are thus beleaguered by the contested and shifting nature of boundaries and borders, particularly acute in an era of heterogeneous globalization and multiculturalism, reshaped by transnational migration, transference of ideas, proliferation of Diasporas, and increasingly complex identities and commitments.¹⁷

Moreover, even retaining the use of 'Latin America', we should be aware that we use it as a nickname for the countries of South, Central and North America shaped by the global expansion of continental Europe into the 'New World'. This was a moment in history that was as impacting the political and economic structures and the collective imagination of the Old World as it was crucial in reshaping institutions and collective visions in the Americas. The conquest, settlement and extraction of riches in the New World would shape the forms of state formation, the development of capitalism and the construction of civilization of a new type of modernity.

In parallel, students of Latin America stress time and again the inner variability of the region: the huge distance that separates the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Brazilian areas from the Indo-American mountain ranges and valleys covering the Andes from South to North; the Euro-American complex of much of the Southern Cone and Mestizo-America as constructed in Mexico, parts of Central America, Venezuela, etc. Similarly, from an institutional perspective, the area has lived through a multiplicity of political and institutional experiences, in a spectrum that varies enormously as one goes for instance, from Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia through Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Mexico, to Colombia and Central America.

The very existence of a region defined as Latin America or as Iberoamerica (the latter, in the spirit of an Iberian rapprochement, supported by German Latin-Americanists, yet leaving French *latinité* aside) is problematic. The notion can be easily deconstructed by stressing the huge differences that separate the various Latin American regions from one another, both in terms of demographic composition as well as the distinct institutional and historical development of different countries. Bearing this in mind, it would be wiser to use *Latin Americas* in the plural, provided the term did not sound so awkward. Yet, with all their aggregative distortion, the term and the images it evokes are still important, as they enable to retain a trans-state and transnational perspective on the region, its institutions and political culture.

Retaining a Transnational Perspective on Latin America

Recent years have witnessed a renewal of interest in the emergence of new regional frameworks, the redrafting of trans-state exchanges and the burgeoning presence of transnational movements and networks, both such that support contemporary processes of globalization and many others, opposed to it.¹⁸ As applied to Latin America, this perspective has opened new ground for recognizing the existence of

¹⁶ Eduardo Mendieta, "Remapping Latin American Studies: Postcolonialism, subaltern studies, post-Occidentalism and Globalization Theory", in Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui eds., *Coloniality at Large. Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, pp. 287-306.

¹⁷ José Mauricio Domingues, "Modernity and Modernizing Moves: Latin America in Comparative Perspective," forthcoming in *Theory, Culture and Society* (2009).

¹⁸ Michelle Pace, *Politics of Regional Identity*. London: Routledge. 2006; Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow, eds. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. 2005. In this new stage, there is awareness and debates over the constructed character and multi-layered structure of regions.

shared forms of institutional building and crystallization of civilization patterns that can be traced back to the models projected into the trans-Atlantic world with the expansion of Iberian colonialism into the Americas starting in the late 15th century, reconfigured through three centuries of colonial rule and recreated after independence with amazing similarities across countries in spite of the process of consolidation of separate states and nationalities.

The connections between sister-nations; in many cases the protracted and only partial disengagement from one another's affairs, carried out by political exiles and wandering intellectuals; the spillover effects of geographical closeness and transnational trends – all these prompt the unbiased observer to ask whether by constraining our attention to one society or micro-region we are about to gain or lose in perspective.

Thus, beyond the question of the appropriate focus of analysis of empirical work, there is much sense in retaining the regional perspective and looking for wide shared denominators beyond variance, as we try to understand even local or micro-regional trends in the region. One may easily identify at least three dimensions of analysis in which the regional perspective may be instrumental in addition to case studies focalized on specific countries and sub-national arenas. These dimensions relate to the bridging of scholarly compartmentalization; the recognition of transnational dimensions that have existed in the region since colonial times but were largely ignored in the heyday of the nation-states; and the connectedness of historical processes affecting a region, such as political trends, cultural visions and economic ideas spreading from beyond the boundaries of single states and societies.

A pan-Latin American perspective is instrumental in bridging trendy gaps separating the societies of Latin America in terms of their separate languages, i.e. separating Brazil from Spanish America. Recently, historian Barbara Weinstein has called attention to the ongoing tensions in the field of Latin American history between Spanish America and Portuguese America, asking to what extent they together constitute a coherent subject of study.¹⁹ In spite of Brazil being the biggest, most populous, wealthiest and industrialized country, Weinstein indicated that at least among historians, Brazilianists often bemoan the reluctance of most Hispanic Americanists to fully integrate Brazil in their analyses. The rather idiosyncratic character of Brazil post-colonial experience, revealed in its comparative territorial lack of fragmentation, the intensification of plantation economies and slavery (Brazil was the last nation in the Americas to end slavery in 1888) and the structure of Imperial Brazil which contrasted with Republican Spanish-speaking countries has much to do with the separate lenses used to treat both areas. Yet, as Weinstein shows, we lose much in limiting discussion – let's say in colonial/postcolonial studies, to specific subaltern groups – mostly the indigenous populations in most Spanish Americas – rather than by addressing many categories and the often blurred categories and conventional boundaries. The dilemmas implied in the construction of national identities and their implications for the marginalization of subaltern groups have been shared across the continental divide between Brazil and Spanish America, beyond specificities due to the demographic composition of the countries. Weinstein discusses for instance parallels in the negotiation of inclusion and exclusion that followed the same logic in early post-colonial times. Thus, in Brazil, free persons of color asserted their rights as citizens and resisted the racialization of political status while acquiescing to the limits of citizenship in the form of slavery, much like mestizo and ladino populations in the Andes or Central America resisted policies that would reduce them to the same status as indigenous populations. By approaching such varied configurations in a shared analytical framework, new understandings of state and nation-building are achieved.

