Neoliberalism and local governance: Radical developments in Latin America

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Abstract
In parts of Latin America, new developments in, and struggles over, governance at the local level have emerged as part of political and policy paradigms which to a greater or lesser degree reject neoliberalism. They can be found in a range of contexts, take a variety of different forms, and have experienced differing outcomes. This article critically explores a number of these developments. It argues that, both practically and conceptually, these developments expand the parameters of what is usually thought of as local governance, and may be of increasing relevance as the impact of the post-2008 financial crisis and economic depression creates conditions in parts of the north more comparable to those in which radical alternatives emerged in Latin America.

Introduction

In parts of Latin America, new developments in, and struggles over, governance at the local level have emerged as part of political and policy paradigms which to a greater or lesser degree reject neoliberalism. They can be found in a range of contexts, take a variety of different forms, and have experienced differing outcomes. This article critically explores a number of these developments. These fall into three categories: the subversion of neoliberal local institutions; refounding the (local) state; and non-statist or anti-statist forms of local governance. It argues that, both practically and conceptually, these developments and struggles expand the parameters of what is usually thought of as local governance, pointing to literatures around horizontalism, for example, and practices such as transnational activist networks of local actions. They demonstrate that there are alternatives to what can seem to be a closed system of neoliberalised local governance. As such, they may be of increasing relevance as the impact of the post-2008 financial crisis and economic depression creates conditions in parts of the north more comparable to those in which radical alternatives emerged

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in Latin America. It thus addresses several issues identified in the introduction to this special issue. These include the complex relationship between crisis (of neoliberalism) and radical developments at the local level; the importance of comparative studies and alternative models of local governance; and the need to unpack the relationship between the local sphere and the local state.

Context: Neoliberalism and local governance

Neoliberalism should be understood not just as a set of policies to promote a small state, low taxation, deregulated labour markets and other market-based solutions to a range of problems, but as a political project, a *process of neoliberalisation* 'to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites' (Harvey, 2005), freeing capital from the constraints of foregoing regimes of accumulation – Keynesianism and the welfare state in parts of the Global North, or import-substitution economies in much of Latin America.

However, while neoliberal *tendencies* are observable everywhere, actual practices are uneven and contingently produced in place-specific ways (Brenner et al., 2010), as they interact with 'inherited landscapes' of political, economic and social conditions. Neoliberalism is variegated (Brenner et al., 2010). But at the same time, some degree of patterning and commonality within this variety is frequently recognised. An influential distinction in the literature has been between what Peck and Tickell (2002) initially termed 'roll-back' and 'roll-out' phases of neoliberal state policy. The former (e.g. Thatcherism in the UK in the 1980s) clears the ground for neoliberalism and establishes core policy directions, while roll-out strategies (e.g. Blairite New Labour) extend and maintain the legitimacy of neoliberalism by managing the socio-spatial contradictions

and tensions that have arisen from and been exacerbated by neoliberal accumulation processes and the state strategies of the preceding period. However, these 'moments' do not necessarily take the form of temporally consecutive phases, and we have elsewhere used a terminology of '*aggressive*' and '*consolidating*' neoliberalism to take account of this (Geddes and Sullivan, 2011).[1]

Institutions and practices of governance at the local level have been transformed by neoliberalism. Much of the literature has been concerned, implicitly or explicitly, with the Global North where, it is argued, the restructuring of the local state has been geared towards a greater emphasis on releasing productive potential, economic growth and competitiveness, and shifting the balance of power towards capital and away from labour (Fuller and Geddes, 2008; Jessop, 2002). Brenner and Theodore (2002) describe the 'neoliberalization of urban space' (or 'neoliberal localization') as a process of destructive creation in which the old local state apparatus is replaced by new forms of local governance – including elite 'networked' forms of governance based upon public–private partnerships which restrict the purchase of local democratic forces; 'new public management' strategies; privatisation and competitive contracting of municipal services.

