Chapter I
Transformations of the social ond

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Chapter 1

Transformations of the Social Bond

1. Introduction

Despite significant social and cultural divisions and inequalities, Latin America was long considered to possess a unique form of social cohesion revolving around the way in which its social bond was forged. Central to this social bond was the structural tension between hierarchy and equality (Martuccelli, 2002). While in a naively evolutionist conception it would appear to have established itself somewhere in between “community” and “society,” it was, in fact, an innovative experience that emerged in the specific context of expanding capitalism and the formation of modern societies. In contrast to a more homogeneous aspiration to egalitarian interaction and the attendant horizontalist ideal, in a dual system of this nature, individuals demonstrated an aspiration of egalitarianism and an affirmation of individual autonomy, while simultaneously corroborating the “natural” permanence of hierarchical elements and personal dependence.

Beginning with independence, then, Latin American countries developed their own unique forms of hierarchy and egalitarianism, of individuation and dependency.

Without the referent of inherited aristocratic or meritocratic status, hierarchy was established mostly through economic and political power, while individualism was expressed more through deviations from the norm.
than through the assertion of individual rights enshrined in the constitution or legal systems. It was a universe of ambiguity that has been admirably depicted with respect to the rural world in the rich store of Latin American literature, and was foretold for the urban milieu in the tango “Cambalache,” in the first cosmopolitan city in the region.

While not exclusive to Latin America, this type of social bond, played a powerful role on the continent at the practical and symbolic levels (to the point that this tension is at the heart of the debate over the legacy of the experiences of conquest and colonization). Nonetheless, while this model could be considered a product of a combination of structural tensions, the latter are not merely a functional adaptation of the contradictory demands of individuation and hierarchy. Rather they reflect original and creative forms of sociability, ways of being and relating that are valued as marks of national identity and take on distinct profiles in each country. Darcy Ribeiro referred to them as new “civilizatory” forms.

There is no better illustration of the power of this model than the fact that despite its inherent tensions, it has become the underlying premise for the notion of a self-sustaining social bond. Its imprint is found on all types of social relations: workplace hierarchies (patronage, labor relations in the formal sector, and trade unions), gender, intergenerational or, significantly, interethnic relations, in addition to the interactions that may occur in the public and civic spheres, and obviously the religious and traditional aspects that constitute its symbolic underpinnings.

Inherent to all of these relationships was a specific game through which the future would be constructed. The trick was to preserve, in a single move, a certain hierarchical verticality, while simultaneously making progress in the establishment of more horizontal, egalitarian relationships. The tension generally was played out through a combination of moments of cordiality and powerful, palpable subordination processes with their frequently paternalistic overtones (Nugent, 1998). Strangely, this dual social bond was experienced as at once stable and solid and constantly at risk and in flux. Social relations were submersed in a silent interactive tension in the quest for certain connivance between open abuse and discreet defiance. Behind the façade of respect for hierarchy, a myriad of everyday questionings were concealed.

Notwithstanding the national and regional variations of this model, the important thing is that this type of sociability with its contradictory shades of presumed domesticity and the longing for equality produced a social bond that was perceived as particularly solid for a very long time. We
repeat: if social cohesion was a problem in Latin America, it was essentially under the dual and paradoxical threat of “barbarity” (the fear that it would be ruptured by grassroots sectors) and “civilization” (individualism and the contractualism promoted by the elites). It was in between these two extremes — where everyone found his or her “natural” space — that society was possible.

The national variations are, of course, considerable. In some countries or regions, the social bond is more or less equidistant between the two imperatives. One example is Brazil, where social life evolved in the midst of an irreducible ambiguity (Da Matta, 1978; Buarque de Holanda, 2006), at least until recently (Sorj, 2000). In other situations (such as in Andean countries), the social bond tends toward the vertical, in which a “double code” in social relations allows for the simultaneous expression of discrimination and challenge (UNDP, 2000). Sometimes the tension is inscribed in a framework that retain some hierarchical elements, despite being essentially egalitarian. Such a case is Argentina where the famous, “you don’t know who you’re talking to,” and the inevitable “Why should I care?” neatly sums up the tension underlying social relations (O’Donnell, 1984). Meanwhile, countries such as Chile or Uruguay tend to accentuate — at least as the relational ideal — the importance of respect for law and standards (Araujo, 2006).