A regional perspective also pays more attention to the transnational dimensions that have been often crucial in defining the realm of the national in ways that do not endorse essentialism but rather reconstruct

¹⁹ Barbara Weinstein, "Erecting and Erasing Boundaries: Can We Combine the "Indo" and the "Afro" in Latin American Studies?" *Estudios interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe*, 19, 1 (2008): 129-144.

the evolving meanings of being national as embedded with transnational implications. A classic example, based on a book-length study which I am completing these days, is that of Central America. From a geopolitical perspective, the Isthmus is a region composed of small republics standing in relative proximity to one another and thus prone to be affected by political processes in the neighboring societies and polities. The core states of Central America trace their origins back to the disintegration of a single state, established in the early 19th century, on the basis of a previous colonial jurisdiction. Accordingly, research can trace the parallel processes of construction of separate nation-state identities and the intricate transnational connections with the other states in the region, which have affected the modes of adoption of institutional and cultural trends identified with modernity. This is crucial for understanding past developments and envisioning the future of that region. Emerging from imperial disintegration, the states were destined to eventually create nations, attempting to “render them real” through the use of official accounts and rituals, the elaboration of hegemonic material and symbolic practices, and the structuring of images of people-hood, connected to spatial and temporal boundaries. Such strategies of nation building involved the partitioning of territories that once belonged to the same political entity; the formation of confined membership and the delineation of borders, organized according to principles of national sovereignty. Born out of a shared colonial administrative jurisdiction and a short-lived attempt at unification following independence, these states have strived to construct their national identities and idiosyncrasy, develop their institutional distinctiveness, while at the same time they have been unable to completely disengage themselves from the ‘sister republics’ and constantly learning from one another.²⁰

The creation of nations also implicated systems of cultural representation that legitimized or de-legitimized different sectors’ and people’s access to the resources of the nation-state.²¹ Once separate, the republics faced the dual task of consolidating their territorial control and domination, while constructing a sense of collective identity through their policies, practices and ceremonies. They had to define and create national membership and boundaries, which implied recognizing certain categories of citizenship as paramount, while replacing, ignoring or denying – without fully eradicating – earlier forms of identification, including the pan-isthmian identity, and subsuming more localized and ethnic identities. This process of nation-building, shared in its generic traits by many states worldwide, became convoluted and protracted, as the new states could hardly elicit in the population a sense of being part of an ‘imagined community’. For decades after their separation, the states could not consolidate their boundaries and seclude themselves from a dynamic of regional intervention. The interference came from quasi-private armies, driven by the prospects of taking power in their own home region or another region, disregarding borders and state jurisdictions. Rebels in one area were supported by allies in the neighboring states, willing to topple those in power and facilitate the rise to power of political forces sympathetic to their own regional designs.

What in contemporary views could be interpreted as “invasions’ were at that time considered as mere advances of forces willing to change constellations of power and in some cases, define state boundaries anew. The wars that ensued were not seen as “national” wars or “anti-imperialist” wars. All political forces shared the understanding that these were internal, fratricidal wars. It will take external threats and interventions to generate a ‘national’ interpretation of the struggle for independence. Yet, initially, even the sense of national struggle was in fact embedded in the transnational resistance to external intervention and threats. Overshadowing the construction of sovereign realms and separate identities were the

²⁰ Ana María Alonso, “The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity”. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23 (1994): 379-405.

²¹ Anupama Mande, “Subaltern Studies and the Historiography of the Sandinista-Miskitu Conflict in Nicaragua, 1979–1990.” Paper presented at LASA 2000 Congress, in: lasa.international.pitt.edu/Lasa2000/Mande.PDF, accessed 11 July 2008.

common origins, which left a legacy of cross-national networks of kinship, economic, social and political ties, and an image of an alternative project of regional nation-building. Individuals could rely on such image when relocating to sister-countries or challenging current institutional arrangements and political divisions. From the perspective of the symbolic enactment of separate national identities, primordiality – in the form of ethnicity or race – was secondary to the political and civic strategies adopted while constructing nationhood. From early on, elites were fully aware that local identifications existed, but that there were no strong lines separating republics from one another or portraying the others as unalterably different in an incommensurable manner. Moreover, the way in which these states declared independence implied that they could not envision their collective identity as naturally given, but rather as a civic accomplishment.

These trends draw attention to the importance of keeping a regional perspective as basis for the analysis of specific countries. In the case of the republics of Central America, for instance, this process of nation-building was complicated due to their shared origins, the complex process of promulgation of independence and the protracted mutual involvement of each state in the affairs of its neighbors. Thus, for instance, that intervention by North American filibusters in the mid nineteenth century led to a war that was fought by what today we would define as a “transnational” alliance of nationals of all isthmian countries, while paradoxically – or perhaps not, since it fitted the logic of state claims – such war became known in Isthmian historiography as “the National War.” Time and again – and the confrontation with William Walker and his filibusters is the first of a series of such critical junctures in the history of the region – the national became embedded in the transnational dimension. The transnational realm supported and superseded the meaning of being part of a nation in the Isthmus. The transnational dimension of the struggle was so evident that its symbolic appropriation in terms of the emerging nations was done in a plural fashion and could not completely obliterate the transnational angle as an underlining current of narrative and symbolic representation. In such manner, the fight only rekindled once again the tension-ridden process of disengagement of the states and crystallizing nations with the persisting transnational dimension of their existence in the Isthmus.²²

This transnational perspective is also important in contemplating the role of states and societies in contemporary processes of globalization and trans-state migration, human trafficking and criminal networks. A case in point is the transnational illicit networks that, following migration to the USA in the period of the civil wars in the Isthmus and after being socialized into crime there, have been deported or returned to the Isthmian societies to project their new know-how and transnational contacts into the establishment of illicit networks that cross nation-state boundaries and require a transnational approach on the part of the states willing to control their social and political impact.²³ The capacity of these states to cooperate beyond the economic realm, where they carried out a lifting of custom regulations depends on long term memories, suspicions and commitments. All these cannot be reduced to economic processes, even if these are highly important. Social orientations, political culture in a broad sense – which includes narrative constructions, discourse and practices – and institutional design are also central to such an inquiry of transnationalism, in Central America and elsewhere.