This process has not been without contestation (Wainwright, 2009). But for the most part in the Global North, this contestation has primarily taken the form of a tension between the aggressive and consolidating moments of neoliberalisation processes. An aggressive form of neoliberal local governance is one which is closely aligned with core neoliberal tenets, prioritising goals of competitiveness and efficiency to establish the conditions for private profitability, and private sector-dominated forms of partnership. In contrast, consolidating neoliberal local governance is likely to take the form of more centrist elite coalitions with a rhetoric of

'community leadership', and attempting to combine economic growth with social inclusion by modernising local state institutions in order to achieve 'more for less' in delivering public services (Geddes and Sullivan, 2011)

However, in parts of the Global South for some time, and increasingly in the North since the financial crisis of 2008, challenges to neoliberalism have intensified, and a further literature reflects not only the critique of neoliberalism but an engagement with so-called post- or anti-neoliberal movements, across both Global North and South (Guarneros-Meza and Geddes, 2010; Leitner et al., 2007; Peck et al., 2009). In particular, a very substantial literature now reflects the strength and diversity of opposition to neoliberalism in Latin America. This literature addresses a number of key themes. These include, first, attempts to position different states/governments in relation to post- or anti-neoliberalism. Thus the group of governments associated with ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America), including Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, may be seen as the leftward end of the broader continuum of 'pink tide' governments, compared to others such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile (Lievesley and Ludlam, 2009). Somewhat similarly, Petras distinguishes between what he calls a 'pragmatic left' (e.g. Venezuela, Bolivia), pragmatic neoliberalism (Brazil, Argentina) and 'doctrinaire neoliberalism' (Mexico, Chile). But are governments in countries such as Venezuela best discussed in the context of radical social democracy (as Lievesley and Ludlam do), as leftist governments (Prevost et al., 2012) or twenty-first century socialism (Burbach et al., 2013), to cite just three recent books? Secondly, the literature testifies to the complexity and variegation of post/anti-neoliberalism, both between and within states; the gap which often exists between anti-neoliberal rhetoric and the sober realities of government policies; and

the further dimensions introduced by scalar interactions between the local, national and supra-national (Yates and Bakker, 2013). Finally, the literature reflects the leading role of social movements in contesting neoliberalism in Latin America, the 'dance with dynamite' in Dangl's (2010) phrase between states and social movements, and the complex and contested interactions between older (party, trade union) forms of opposition and the forms and principles of action characterising social movements (Barrett et al., 2008; Burbach et al., 2013; Zibechi, 2010). In particular, the localised, territorially-based, but also nationally and transnationally-networked nature of many social movements is widely recognised (Sitrin, 2006; Zibechi, 2012).

Radical developments in local governance in Latin America

Several Latin American countries were test-beds for neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s, and both aggressive and consolidating forms of neoliberalised local governance can be found widely across Latin America (for example local participatory institutions in Mexico (Guarneros-Meza, 2009) and in Chile and Brazil (Leiva, 2008); plans to create privatised towns in Honduras (Lydersen, 2013); or 'good urban governance' in Bogota (Gilbert, 2006). Identifying numerous examples of free trade zones, Goldfrank and Schrank associate them with a Latin American municipal neoliberalism which uses 'tax breaks, regulatory rollbacks and the repression of organised labor to attract and retain foreign direct investment' (2009: 444).

However, we also find in parts of Latin America – while recognising that they remain a minority – more radical forms of local governance. These are the main focus of this article. Importantly, they can be found in national contexts of aggressive and consolidating neoliberalism, as well as those

Table 1. Characteristics of the cases.

	Context	Subverting/refounding/anti-state	Impetus from below/above
LPP Bolivia	Crisis of neoliberal regime	Subverting neoliberal institutions	Local activists (responding to national institutional change)
Participatory budgeting, Porto Alegre	Radical local political regime, consolidatory neoliberalism nationally	Refounding local state – deepening/participatory democracy	Local political party/activists
Consejos Comunales, Venezuela	National regime contesting neoliberalism	Refounding the local state	National government with grassroots support
Bolivian new constitution	National regime contesting neoliberalism	Refounding state and local state	National government, grassroots pressure
Zapatistas, Mexico	Neoliberal national regime	Anti-state	Grassroots social movement
Autonomous neighbourhoods, Argentina	Neoliberal national regime	Anti/non-state	Local activists and communities
MST and Via Campesina, Brazil	Consolidatory neoliberal national regime	Non-state	Activists at local level with national and transnational dimensions

where national governments contest neoliberalism. This raises, as we shall see, interesting issues about the relationship between national context and local governance. The emergence of these radical developments differentiates Latin American local governance from that of Europe or North America, and means that both the practice of local governance, and debate about it, is significantly different. It will be argued here that 'Northern' theorisations of local governance need to be widened considerably to take account of important developments in parts of Latin America.

A key factor in understanding the differences between the Global North and Latin America is the differential temporality of neoliberal crisis. Whereas in Europe and North America the major crisis within/of neoliberalism has occurred in the past few years, in much of Latin America crisis impacted much earlier – in the late 1990s

and early 2000s (Martins, 2012). Latin America has thus experienced a much longer period during which the inability of neoliberalism 'to either produce strong economic growth or decrease poverty and inequality' has opened up spaces for radical alternatives (Goldfrank, 2009: 45–46).