The relative equidistance between equality and hierarchy, between individualism and ties of personal dependency, gradually mutated over the course of Latin American history under the influence of an increasingly urban and better educated population, workers’ movements and socialist ideologies, communications systems and the growth of vast metropolis with their anonymity and sub-cultures. But even though Latin American societies showed tremendous capacity to change while simultaneously retaining their ambiguities, the existing equilibriums have eroded rapidly in recent decades, giving way gradually but irrevocably to growing demands for equality and individuation.

Latin America is currently undergoing an active process of democratization (demands for equality and individuation) in all areas of social relations. Everywhere the horizontality of the social bond is becoming a core demand. There are many reasons for this, ranging from the unquestionable contribution of expanded educational coverage or the mass media, the consolidation of an egalitarian yearning conveyed by the city, the affirmation of the human rights discourse as the dominant semantic field, the feminist movement and the cultural affirmation of women, ethnic
minorities or youth, without overlooking, of course, the impact — as we shall see in the next chapter — of a culture of mass consumption and political changes. Here too we should include recent struggles for democratization, as well as the new economic model which, by emphasizing the market's role in the generation of wealth and fiscal responsibility, has increased public awareness that citizens are the main source of state resources, with the attendant effect of delegitimizing the universe of relations rooted in a state whose aureate floats somewhere high above society. This constitutes perhaps one of the most sweeping transformations in the history of the continent.

This genuine and profound democratic revolution is not manifest, however, at the institutional level; at least not yet. As we will see, the political system itself remains particularly fragile in some countries and, on more than one occasion, the democratic aspiration has had a destabilizing effect on our institutions. Hence the difficulty encountered by those who focus solely on the political sphere and therefore fail to grasp the relevance of the change in progress. At the moment, the democratization process begins and ends with individuals, with their expectations and their initiatives. This clearly is not enough and there is an enormous risk that without the institutional channels to formalize and translate them, these factors will have a negative impact on social cohesion and on the stability of democracies. At the present time, however, they clearly represent the promise of another type of more democratic and horizontal social cohesion.

In any event, the outcome of this silent democratic revolution will not be long in coming. Transformations are visible in many social settings, starting with gender relations — a high profile issue in recent decades (and rightly so) and therefore accorded less attention here — as is the revolution of expectations and their paradoxical egalitarian dynamism, which has been the driving force behind consumption in recent years.

In this chapter we will outline the main consequences of the changing social bond for religion, inter-ethnic or race relations, urban dynamics, culture, the imaginary conveyed by the media, and emigration. All of these areas contain a patent, albeit varied and sometimes contradictory, affirmation of the growing desire for equality. It is a process that lends itself to ambivalent readings. The egalitarian demand — whose main standard-bearers today are individual actors — destabilizes the old social relations and their influence vis-à-vis the hierarchy. From this viewpoint, the social bond is no longer that sphere of co-presences that lent itself to a conception of social cohesion as self-sustaining. Moreover, beyond institutional or
contractual space, this egalitarian project requires the development of a new sociability among individuals, one that is more horizontal and less abusive than that which has been experienced on the continent until very recently.