Another important dimension suggesting the relevance of a regional approach to Latin America involves the connectedness of historical processes affecting a region and the character of political trends, cultural visions, economic ideas, etc. beyond the boundaries of single states and societies. The study of political exiles shows that individuals forced to relocate in the region have made important contributions to the redrafting of national visions. By being forced to leave the territory of a national state and claiming they were the true representatives of the national spirit, they have redefined time and again what meant to be a

²² This analysis is based on a book manuscript under completion: Luis Roniger, *Transnational Politics in Central America*.

²³ Richard Snyder and Angelica Duran-Martinez, “Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets”. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, published online 5 March 2009.

national of the country of origin, have pushed sometimes the conception of the national beyond established borders (as in the cases of José Martí, Ramón Emeterio Betances and Eugenio María de Hostos in the Caribbean) or even created the image of Latin America, as seen from Europe (in the case of Jose María Torres Caicedo and the Parisian exile community).²⁴

Similarly, and looking for historical connectedness beyond the boundaries of an Iberian, Latin or Anglo-Saxon America, it is not by chance that major shifts in the history of Latin America can be read in terms of the policies led by the USA, especially in the century after its rise to hegemonic status in the Western hemisphere in the 1890s, until the challenges launched to such status since the late 1990s. One particular grim part of this interconnectedness has been the role of the USA in the training and indoctrination of Latin American officers in the Doctrine(s) of National Security, with an effect on the character of repression of citizens led by military regimes in South and Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, which projected a legacy of human rights violations onto the core reconstructed democracies of the region.²⁵

We conclude that at least in terms of the wider context – the crystallization of parallel institutional dynamics, historical connectedness and transnational impacts – there is ground for retaining a regional perspective as we look for clues on modernity and its connections with globalization in Latin America.

Modernities in Latin America: Global, Multiple and Truncated

The discourses of modernity and the debates around them addressing Latin America resemble in many ways earlier discussions of the program of modernity as envisaged for instance by the Enlightenment in Europe, yet go beyond. Due to their historical configuration, the societies of Latin America *are and are not* part of the West. They have incorporated modern notions of citizenship, representative democracy, civic associations, elections, public debate and public spheres, justice and equality before the law, wrangling with them as part of their own – traumatic and colonial – origins. And yet, they have distinctive cultural-demographic setups and have developed specific institutional trends and notions. Even if incorporating Western institutions and ideas, they have developed not the way in which Western Europe or the US developed. The difference is not a matter of more-and-less in a universal path that will eventually bring societies to converge, as assumed by classical theories of modernization in the 1950s and '60s, but rather a function of the multiple paths of modernity that human societies have followed, even in the Americas.

Shmuel N Eisenstadt has indicated that among other assumptions, the concept of multiple modernities entails that modernity is to be viewed as a distinct civilization, related to distinct institutional trends in politics and the economy, but also supported by its own civilizational premises, among which stand out a continuous reconstruction of roles and identities, a growing autonomy from ascribed frameworks, an increasing reflexivity and the decline of markers of certainty. The spreading of modernity, first conceived in Western Europe and spreading into the Americas and many other areas, has implied many forms of contestation, appropriation and transformation, thus creating not one but multiple patterns of modernity, both in the West and beyond. As it turned global, modernity has become plural. Even those movements that usually claim to fight modernity and predicate a fundamentalist return to pristine culture – e.g.

²⁴ Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger. *The Politics of Exile in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 33-34, 81-82 and 105-117.

²⁵ Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, *The Legacy of Human Rights Violations in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile and Uruguay*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Cecilia Menjivar and Nestor Rodriguez, eds. *When States Kill. Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.

Islamic radicalism – are in fact redefining the meanings of their path into the global scene, which is none other than modern.²⁶

In this framework, it is important to stress that – beyond all the colonial and post-colonial violence; and the mercantilist and capitalist integration into world circuits as producers of primary wealth ranging from minerals to cattle products and crops and consumers of manufactured products – the societies of Latin America have developed global, multiple and yet truncated modernities.

These tendencies started to develop, at different rhythms very early throughout the region. From their very inception the societies of Latin America were connected to external centers and global circuits, as part of the economic and political, religious, cultural and ideological centers of emerging Atlantic modernity.

Atlantic modernity succeeded in replacing and attempting – with variable success – the obliteration of the memory of successive imperial waves of autochthonous modernization, epitomized in the astronomical discoveries of the Maya, the advanced uses of landscape and urban design by the Aztecs, or the forward-looking modes of redistribution of agricultural surpluses and symbolic organization of space and society orchestrated by the Incan political center. In this sense, we should consider Western-originated globalization an ongoing and changing process triggered by another imperial expansion and reinforced by the shifting and expanding unfolding of the capitalist system, a process neither peculiar nor limited to contemporary historical conditions.²⁷

Unsurprisingly, the colonial and post-colonial experience of these societies bred a persistent global awareness and reflexivity, foremost among the elites but also, indirectly among the subaltern classes. A kind of global awareness crystallized and provided parameters of institutional building and reflection in these societies, led by upper classes and elites that thought themselves, struggled and subjugated subaltern populations as they envisioned being part of the upward mobile strata of Atlantic modernity.²⁸

Yet, while imagining themselves as taking part of Atlantic modernity – the so called “West” –, these elites soon realized their collective identities, their social *problématique* and the construction of political order were not identical to those of Europe. Being at the crossroads of Western European expansion into the New World, individuals in the Americas realized that their experience differed from that of Old World peers. Many of the descendants of non-Western civilizations such as the Inca Empire and the Maya kingdoms and the forcibly displaced members of African societies enslaved in the Americas attempted to keep their cultural distinctiveness alive. And those arriving from Europe and their Creole heirs could not evade reflecting on the distinctiveness of the new social environment, even as they attempted to share the culture, values and life styles that Iberians followed.

²⁶ On such views on fundamentalism and religious radicalism see SN Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities – A Paradigm of Cultural and Social Evolution.” *Protosociology*, 24 (2007): 154-59. Amy Kaminsky has suggested that even postmodernism – with all its irony and deconstruction – cannot but presuppose what it intends to supersede, marked by the very trends of modernity whose decadence it claims to reject. Kaminsky, *After Exile. Writing the Latin American Diaspora*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 2. See also Gerhard Preyer, “Introduction: The Paradigm of Multiple Modernities”. *Protosociology*, 24 (2007): 5-18.