The paper will now discuss a number of the radical developments in local governance. These cases have been chosen to illustrate three themes:

- The subversion of neoliberal local governance institutions;
- 'Refounding' the (local) state; and
- Non-statist and/or anti-state modes of local governance.

In addition, the cases chosen offer a range of geographical and politico-economic contexts. Table 1 sets out the cases which will be

discussed; the context of each, referring back to the distinctions made in the previous section; their relation to these three themes; and whether the case in question was primarily one of local grassroots initiative or initiative from above.

The subversion of neoliberal local governance institutions

Decentralisation of the state was a part of the neoliberal agenda in Latin America in the 1980s, seen as a means of cutting back the central state and promoting democratisation (Goldfrank, 2009: 45), and bolstering popular support, as the impact of neoliberal policies in terms of increasing poverty and inequality began to threaten their legitimacy.

In Bolivia, neoliberal governments came to power initially in the early 1980s, with a popular mandate rooted in the perceived failure of import-substitution industrialisation and an economically interventionist state. They embarked on a set of policies which are now extremely familiar, especially the privatisation or closure of major extractive industries, encouraging foreign direct investment and the restructuring of the national state along neoliberal lines (Hylton and Thomson, 2007; Kohl and Farthing, 2006). These aggressive neoliberal policies were, however, complemented in the 1990s by a set of further consolidating policy measures impacting at the local level and signifying recognition by the regime of the need to buttress the hegemony of the neoliberal project as its negative effects (unemployment, rises in living costs) became much more apparent and popular discontent grew.

The primary policy initiative of this type was the 1994 Law of Popular Participation (LPP), which for the first time introduced a more comprehensive system of democratic local government in a country where previously municipal elections had taken place only in the larger cities. Whereas before local elections had been dominated by traditional political parties and urban political elites, under the LPP more than 250 new local governments elected councillors, including many from rural areas and from the indigenous population which is in the majority in Bolivia, especially in rural areas (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: chapter 6; see also Hylton and Thomson, 2007: 99–100). Furthermore, local government was allocated 20% of the national budget to spend (double the previous proportion), especially on infrastructural development and social investment in education and health. Localities were also required to set up municipal 'oversight committees' to monitor spending, leading to over 15,000 local grassroots organisations becoming involved in participatory institutions at the local level. However, the problem for the neoliberal regime was that while the new local governance system substantially increased participatory opportunities, it was not capable of changing fundamentally the material conditions of the majority of Bolivians. The resources available were limited, the new law did not address fundamental issues of land tenure and economic development, and the redistributive impact of increased local infrastructural and social expenditure did relatively little to counteract the broader ways in which neoliberal policies favoured capital, especially foreign capital and the local ruling class aligned with foreign capital. At the same time, oppositional forces, which initially had tended to dismiss the new institutions, quickly came to recognise, and then colonize them. As neoliberal hegemony fragmented in the late 1990s and the early years of this century, these new local spaces played an important role in the coming together of an opposition movement 'proposing a counter-hegemonic agenda that united … anti-neoliberal discourses [in] a heterogeneous coalition of indigenous people, labour movements, impoverished urban residents and rural coca producers' (Kohl

and Farthing, 2006: 146–147). The radicalisation of the new local state spaces set up in Bolivia by the LPP thus offers an example of the contribution which the occupation by oppositional forces of local governance institutions can play in contesting a national neoliberal regime.

'Refounding' the (local) state

In the Global North aggressive neoliberalisation has sought to cut back and emasculate the local state, while the consolidatory neoliberal project has been to modernise the (local) state and local governance. In contrast, radical Latin American practice has sought to reshape the local state in at least three ways, by:

- deepening democratic and especially participatory processes as a bulwark against the threat of neoliberalisation;
- creating new/alternative/parallel local governance structures and practices; and
- radically refounding the state, including the local state.

These categories overlap with each other in practice but it is useful to identify these different strands.