2. Religion and religiosity

Religion, or perhaps we should say religiosity, is probably the main source of ontological security, moral support and hope, particularly among the poorest sectors. It would be difficult to explain the capacity to endure adversity, sustain ethical mores, or trust in a better future without taking into account religious beliefs. Most commonly observed, however, are unique forms of religiosity, meaning that individuals are often sustained by personalized and often syncretic or hybrid beliefs: the protection of a certain saint or some variation of Marianism, for example, rather than an active and obedient observance of institutionalized customs and authorities. Catholicism, the continental hegemonic religion that was imposed on the indigenous and African slave populations, displayed an enormous capacity to absorb and syncretize local religions, despite its efforts to repress and eradicate them, which persist to this day in some areas, albeit to a lesser degree than before. A vernacular facet of Latin American religiosity, traditional religious syncretism now features a new twist. Previously rooted almost exclusively in large social group contexts, the spiritual makeover increasingly reflects a tendency towards more individualized recompositions.

Latin American institutional religion and religiosity are a fundamental source of social cohesion not only because they offer individual support, but also due to their role in the construction of culture and politics. As indicated by its etymological roots, religion (religare = to bind) is a powerful unifier in Latin American societies. The cultural base of mestizo America is sustained to this day by grassroots forms of religiosity that combine Christianity with ancestral beliefs and rituals, whether from the Quechua, Mapuche, or Maya, or various African traditions. In Catholic churches, town squares, or on beaches — where each year millions of people pay homage to Yemanja, the African goddess of the sea — the mix of traditions produced the unique

4 This section is based on the work of Ari Pedro Oro, "Religião, coesão social e sistema político na América Latina".
cultural phenomenon of a common religious substratum upon which the most diverse versions and traditions coexist, in many cases peacefully.

This particular ability to live with diversity went hand in hand with another virtuous process, namely the successful laicization of Church-State relations. This clearly has not been a homogeneous process, as illustrated by Mexico’s Cristiada rebellion in the 1920s, during which more people were killed than during the Revolution of the preceding decade, or by the powerful influence of the Catholic Church hierarchy in 20th century Argentine politics. In general, however, Latin American societies have been exempt from religious wars and the separation of Church and State and the secularization of politics are well established.

In recent years, this universe has been transformed by the growing presence of evangelical churches, many of them native to the region. Extremely enterprising and with a tremendous capacity for proselytizing, these churches have installed themselves on several continents and built communications empires. Paralleling the growing presence of evangelical religions and cults primarily among the working classes, other religions and spiritual or self-help movements have proliferated among the middle classes in particular, feeding new trends such as the massive presence of “whites” in Afro-Brazilian cults or the preponderance of evangelism among Mexican and Guatemalan indigenous peoples. This transformation has been spurred by the erosion of tradition as a source of identity formation, which ultimately transfers to each individual the task of defining his or her religious identity.

This movement, as a whole and as a sum of its many parts, must be taken into account when evaluating the role of religion in social cohesion in our countries. We will therefore employ a circular reasoning process in our discussion. We begin with the vitality of religious affiliation to underscore the continued relevance and force of the Catholic faith alongside growing religious differentiation. We then examine the mechanics of the relations between the state and religion, and the role of politics therein. Only after examining, albeit briefly, all of these factors, in the last section we discuss their ramifications for social cohesion in democracy.

**The universe of religious affiliations**

In the past as well as today to speak of religion in Latin America was to refer mainly to Christianity. In effect, Christianity is impregnated in Latin American societies. It is woven into the social fabric of everyday life on the subcontinent in the sense that numerous collective events and activities,
national, regional, and local holidays and religious symbols — which are widely visible even in public places — reflect the Christian tradition and are guided by its liturgical calendar. Besides Christianity, however, other religious practices and rituals associated with grassroots religions, which may involve mediumistic trances, esoterica, neopaganism and so forth, shape a uniquely sacred territorially comprising traditional sacred spaces (churches, temples, centers, oratories, chapels, pilgrimage and festival sites, cemeteries) as well as private spaces that have a religious function. Some examples of this are the homes of healers and intercessors, pastors of small Pentecostal churches, leaders and members of evangelical groups “cell churches,” mediumistic centers, spirits or therapeutic centers, charismatic and meditation groups.