²⁷ It is no superfluous to recall in this connection that the series of waves of Western-led globalization – and the ambivalent attitude the centers of such developments generate in various societies and sectors – are only a specific case of a long range of historical globalizations that have included among others earlier Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Chinese, classical Islamic and Hinduist waves of globalization.

²⁸ Laurence Whitehead, “Latin America as a Mausoleum of Modernities”, in Luis Roniger and Carlos H Waisman, *Globality and Multiple Modernities*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002, pp. 29-65.

By being in a different world, interacting with others absent in the “motherland” or in pre-colonial times, being exposed to tastes, illnesses, sounds and sights that triggered their awareness of difference, neither settlers nor subject populations could avoid considering that their markers of certainty did not fit exactly those of the ‘mother-country’. Whether supporting social and moral principles that they considered universally valid or particular to them, the experience of the New World gave rise to reflexivity, rebellion and struggle, as typical of modern frames of mind.

This reflexivity had global referents and underwent a twist as these societies entered fully the period of construction of self-constituted polities in the nineteenth century and went through new transformations in the late 19th and 20th centuries. But even very early on, during the Colony there were several sources of reflexivity. First, the colonists were part of multiple frameworks of identity, of powers that were in fact a composite of monarchies, to use John H. Elliot’s depiction of Spain, and of a diversity of intersecting ways of life.²⁹ This precluded the formation of uniform criteria of membership and rather prompted cross-cutting and not necessarily coinciding criteria such as those of the different kingdoms, Catholicism, being subjects of a monarchy, members of a local settlement, Whites and non-Whites, free, semi-free and non-free individuals, among many other criteria.³⁰

The criteria themselves were interpreted in a non-orthodox manner, creating an elasticity that the distance from the centers of power would shape into a persisting gap between the letter of the law and its implementation for centuries to come. For example, while in theory non-Christians were excluded from migrating to the Americas, in practice they crossed the Atlantic and became members of local communities, especially during Castile’s annexation of Portugal between 1580 and 1640. Similarly, as Tamar Herzog has shown, while there was a distinction between whites and non-whites, the criteria were not strictly racial, but rather embedded biological considerations within cultural and socioeconomic cultural traits, “thus allowing dark-skinned people to become ‘White’ and ‘darkening’ those with a fair complexion.”³¹

This trend of multiple and cross-cutting criteria of membership and interaction as well as the gap between formal institutional rules and social practices have persisted in varied forms well into contemporary times, recreating dynamics of confrontation and debate between ‘purists’ – be they Conservatives or revolutionary – and pragmatic social and political forces.

There was also the complexity of miscegenation, of religious syncretism and of emerging hybrid identities. In Spanish and Portuguese America, peoples and traditions from Europe, the Americas and Africa met on unequal ground and impinged upon one another from the start. Hierarchical domination and colonial controls were imposed on subaltern sectors by a minority of conquerors, settlers and patrons. However, these became compound very early on, due to factors such as the gender ratio of colonizers to colonized and its sequel of miscegenation, the dynamics of mutual accommodation, the distance to the metropolitan centers of power and the frontier-like character of settlements dispersed in territories greater than anything imagined in the Old World. Thus, despite the destruction of earlier social systems, annihilation of whole populations, and shattering of aboriginal cultures, the conquest and colonization of the Americas opened room for syncretism and alternative identity formation. Challenges were common

²⁹ John H. Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies.” *Past and Present*, 137 (1992): 48-71.

³⁰ Spanish-American territories were formally not colonies but parts of the Crown of Castilla and since the 1560s, quasi-autonomous kingdoms in the framework of Greater Spain, along with Aragon, Naples and the Netherlands. Brazil followed a similar pattern within the Portuguese realms (Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 15-93).

³¹ Tamar Herzog, “A Stranger in a Strange Land: The Conversion of Foreigners in Colonial Latin America”, in Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, eds. *Constructing Collective Identities and Shaping Public Spheres*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998, p. 57.

from very early on, originating in the descendants of the settlers, the heirs of native nobility, the Indian commoners, the runaway slaves and freemen, and the growing sectors of mixed backgrounds.

Miscegenation (*mestizaje*) implied much disappointment for those willing to climb the upper echelons of the social hierarchy, yet integrationist images did not disappear but merely amalgamated differently with the Bolivarian and Republican ethos that became dominant in the 19th century.³² Since then and into the 21st century miscegenation became a pervasive trait generating ambiguity, in tandem with religious syncretism and hybrid structures, all constituting major issues in social composition and collective reflexive images. In the heyday of racism, miscegenation raised doubts about the ability of these societies to fully embrace civilization, while in 20th century post-revolutionary Mexico or republican Brazil, miscegenation provided a key symbol for society, as it symbolized and represented the integrative values deemed by the elites as crucial for attaining progress and stability under conditions of disaggregation and submerged conflicts.

Another axis of reflexivity involved the continuous questioning of collective identity and legitimacy, in part triggered by cultural transformation and the internal controversies led by various parts of colonial and post-colonial society and in part due to inter-European struggles such as those centered around the so-called Black Legend of the conquest of America. In the 18th century, Americans found themselves increasingly enmeshed in controversies about the nature of their societies. Some, like the Jesuits exiled to Europe, looked for the indigenous roots of the distinctive American identities and tried to establish the image of Aztecs and Incas as civilized nations far more advanced than the Romans in Gaul and England.³³ In this endeavor, these authors continued a line perhaps initiated by Bartolomé de las Casas' and Peter Martyr's letters (which influenced Montaigne's and Europe's mythical image of the "noble savage" in the 16th century). As analyzed in detail by Antonello Gerbi and Leopoldo Zea, the displaced Jesuits were opposing Europeans who felt seduced by visions of the Enlightenment that essentialized the New World as a feeble version of Europe.³⁴

Whether defending or deploring the condition of the Americas and their people under changing terms (be they those of strength and feebleness or civilization and barbarism) or struggling to uphold the pristine values of their countries, individuals in these societies were willing to think of themselves as part of a universal – global – scenario, and as such reflect about their place among world societies. This same perception was to undergo many changes after independence, while at the same time retaining the somehow paradoxical perception of being part of a globalizing trend of modernity, yet at the same time differing from them in substantial ways, which in our times could be defined as a path of multiple modernities. At the core of this perception was the view that their societies were combining a global insertion, being fully integrated into world circuits and trends, sharing with other societies in the West basic premises of political and economic order, while evolving their own forms of modernity, which in the case of Mexico were defined by anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz as 'Indian modernity.'³⁵

³² Alberto Flores Galindo, *Buscando un Inca. Identidad y utopía en los Andes*. Lima: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1987; David Cahill, "After the Fall: Constructing Incan Identity in Late Colonial Cuzco", in Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, eds. *Constructing Collective Identities and Shaping Public Spheres. Latin American Paths*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998, pp. 65-99.