Attempts to *deepen local democratic and participatory processes* have become widespread in Latin America in a wide range of national politico-economic contexts (Chavez and Goldfrank, 2005; Goldfrank, 2011). The most well-known example is the experiment in participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre was an attempt to open up the local state machinery and involve all citizens, especially the poor, in deciding how it should work, a process intended to be both personally and socially transformative (Wainwright, 2009: chapter 5). Thus PB was not just, as the World Bank suggests, a tool for good governance, which would educate,

engage and empower citizens. It also aimed to 'invert the priorities of the municipal budget based on the criteria of social justice' (Baierle, 2011: 51). Thus unlike neoliberal local anti-poverty projects (such as New Deal for Communities in England or the EU's anti-poverty programmes of the 1980s and 1990s), it aimed to reconfigure local government spending as a whole towards the poor. The experiment in Porto Alegre must also be distanced from some of the pale shadows which have sprung up elsewhere. Crucial in Porto Alegre, but often difficult to replicate elsewhere, were the collaboration between the local PT (Workers Party) in power in Porto Alegre and well-organised social movements and civil society organisations; the substantial extent of the financial resources to which the PB process applied; and the thorough and inclusive preparation and organisation of the process. This was not a process dominated by a local elite, but by a broadly-based grassroots local leadership. Perhaps most importantly, PB in Porto Alegre was an attempt to strengthen popular support for local state expenditure on social programmes against the depredations of neoliberal ideas, not to provide a populist veil for cuts. But this radical vision has not lasted. The 'strong' version of PB in Porto Alegre itself has faded under the pressures of the loss of power of the PT locally, local bureaucratisation, and national government neglect or hostility (Baierle, 2011; Goldfrank, 2011). Despite significant successes over a considerable number of years, a radical grassroots initiative has thus proved unsustainable in a consolidatory neoliberal context. And while many other versions of PB have sprung up both in Brazil and across the world, sometimes having positive local impact, in many cases the radical idea has been de-radicalised and co-opted within neoliberal agendas (Sintomer et al., 2008).

Rather different, though also attempting to deepen participatory practices, are various

attempts to set up *new local governance institutions* in parallel with, in opposition to, or in the absence of, existing municipal institutions.

In Venzuela, the establishment of community councils (*consejos comunales*) at neighbourhood level can be seen both as buttressing and challenging the existing local state, and a process of local institution building helping to create a 'new geometry of power' (Massey, 2010) which can both empower local activists and enable new local leaders to emerge and promote the 'Bolivarian Revolution' (Marcano, 2009; Motta, 2009), and create conduits for the distribution of oil wealth. These councils are described by the government as the embodiment of participatory democracy, handing over power locally to organised popular movements. A law of 2006 allowed local citizen groups in small areas (average 400 households) to form neighbourhood 'micro-governance' institutions (Goldfrank, 2011: 283), to initiate policy for their local areas and oversee community development projects. Funding from central and local government as well as from locally-raised resources amounted to US$5bn in 2007, shortly after their formation (Gott, 2008). This is a large scale initiative – by 2011 there were approximately 31,000 consejos (Muhr, 2012). However commentators emphasise the tension between top-down and bottom up influences, with strong pressures from the state to set up councils and the establishment of a national ministry to oversee their funding and operation, while the existing local government system complains about being undermined. Those councils which have been able to consolidate their position have been more successful, but some have not, and the tensions between the existing municipalities and the new councils can contribute to what Ellner (2010) describes as the problems of organisational solidification and institutionalisation which have faced the

Chavez administrations. Fernandes puts this in different terms, describing the Bolivarian state as 'post-neoliberal' in the sense that neoliberalism is no longer the dominant guiding policy but continues to surface in a range of conflicting rationalities and policies that are brought into uneasy co-existence', with 'a collision between the urban social movements and the instrumental rationality of bureaucrats' (2010: 19 and 27). The *consejos comunales* thus represent a primarily top-down initiative, although with strong grassroots support, and a question remains as to their future if the national political context should change.

Whereas the *consejos comunales* represent the introduction of a specific set of institutions into the existing state apparatus, more far-reaching, at least potentially, are attempts to thoroughly *reshape the state* in its entirety. In Bolivia (as also in Ecuador) the 'refounding of the state' has taken the form of a new constitution drafted by a specially-convened popular constituent assembly and ratified by a national referendum. The new constitution – in principle at any rate – entrenches a range of rights and guarantees, especially but not only for the indigenous majority, and starts to disembed the 500-year-old colonial (neo)liberal state. The new constitution redefines the concept of the state from a plurinational, multicultural and communitarian perspective,[2] opening up 'multiple types of direct, universal and communitarian representation' (Prada Alcoreza, 2009: 2).