³³ Enrique Giménez López 1997, *Expulsión y exilio de los Jesuitas españoles*. Universidad de Alicante, 1997.

³⁴ Antonello Gerbi, *La disputa del Nuevo Mundo*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960, Leopoldo Zea, *América en la historia*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Revista de Occidente, 1957. Others, primarily exiled Peruvian Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán, called for independence, exhorting his compatriots to rebel against the Spanish Crown, rejecting its arbitrary and despotic rule that "ignored the unalienable rights of man and the indisputable duties of all governments" and tried unsuccessfully to attract British support for expeditions to liberate South America. See David Brading, *The First America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991: 535-40.

³⁵ Claudio Lomnitz, *Modernidad indiana. Nueve ensayos sobre nación y mediación en México*. Mexico: Planeta, 1998.

Collective identity is predicated on some mixture of universal and particularistic motives and symbols.³⁶ Paradoxically as it may sound from the point of view of the constitutive demographic elements of Latin American societies, in terms of collective identities Latin American particularism leans less toward the primordial and more to the universal. Often, national identities were constructed, as in Mexico or Paraguay, around the idea of fusion of races (or languages in the latter case) and were intimately related to images of Latin Americanism and universalism.³⁷ Moreover, symbols were drawn from three interconnected and mutually reinforcing sources. First, symbols were anchored in imposing nature of the continent, immortalized among others in the *Canto general* (1950) of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Second, they derived from the plight of being at the margins of the Western core of the world or global system, the consequences of which were portrayed, for example, by Eduardo Galeano's *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*.³⁸ And third, they crystallized the universal aspirations and horizons of important sectors in these societies, which prompted a continuous search for models of development and institutionalization.

The universal orientation implied a tension between the external models and the endogenous dynamics of their own societies that seemingly placed them at a structural disadvantage vis-à-vis other societies of the expanding West. For once, Latin America shared with North America a sense of being a land of utopia, a promised land, the target of dreams, a land of open opportunities – all built-up around the ideals and expectations of Western culture.³⁹

Due to the particular modes of insertion into the global system and configuration of public spheres in Latin America, many of these expectations would lead necessarily to a sense of disappointment, lack of fulfillment, impaired accomplishment and peripheral standing within the global scene. This awareness will prompt an almost obsessive concern with progress, an intense drift toward soul-searching and one of the longest traditions of reflection on collective identity.

As soon as these societies reached independence and saw themselves at the forefront of modern politics, a basic tension crystallized between their global immersion and future-oriented outlook, on one hand, and the intellectual and elite circles' deep sense that modernity did not fully develop as it was deemed to be but was rather truncated, and that there was reason for concern due to the current state of their societies. Already Simón Bolívar the 'Liberator' expressed such concerns as he failed in his conscious effort to create a liberal nation composed of "good citizens."⁴⁰ In the 19th century it was common to think these problems of a truncated modernity in terms of an internal fight in favor of progress or civilization and against barbarity, as epitomized in the work of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. When he wrote *Civilización y barbarie* in 1845 he was fully aware of the French periodical literature of his period, knew the work of historians such as Guizot, Michelet and Thierry, and in his prologue observed that South America as yet lacked a work comparable to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, published only shortly before. Whereas he relied on the style of Spanish *costumbristas* to unravel the character of the Argentinean people, his framework of comparison was the world as a whole, freely comparing the

³⁶SN Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen, "The Construction of Collective Identity", *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, 36 (1995): 72-102.

³⁷ This assertion may sound strange regarding Paraguay, often parochialized in analyses, but even there can be found universal and of course Iberoamerican horizons, at least since colonization and the Jesuit missionary projects. Even José Gaspar de Francia's and López' policies were more dialectically connected to globalism than is usually claimed. See Julio César Chávez, *El supremo dictador*. Madrid: Ediciones A, 1964; Helio Vera, *En busca del hueso perdido*. Asunción: Expolibro and RP Ediciones, 1999.

³⁸Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1971.

³⁹ Esteban Krotz, "The Alienating Utopia" European Modernity and Latin American Identity." *Folk*, 34 (1992): 84.

⁴⁰ Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the European Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 133-53.

gauchos in the Pampas to the Bedouins in the Middle East and the Tartars in central Asia. The political conditions of independence created an environment in which only the despotism of harsh *caudillos* could prevent society from lapsing into anarchy and banditry. But such despotic order was inimical to progress and indeed expressed a struggle between rural *caudillismo* and urban culture, with Buenos Aires as the epitome of future order and civilization. Both Sarmiento and his critics (e.g. Juan Bautista Alberdi) agreed their country should emulate European paths to civilization, drawn by the binary opposition between liberal progress – as exemplified by France, Great Britain and the United States – and Catholic Spain, the source of conservatism and stagnation in the Americas.⁴¹

Throughout Latin America, seclusion from global forces and currents was not considered an option. To mention but one of successive waves of ideas and institutions projected onto these societies, Liberalism emerged there as a model for shaping the future, rooted in Spanish and European ideas, and as a reaction to the then current fragility of the nation and a basis for its reconstruction within the framework of innovation, a trend to be repeated with new ideas and cycles of institutional reconstruction.⁴²