Particularly relevant here is what the constitution says about the territorial structure and organisation of the state. Here, four types of autonomy are recognised in a decentralised model: departmental, regional, municipal and indigenous. These are not dependent on each other and have equal constitutional rank. While the first three 'types of autonomy' are familiar, the particular feature of the Bolivian constitution lies in

the recognition alongside departments, regions and municipalities of the right to self-government of Bolivia's indigenous 'nations and peoples and peasant communities whose population shares territory, culture, history, language and its own legal, political, social and economic organisation or institutions' (Prada Alcoreza, 2009: 7). An important implication of this is the recognition of traditional collective and communal, rather than individualised, practices of local leadership, which remain strongly embedded.

Following the ratification of the constitution, the process of putting it into practice is now beginning. As with the community councils in Venezuela, this is inevitably raising issues about overlapping institutional jurisdictions at the local level, as well as about local institutional capacity and tensions between grassroots and indigenous organisations and the old state bureaucracy surviving from the liberal colonial state. Like the Venezuelan *consejos*, this is primarily a top-down national initiative (although again built on very strong grassroots social movement pressure support) by a government contesting not only neoliberalism but also the legacy of colonialism. It is an ambitious attempt to rethink the capitalist and colonialist nation state (Sologuren, 2010) in which new local governance institutions are key to its objectives – but the outcome is as yet unclear.

Non-statist and/or anti-state modes of local governance

A distinction can now be made between the three examples discussed so far – PB in Porto Alegre, the Venezuelan community councils, and the refounding of the Bolivian state – where the main thrust has been to work 'in and against' the existing local state, or to radically reform it, and other experiences in which non-statist and anti-statist currents and principles are dominant.[3] In a moment we will look at examples of this trend in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, but first it is interesting to note that in Bolivia the current represented by the constitutionalism of the MAS, reflecting a decision to occupy the state apparatus, albeit with the intention of transforming it, is opposed by significant currents within the social movements. Thus Revilla (2011) suggests that, in the city of El Alto, the occupation of the local institutions set up by the neoliberal regime had the effect of reducing the autonomy of local social movements and creating a split between leadership and base. For Zibechi (2010) the inclusion in the new constitution of the autonomous indigenous communities represents a statist incorporation of the indigenous tradition.

Perhaps the best known example of anti-statist local governance comes from the Zapatistas. The Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, which erupted in 1994 and still continues, had its roots in the exploitation and oppression of the peasantry in an area dominated by large cattle ranches and coffee plantations which confine peasant cultivation to the margins, and in the policies of the national and provincial Mexican state as the chief agent of the dominant classes. A characteristic of the Zapatista struggle has been its combination of local rootedness with global appeals for support and for parallel activism elsewhere. Early attempts by the Zapatistas to secure concessions from the Mexican government largely failed, resulting in a long period of stalemate in which the state pressurised and coerced the Zapatista-controlled localities in a range of ways but stopped short of a serious attempt to eradicate the rebellion by means of major military action. The Zapatistas have now established their own autonomous local institutions or 'counter-spaces' (Hesketh, 2012) alongside those of the Mexican state in the areas of Chiapas they control. The

exercise of indigenous autonomy is thus a reality in the Zapatista lands, if a precarious one. The current autonomous structures of 'caracoles' (physical administrative areas) and 'good government juntas' each combining a number of autonomous municipalities, 'extend the autonomous infrastructure of schools, clinics, production workshops and shops which the Zapatistas have been building' since the early years of the rebellion. They are not only a response to the failure to get indigenous rights secured in the state constitution, but an attempt to put into practice alternative forms of organisation, such as the famous principle of 'leading by obeying', and rotation of leadership roles (Chatterton, 2009). The existence side by side of the local institutions of the Mexican state and those of the Zapatistas can be seen as a form of dual power, and an attempt to develop a form of local governance which does not reproduce the alienated form of the capitalist state. The extent of change from traditional forms of social and political organisation which the Zapatistas have been able to achieve is much debated, with some commentators questioning in particular a failure to change gender relations (Barmeyer, 2009). Others see progress as 'a tendency, subject to ups and downs, contradictions and errors, but it is a dominant tendency' (Marcos, 2003: 2; Mentinis, 2006).

In Argentina, the economy went into freefall at the end of 2001, leading to a collapse of the political establishment. Large numbers of citizens were made unemployed and/or lost their savings, and were thrown onto their own resources. The Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD) emerged as a major force in response to these crisis conditions, in a struggle 'framed within the emergence of loosely networked autonomous neighbourhoods. These (were) the basis for making an autonomous local politics of place using direct action as a survival strategy in the face of widespread unemployment',

providing services, making food and shelter, selling locally made products, providing education via 'a militant, mass and barrio-based movement against the state and capital', especially in poorer industrial urban neighbourhoods (Chatterton, 2005: 546). This movement was joined by others, the so-called *caceroleros*, mainly drawn from now-impoverished middle class strata (Prevost, 2012). To a great extent these autonomous neighbourhoods proved quite short-lived, as the government introduced large-scale social and employment programmes which succeeded in eroding the basis of the piquetero movement (Feliz, 2012). However, the autonomous neighbourhoods represented a form of local self-governance in a time of crisis, and left behind experiences of self-organisation, direct democratic participation and non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian practices, which have been influential across Latin America and beyond (Sitrin, 2006).

One major movement influenced by such principles is that of landless rural workers. In Brazil, the landless workers movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* – MST), with over 1 million members, has been responsible for a long campaign of mobilisation and land occupations. A rural political movement advocating the fundamental transformation of the structures of power via grassroots collective mobilisation, the MST is a response to the inability or unwillingness of traditional political parties, including the PT (*Workers Party*), to address the needs of the rural poor (Vanden, 2012). In most cases, land occupation is accompanied not only by the development of cooperative farms but also houses, schools and health facilities (Dangl, 2010: 122). The MST thus takes on a local government role. Alongside the MST, *La Via Campesina* is a transnational peasant network of grassroots organisations and movements of small-scale producers from various places around the world, mostly from the South

(www.viacampesina.org). Movements such as this reflect the failure of the neoliberal order to ensure adequate living and working conditions for peasant communities, while market-driven neoliberal restructuring of the state leaves less and less space for democratic practices. In contrast, organisations such as *Via Campesina* and the MST 'are repoliticising a public sphere of their own … contesting and redefining the politics of place and scale, that is, the socio-political construction of the local, the national or the global, which usually serves to confine rural movements into a bounded local space concerned with traditional – read pre-modern or backward – ways of life, identities and cultures' (Massicotte, 2010: 74; Woods, 2006). Such place-based grassroots rural movements represent, again, a radical non-state form of local governance in which the rural poor have established their own local institutions in the face of the absence or hostility of the capitalist state.

Echoes of these Latin American autonomous practices and institutions of autonomous local governance, or 'territories in resistance' as Zibechi (2012) terms them, are evident in the *Occupy* and *Indignados* movements in Europe, most notably in Spain and Greece, where the social impact of the crisis and austerity measures has been greatest. To date, however, such movements, lacking the rootedness and capacity of those in Latin America, constitute primarily symbolic rather than material 'territories of resistance'.

Discussion and conclusions

This final section of the paper offers an assessment of the cases discussed and comments on their wider policy and theoretical relevance. Table 2 summarises some of the issues.

Inevitably perhaps, the track record of these radical developments is mixed. Some have not survived (the Argentinian

autonomous neighbourhoods), or live on only as a pale shadow of what they once were (participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre). But others have survived against long odds (the Zapatistas) and/or have achieved significant gains for marginalised groups (MST and Via Campesina, the consejos comunales), or have helped to lay the basis for wider contestation of neoliberalism (occupation of the local spaces created by the Bolivian LPP).

But both the 'successes' and 'failures' need to be caveated. The 'successes' face two tensions and challenges in particular. Those (such as the consejos comunales and the embedding of indigenous traditions in the Bolivian constitution) which create new local state institutions face the challenge of 'delivery', in the face of opposition or lack of capacity within the existing state apparatus – the 'enemy within' as it is sometimes called. The limited capacity of the state to implement change is an important reason why reforming governments have found it difficult to push through their programmes. Alongside this is a cultural challenge to oppositional activists finding themselves in government to adapt to the needs of governance. Capacity for opposition does not necessarily translate to capacity for proposition. Secondly, in cases such as the Zapatistas and the autonomous local institutions of the MST, there is the constant threat from hostile or at best indifferent governments.

In the case of the 'failures', the caveat is very different. Both participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre and the Argentinian autonomous neighbourhoods have had a major impact in the wider world. The former has stimulated many attempted copies, promoted both by governments (national and local) and by local communities and groups of citizens. The fact that few of these have attempted to replicate the more radical elements of Porto Alegre only partially negates

Table 2. Assessing the cases.