Seclusion from world trends was not an alternative and elites looked to core modern Western ideas for inspiration. Nonetheless, the reflexive concern with the inner fabric of society led to changes in these ideas as expressed in Latin America. Threatened by the presence of the masses, Liberalism soon turned elitist or “moderate” whereas Conservatism admitted the caducity of the old regime’s ideological foundations. A rather conservative Liberalism (without much of its pragmatic orientation in the US) and a liberal Conservatism agreed on the need to lead change, differing mainly in the pace and agency of such change: should history dictate organically the rhythm of change, as claimed by Latin American Conservatives, or should social forces promote it actively, imprinting a progressive shift in history, as claimed by Liberals? Later on, as civil wars waned and institutional stability could be foreseen, the drive toward modernity continued in these societies that remained elitist and oligarchic. Positivism was adopted – more Comtean and authoritarian in Brazil or Venezuela and more Spencerian and Darwinian in Argentina and Uruguay – for its promise of order towards the consecution of industrial and scientific progress. But once again, as it was incorporated, Positivism was transformed in its corollaries. While in Europe it became connected with racist trends, in Latin America it predicated progress, miscegenation and assimilation of races into a “Creole race,” even if by force or by replacement (i.e. through immigration).⁴³

Thus, in the realm of ideas and due to the need to create the “nations” in the name of whose sovereignty the new states based themselves, its peoples imagined Latin America in future-oriented terms and through the prisms of various languages of civilization and Western modernity. Even in provincial areas, e.g. in Yucatan, Mexico, there was a buoyant celebration of progress already in the mid-1840s, as traced by James Dunkerley: “We have literary, scientific, commercial and political journals. There are today in Mérida philanthropic societies, reading groups and scientific academies. Pioneering businesses have triumphed; we have a stagecoach network, cafés, hotels and recreational associations. Primary education has acquired new energy; the government is improving and makes efforts to develop agriculture; roads

⁴¹Brading, *The First America*, pp. 620-47.

⁴² Referring to a later period, Laurence Whitehead makes a distinction that applies to Liberalism in general as well as to other ideas and institutional trends incorporated from the core societies of the West. “Even during the [post-1930] Depression there was an important difference (understood by those who experienced it at first hand) between the *achieved* liberalism of developed capitalist/market economies, and the *rhetorical* and *aspirational* liberalism of Latin American societies.” Laurence Whitehead, “State Organization in Latin America since 1930”, in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 5. In the same line and from a culturalist perspective see Octavio Paz, “A literature without criticism,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1976, pp. 979- 80.

⁴³ Leopoldo Zea, *Pensamiento positivista latinoamericano*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1980.

have been built and repaired. In short, we are to road to progress.”⁴⁴ In other areas, the lack of such signs of progress could induce pessimism and a sense of failure.

Elites followed global models, (initially Iberian and European, then American ideas), turning them into institutional guides and converting Latin America into what Laurence Whitehead has called a “mausoleum of modernities,” modernities that were in fact truncated either through defeat or through the reinforcement of previous imbalances and inequalities inherent in the hierarchical structure of Latin American societies and which deepened the biased and uneven pattern of modernity in the region. Illustrative is also the last wave of democratization, which led to the full fledged adoption of democratic institutions without the strengthening of the very foundations of democracy in the form of a democratic civic culture, compliance with the rule of law, of personal responsibility. Assessing this stage in the region, former Brazilian president and sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso states that “we [Latin Americans] keep moving back and forth between institutions and personalism. Charisma threatens the compliance with the rules and the citizen still runs the risk of being treated as a client, as a dependent, entitled to receiving gifts rather than exercising rights.”⁴⁵

Intellectual and political elites incorporated selectively ideas and modern institutions as they tried to cope with the challenges posed by the particular character of their societies.⁴⁶ Were these epitomes of modernity merely “ideas out of place,” as Roberto Schwarz inquired in connection to Brazil?⁴⁷

Rather, due to their global immersion, leading elites and social strata used globally fashionable idioms and symbolic markers to interpret reality and fight for political power and cultural hegemony, yet translating them often into oppressive forms of domination of subaltern groups. Often, as these struggles took place in societies that differed from those in which these ideas crystallized, the cultural lenses themselves became transformed and worked into more eclectic – or should we say ‘multiple’ – frameworks of analysis.

These idioms of modernity went not unchallenged. They were confronted by images of indigenous traditions that persisted over time, by the African customs, rhythms and flavors contributed by the uprooted descendants of forced laborers and slaves, and by the ideological views that the immigrants brought with them into these countries, as they arrived massively particularly in the second half of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century. The confrontation between elite imagination and alternative perspectives was a long-lasting experience in the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Americas. It can be detected as early as colonial times and spread through a wide variety of realms, most importantly within the religious quest for the shaping of souls.⁴⁸ It acquired new forms in the last two centuries, as elites faced contradictions between their models of political legitimacy (ordered according to republican and liberal principles) and the mechanisms necessary for governance (which included concentration of powers and use of clientelism). This confrontation could be witnessed also in the reactions to the implementation of positivist and capitalist developmental ideas and models, in the form of peasant revolts

⁴⁴ *Registro Yucateco* (1846) in James Dunkerley, *Americana*. London: Verso, 2000, p. 32 (from Marie Lapointe, *Los mayas rebeldes de Yucatán*. Zamora, Michoacán, 1983, p. 32). This quotation is in full line with the work by Carlos Forment, *Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900*. Vol. 1: *Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

⁴⁵ Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “New Paths: Reflections about Some Challenges of Globalization”, paper prepared in 2007 for the conference on “International Inequality, Then and Now: Revisiting Cardoso and Faletto’s *Dependency and Development in Latin America*”, Watson Institute for International Studies, April 2008, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Tulio Halperin Donghi, “En busca de la especificidad del pensamiento político hispanoamericano”. *Cuadernos americanos*, 6, 66 (1992): 31-46.

⁴⁷ Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas. Essays on Brazilian Culture*. London: Verso, 1992.

⁴⁸ See Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992 and Pierre Duviols, *Cultura andina y represión*. Cusco: Centro de estudios rurales y andinos Bartolomé de las Casas, 1986.

and, at least in one case – Mexico in the 1910s and 1920s – a full-fledged social and political revolution. After 1917 many of these trends were rephrased in the idioms and symbolic markers of new ideologies, borrowing from and changing Marxism-Leninism, Trotskyism and Maoism in the spirit of indigenous grievances.