	Assessment	Wider policy relevance	Theoretical perspectives
LPP Bolivia	Important basis for contestation of neoliberalism	Relevant to other anti-neoliberal struggles	Local state as terrain of class struggle
Participatory budgeting, Porto Alegre	Initial radicalism, since diluted	Widely imitated in less radical forms	Participatory local democracy
Consejos Comunales, Venezuela	Significant institutional change, citizen involvement, impact on policy. Tensions with pre-existing state institutions	Neighbourhood microgovernance	Local state as terrain of class struggle
Bolivian new constitution	Local indigenous institutions embedded in constitution. Statisation of social movements. From principle to practice?	Constitutional basis for radical change	Refounding vs. modernisation of the (local) state
Zapatistas, Mexico	Deepened democracy and autonomous service provision but in confined area	Influential via, for example, World Social Forum	State/social movements debate
Autonomous neighbourhoods, Argentina	Local impact but short-lived	Occupy, Indignados, Syriza	Horizontalism
MST and Via Campesina, Brazil	Local autonomous governance and basic service provision, but constantly under threat	Transnational network	Radical networked social movement governance?

the worldwide stimulus given to deepening local democracy. The latter, via global networks such as the World Social Forum, have offered principles for local communal responses to economic crisis, the impact of which can now be seen in oppositional grassroots movements in the Global North. It may be that networks of activists, rather than bureaucratic state policy transfer mechanisms, are of most relevance in disseminating radical experiences and inserting them into existing practices from below, rather than from above. More generally, struggles such as those of the Zapatistas, Via Campesina and the MST permit the hope that another world is possible – that there is an alternative to what can seem a closed system of neoliberalised (local) governance. And, while the context of much greater poverty and inequality in Latin America than in the Global North may in the past have been an important factor inhibiting such 'policy' transfer, the impact of the post-2008 recession in areas like Mediterranean Europe is now bringing the two contexts closer together. However, it must be remembered that many of the Latin American experiences discussed here arose out of long periods of organised resistance by strong social movements to the neoliberal state, conditions which are not (yet at any rate) present in the European context.

Clearly though, national context matters for local outcomes – but this is not as simple as it might seem. Supportive governments can both promote and sustain radical local developments, and left or centrist ones may be more likely to do so than more aggressively neoliberal ones. But local radicalism may equally emerge in opposition to harsh neoliberal policies. And hostile or indifferent governments – of whatever point on the political spectrum – can undermine radical local initiatives, as in the cases of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre or the Argentine autonomous neighbourhoods. However, the Zapatista rebellion demonstrates the capacity of a strongly rooted local struggle to survive in such conditions – although the Mexican government has both fomented internal tensions and prevented any wider replication within Mexico.

Some of the radical local developments in Latin America feed into literatures and debates in the Global North. For example, participatory budgeting experiments such as that in Porto Alegre can be located within debates on public participation and participatory democracy. But in many cases, the theoretical perspectives and debates around the developments discussed in this paper are not those within which local governance is discussed in the North. Two examples will be discussed here.

The first concerns the nature of debate about the state. Whereas in the Global North a dominant theme in the debate about the role of the state in local governance concerns the respective roles of the state and the market (and such debates are also important in Latin America), radical debates in Latin America concern the respective roles of the state and civil society. Like a debate of some decades ago in the UK (Cockburn, 1977) they concern the potential of the (local) state as a terrain of social struggle, and the possibilities and problems for radical action of working within and through the (local) state.

For one current in this debate, the occupation of (local) state institutions by radical social movements and, more broadly, electoralist strategies of political parties which see themselves as the 'political expression' of social movements, are important means of achieving and institutionalising the objectives of radical social movements (Burbach et al., 2013). Against this, a powerful perspective argues for the autonomy of social movements from the (local) state, regarding the state as an alienated form of domination and electoral strategies as a subordination of horizontalist principles to the alienated forms of bourgeois democracy (Holloway, 2005). Such radical decentring of the (local) state is a valuable corrective to any tendency to automatically privilege local government and other local state institutions – including state-managed 'partnership' institutions – in our analysis of the local. It may, however, at least in some cases, be too simplistic to conclude that 'autonomy' from the state implies having no dealings with it. Many oppositional movements have some form of relationship, even collaboration, with the state, and Menser (2009) suggests that when this is the case we should think more in terms of movements seeking to 'fracture' the state, transferring or reclaiming some parts for civil society.