A crucial aspect of the indigenous models has been the quest for the protection of collective ownership of lands rooted in the collective memory of the Andean *Tahuantinsuyu* and the Mesoamerican regions, which provided a strong source of resistance to capitalist encroachment and privatization of lands. Driven by this logic of pre-Columbian origins, even modernists such as early 20th century Peruvian Pedro Zulen and José Carlos Mariátegui, concerned with progress and development and attuned to global idioms were able to transcend the European bias of their ideologies. Both rephrased their ideas in terms of the revolutionary potential they identified in the *indigenista* movements of Peru. Similar trends of confrontation, connected with the decline of support for Liberal democracy and the so called neo-Liberal policies have been developing more recently in different ways in Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and Central America.⁴⁹

The backlash against the macro-economic adjustment policies, which elites embraced in the 1990s to face the crisis created by economic stagnation, inflation and debt-ridden budgets, and which openly discarded the étatist legacies of earlier decades, soon erupted, not only in the above countries. The backlash was directed against both the economic policies as well as, in many countries, against the Liberal principles of representative democracy that seemed to have failed to lead the countries into more than a truncated pattern of modernity and development. As the policies of macro-economic stabilization and liberalization, dismantled corporatist frameworks of representation, curtailed subsidies, changed the regulation of labor markets and affected rural communal lands, indigenous and popular movements rose to fight them and depose rulers, denouncing such policies and mobilizing trans-communal support for alternative models of development, basically those opposed to neo-liberal privatization and the change of labor frameworks. In some countries, such as Venezuela, populism has accordingly risen again; this time, linked to the renewed appeal of Socialist and Left ideologies and being more étatist and suspicious of free markets than the classical populism of the past.⁵⁰

The above analysis indicates first, that these societies patterned their political institutions and public spheres after models that were conceived locally as the epitome of advanced global progress and modernity. Second, that the multiple models of modernity turned hybrid in Latin America, due to the tensions in their inner logic and between such logic and their subordination to local history and prevailing social and political patterns. Third, that in this process modernity appeared as truncated and that, accordingly, their carriers struggled to impose their vision of global insertion upon wider sectors competing with each other and with the carriers of indigenous models in the symbolic arenas. It is in terms of such interplay between history, politics and culture that we should try to understand the unfolding of Latin American modernities, as global, transnational, multiple and yet, truncated.

⁴⁹ Gerardo Leibner, "Pensamiento radical peruano: González Prada, Zulen, Mariátegui." *Cuadernos americanos*, 66 (1992): 47-66 (Zulen followed moral idealism and Mariátegui elaborated a blend of Sorel and Marxism, which he adopted while in Europe). On other countries see Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc, eds. *The Struggle for Indian Rights in Latin America*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004; and Deborah Yashar, *Contesting Liberal Citizenship in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁵⁰ Leon Zamosc, "The Indian Movement and Political Democracy in Ecuador". *Latin American Politics and Society*, 49, 3 (2007): 1-34; Carlos de la Torre, "The Resurgence of Radical Populism in Latin America". *Constellations*, 14, 3 (2007): 384-397; Steve Ellner, *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict, and the Chavez Phenomenon*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 2008; Raanan Rein, "De la Casa Rosada al Palacio de Miraflores: Populismos de ayer y de hoy", unpublished text presented at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, 26 May 2009.

Retrospective and Prospective Conclusions

Due to their entangled insertion in the global arena, Latin America became tied to the early modern process of Atlantic-led globalization, imposed by its colonial standing with all its brutality and exploitation. Since those early days of emergence of Atlantic modernity, elites have tried to incorporate idioms, symbolic markers and institutions from the West. Even though at first, these institutions were part of an imposed order, they transformed the region in permanent ways through the adoption of Christianity, capitalism, bureaucratic structures and later on political institutions at the forefront of Western-led modernity. Paradoxically, yet in full congruence with this pattern of development, often the areas that look traditional in contemporary Latin America were once spearheads of modernity left behind as modernization shifted gears or as development moved to other areas. In Latin America, often tradition is merely a form of left-behind modernity turned peripheral to new poles and waves of development.

For centuries the West and its tenets of modernity have been the reference point of projects, designs and ambitions in these societies, yet triggering reactions and imprinting great ambiguity towards those projects in society at large. But even when the ideas and institutions of Atlantic modernity have turned hegemonic in certain periods and countries, the unfulfilled promise and biased appropriation of modernity have triggered reactions, confrontation and struggle.

On an ideational level, however, there is a major difference between Latin America and other cultural areas of the world such as China or the Islamic world. In the case of Latin America, with the exception of perhaps some of the Andean areas, the confrontation with Western ideas and institutions is not a confrontation with an alien culture, like in Islam, China or perhaps in India during British imperialism, but it is a confrontation with the own conflict-ridden origins and development of these societies. Such confrontation has been accompanied by long reflections on collective identities and has led to an amalgamation of forms. Modern institutions and idioms have become part also of aboriginal societies, of the descendants of the slaves, of the children and grandchildren of immigrants. They have become the makeup of the absolute majority of sectors and countries in Latin America. What is striking is that the confrontation is not a confrontation with visions and institutions external to these societies, but rather a conflict-ridden confrontation that became an intrinsic part of the constitution and configuration of these societies, which have amalgamated even autochthonous trends within such future-oriented perspectives of progress, justice, development and equality.

The meanings of being modern and of modernity have changed with the passing of time. Latin America has changed radically, in a process that has redefined time and again the meanings of being modern in the continent. Yet, as it changed, Latin America did so not in the European way(s) and neither in the US way, but rather in a multiple and distinctive way that amalgamated social groups, redefined cultural hybridity and projected religious syncretism, with institutional consequences of importance for the shaping of collective identities, political order and public spheres.