Secondly, a key characteristic of struggles such as those of the MST and Via Campesina in Brazil and the autonomous neighbourhoods in Argentina is that they are 'networked'. In Argentina, this meant a network of autonomous neighbourhood actions, while in the case of Via Campesina local struggles are linked in a wider, global network. These networks are integral to the local struggles, providing support and sharing experience. The global support network which the Zapatistas have built is a similar case. So this is, in a sense, 'networked local governance' – but it is a far cry from the 'networked local governance' of the Global

North, with its state-managed local partnerships subordinated to national or European programmes, and from debates about the shift from government to governance or about trust or community leadership in partnerships. Instead, a key concept and literature is that around 'horizontalism'. As Sitrin (2006) suggests, *horizontalidad* is a word which has come to embody the social arrangements and principles of organisation of these movements: 'As its name suggests, *horizontalidad* implies democratic communication on a level plane and involves – or at least intentionally strives towards – non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian creation rather than reaction. It is a break with vertical ways of organising and reacting' (Sitrin, 2006: 3), in political parties and trade unions as well as within the state, and foregrounds local action. In his identification of local 'counter-spaces' as 'territories in resistance', Zibechi argues that 'the crisis of the old territoriality of the factory and the farm and (neoliberal) capital's reformulation of old modes of domination' has led to the 'territorialisation' and 'territorial rootedness' of contemporary anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist movements in Latin America. By this he emphasises the roots of contemporary radical movements in local spaces secured through long periods of struggle, spaces of autonomy from not only the state but from traditional political parties and trade unions oriented towards the state. Thus for today's radical social movements in Latin America, he suggests, the taking and holding of local spaces is the key to strategy, replacing the strike or electoral or clientilist politics: 'territory is the space in which to build a new social organisation collectively, where new subjects take shape and materially and symbolically appropriate their space (Zibechi, 2012: 14 and 19).

Discourses such as those of Sitrin and Zibechi have proved powerful, not only in Latin America but in the Global North. But

this has prompted numerous critiques. Many argue that horizontalist practices do not dispense with leaders, and indeed that hierarchy within networks may be more difficult to combat as it is informal rather than formal. Alcoff (2012) suggests that the need is to recognise and acknowledge power differentials within so-called horizontalist practices, and indeed to exploit positively rather than deny difference. Studies also point to the difficult and complex 'operational logic' of horizontalist networks, especially perhaps the gaps which open between grassroots and those working transnationally (Routledge and Cumbers, 2009). A further line of critique is that horizontalist action lacks vision and strategy (Marcus, 2012) – and indeed an essence of horizontalism is to focus on the small steps, the revolution that can be achieved in the every day, the exploitation of the cracks and fissures of power. In particular, it is argued that the rejection of systematic analyses by horizontalists results in a failure to confront capital and the capitalist state at the systemic level (Robinson, 2008). This is undoubtedly and straightforwardly true of some strands of horizontalism, and there are parallels here with critiques of 'everyday making' theorists in the North (Davies, 2013a, 2013b). But it is not a critique that can so easily be levelled at other strands, which demonstrate a profound anti-capitalism while criticising traditional forms of hierarchical, authoritarian, left action (e.g. Holloway, 2005). The question is rather whether the 'systemic' nature of capitalism, and the point at which contestation should be focussed, lies 'up there' or 'down here', or both, and if the latter how 'verticalism' and horizontalism can support each other. Practices such as those of Via Campesina, and the Zapatistas illustrate both the potential and the problems of such attempts.

Perspectives such as these raise many difficult questions. To what extent are such social

and indigenous movements 'progressive', in relation not only to neoliberalism but to gender, for example (Lucero, 2009; Pape, 2009); can social movements 'govern' as well as they can oppose (Shultz, 2008); can movements (such as the Zapatistas) survive long term without themselves becoming institutionalised; how effectively can the principles of direct democracy on which they are founded work at larger than the local scale? And, while horizontalists like Sitrin and Zibechi insist on the autonomy of movements from the (local) state, 'their own evidence shows that the movements thoroughly imbricate themselves with the state even as they attempt to escape its strictures' (Hammond, 2013: 82). It is questions such as these, though, that are at the forefront of radical debate in Latin America today. And, while these perspectives may seem remote from a concern with local governance today in much of the Global North, that might no longer be the case if economic crisis continues to create there the conditions which gave rise to the experiences discussed in this paper.

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Notes

1. Consolidatory neoliberalism contains dominant elements which directly contribute to the neoliberal class project, and subaltern elements which contribute to managing the problems – especially the threats to cohesion and the hegemony of neoliberalism – which aggressive neoliberalism produces.
2. The term communitarian does not have the associations in Bolivia which it does in the US and UK.
3. The tension between statist and anti-statist currents correlates to an extent with that between developmentalists and environmentalists, and sits alongside other tensions, such as that between anti-capitalists and those whose opposition is to neoliberalism more closely defined.

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