In Latin America, religious syncretism has been paramount, leading to the lack of autochthonous or Catholic religious fundamentalism, despite constant religious change and the resurgence of social movements among the indigenous sectors and more recently, also among the Black populations. In countries with monotheistic religions such as those in the region, one could expect to have some sort of fundamentalism, as can be found in the USA, but the phenomenon is rather negligible in Latin America. Contrastingly, the region has exhibited other religious trends, such as Liberation Theology, which projected a vision that promised to fulfill the unfulfilled dream of modernity; Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Caribbean cults that amalgamated Catholic saints and African *orixás* (spirits); or more recently, Pentecostalist groups that once again in Latin America became less grounded in messianic messages and more oriented to divine healing, possession trances, as well as towards the reconstitution of personal

behavior and family life.⁵¹ In parallel, when compared to Europe for instance, there has been a weakening of the primordial criteria of collective identity, as evident for instance in the relative absence of racial wars. In spite of deep ethnic tensions, racial wars have been rather exceptional: in the 1780s with Tupac Amaru in the Andean area, in Haiti in the 1790s and Yucatan in the 19th century. Such occasions have been rather rare, and their social and economic substratum has been equally central. Many civil wars have taken place, but they have developed a different character, typically in a social or socioeconomic direction and not in the direction of cultural wars as in the US and neither in the direction of racial or ethnic wars as in sub-Saharan Africa or the Balkans. Sometimes, civil wars have degenerated into ethnic conflicts like in Guatemala in the 1980s, but these occasions have been rather exceptional until recently. Truly enough, more recently there have been signs of leaders such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela using or allowing close circles to use a polarizing political rhetoric to spread racial and xenophobic messages as a mobilizing tool among the popular and previously marginalized sectors, but even these trends – with all their danger – have been contained so far.⁵²

In Latin America there has been a continuous search for fulfilling the unfulfilled vision of modernity, leading to the emergence of competitive models, of alternative and multiple modernities, with one model of modernity carrying the day and replacing previous ones, all of them voiced in attempts to accomplish and fulfill the unfulfilled promise of modernity, while in many cases resisting ferociously the implications of contemporary globalization. Accordingly, we find a continuous confrontation with the unfulfilled promises of modernity, a trend I see as derived from the truncated character of modernity in the region. We see time and again social movements and new leaderships confronting ideas originating in the Western centers, assuming their implications while addressing their shortcomings in demanding equality, recognition and fuller political participation. Illustrative is the movement of the Shining Path in Peru, which incorporated Maoists ideas relating them to earlier pre-colonial, Inca ideas, predicating Maoist revolution and enforced social equality by launching since the 1980s a guerrilla that attempted to attain the complete severance of connections between the Peruvian countryside and the circuits of capitalist commercialization and Liberal state control. Similarly, the Zapatistas, with their anti-global ideas, incorporated the idiom of human rights, unfulfilled for generations in the Mexican state of Chiapas and the surrounding areas, and tried to claim its fulfillment by opposing the implementation of the NAFTA trade agreement that they assumed would affect the rural populations negatively.

The distinctive yet multiple patterns of modernity in Latin America have been recurrently reinforced by the consciousness of the unfulfilled promises of Western-led modernity – and its core ideas and institutional derivatives of progress, development, equality and justice – which in this region became connected to the consciousness of being at the margins of the global scene and the developed world, being part of an unfulfilled dream of modernity, a truncated modernity, whose imbalances have been supposedly deepened within contemporary globalization. As indicated, in Latin America there has been a continuous search for fulfilling such unfulfilled visions of modernity, leading to the emergence of competitive models, of alternative and multiple modernities, competing with one another and yet, all of them voiced in attempts to accomplish and fulfill the promise of modernity, while in many cases resisting ferociously the implications of contemporary globalization.

Historically, part of the problem has been the dissociation and gap between the ideas of modernity and their unfolding in practice, their incomplete implementation. In theory, from the nineteenth century these countries have defined themselves as representative democracies, while in practice they have often become plebiscitary and ‘majoritarian’ democracies, exhibiting a strong presidentialism and a lack of

⁵¹ See David Lehmann, *Democracy and Development in Latin America*. Philadelphia: Temple University, 1990; and idem, *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation And Populist Culture In Brazil And Latin America*. Cambridge: Polity, 1996.

⁵² Luis Roniger, “Antisemitism. Real or Imagined? Chavez, Iran, Israel and the Jews”, ACTA Paper No. 33, Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, July 2009.

institutional checks-and-balances, which has led to the recurrent emergence of military and civilian leaders ruling through the exclusion, persecution and exile of oppositions, while claiming to represent the common will of the people.⁵³ According to the proclaimed ethos, these have been polities ruled constitutionally and within the bounds of the law, yet in practice the informal structures and illicit frameworks and networks have been interlinked and have affected the implementation of the law, disseminating institutional distrust and reinforcing patterns of mediated clientelism, favoritism and bending of the rule of law.

In contemporary times, the area witnesses new and increasing divergence and diversification of its multiple modernities. There are countries such as Brazil, which have managed to diversify their economies, succeeded in launching inclusionary policies that respect their societies' pluralism and have created modules of participatory regulation of civil society, while linking such policies to the integration of their countries in contemporary processes of globalization. There are some countries, most notably Mexico, Central American and some Caribbean nations, that while showing variable structural economic differentiation – more in Mexico and less in Central America – have opted to become integrated in the model of globalization and transnational commercial exchange led by the USA. There are other countries, led by Venezuela, that while still showing relatively little differentiation in its economic global integration, have chosen self proclaimed revolutionary, modern models that curtail free markets, threaten to curtail pluralism, reinvigorate radical nationalism and radicalize the interlinking of national and global strategies in the direction of South-South alliances contesting US hegemony in the region. Recent years have also witnessed a renewed impetus for a politics of identity, evinced in such varied trends as widening constitutional recognition of multiculturalism, a growing presence of indigenous and Black leadership, and heightened mobilization of subaltern groups. Beyond the contrasting and multiple models, whose lines of development are still uncertain, all contemporary Latin American countries are trying to face the forces of globalization while redefining and re-institutionalizing what they perceive as their own traditions rooted in the universalistic and participatory legacies of the Great Revolutions and the discourse of modernity, yet with far different institutional implications for the future of these societies. Not without reason, Latin America is a transnational cluster of societies and polities, whose boundaries keep evolving but whose modern dynamics makes it a vibrant setting for comparative sociological, political and cultural analysis.

⁵³ Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.