One might argue, in the tradition of Maurice Halbwachs, that all religious celebrations and rituals, including holidays and the entire religious geography described above, are important to reinforce the collective religious memory, but they are also effective social attractors, which fosters social integration and by extension, the cohesion of social groups. In other words, beyond strengthening collectively shared symbolic universes, religious practices and sacred spaces are also venues for social gathering and for solidifying social bonds. The integrating aspect of Latin American religiosity is likewise apparent in the vast array of church-sponsored assistance projects — school-based programs and health clinics, or services for orphans, the elderly, the homeless, the poor, migrants and other disadvantaged groups — which are often carried out in conjunction with government authorities to promote social solidarity and address the problems of the neediest people.

A survey on religious identification in 20 Latin American countries showed that Catholicism and Christianity continue to be the leading religions. Catholicism accounts for 79% of religious self-identification and is the institution in which Latin Americans place the greatest trust. According to the polling firm Latinobarómetro, from 2003 to 2004, the degree of confidence expressed in the Catholic Church rose from 62% to 71%. The countries with the highest proportions of people who identify themselves as Catholic are Venezuela, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. Meanwhile, 12% of Latin Americans report belonging to an Evangelical faith and of these, 70% are members of the Pentecostal church. Guatemala (39% of the population) and Honduras (28.7%) are the most heavily evangelical countries on the continent. Catholicism and Christianity then, are no longer synonymous in the region, as they were in the past.
Nonetheless, 91% of Latin Americans identify themselves as Christians of some sort. The remaining smaller percentages are identified as belonging to mediumistic (African American, spiritist, or Ayahuasca) religions, eastern faiths, Judaism, mystical or esoteric streams, and the non-religious.

The extraordinary expansion of Pentecostalism in Latin America is one of the most significant religious phenomena of the past thirty years. North American in origin but possessing a tremendous capacity to adapt to the diverse religious, social and cultural realities of the subcontinent, Pentecostalism has penetrated different social strata, although its main client base is found among the poorest and most disadvantaged urban dwellers. As a conversionist religion, it has a profound influence on the subjective experiences of its followers, who tend to adopt a new lifestyle and find new meaning for their existence. Although this occurs to varying degrees depending on the dictates of each church, most require a puritan sort of behavior, which means abstaining from “worldly pleasures,” such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, and irreverent parties, and espousing a new morality that condemns abortion, adultery, and homosexuality, all in the context of a symbolic break from the “world.”

Being a Pentecostal Christian — whether by birth or conversion — brings with it certain therapeutic benefits, such as alcoholism and drug abuse recovery, and a “family and work ethic” associated with saving, valuing success, and earning money “with God’s help.” This has an effect on gender relations and leads to a new form of sociability. Church-centered social networks become a key source of information about job opportunities, including those available outside of the country, where Catholics frequently “convert” to Pentecostalism in order to approach the Pentecostal churches where their compatriots, and solidarity networks, can be found.

This latter point is important: as with other faiths, Pentecostal religious practice is not confined to the sphere of subjectivity. It has many repercussions for daily life, building solidarity and becoming a purveyor of meaning and collective identification. Oftentimes, however, the more mundane facet, which is quite modern in its use of the communications media, has lent itself to a negative external vision of the church. An example of this is the systematic tithing requirement which in some cases has enabled pastors to enrich themselves to the point of amassing vast fortunes. While these issues may be present in some denominations, they do not overshadow the enormous impact that the ascent of Pentecostal groups has had in many countries, in terms of bringing discipline to, and integrating, the poorest of the poor.
The "other" religions observed in Latin American countries include Judaism, Islam, indigenous faiths, eastern faiths, African American religions (Candomblé, Umbanda, Santería, Voudun, etc.), spiritism, and an array of religious beliefs referred to in the literature as “popular religions,” “mystic esoterica” or “new religious movements.” They are minority religions from the demographic and political standpoints. Some are experiencing a certain decrease in their following (African Americans), while others resort
to various forms of syncretism as a strategy for preserving their autonomy as religions (spiritualism, Eastern and African American faiths). Other streams (mystic esoterica) have a growing number of followers, but given the low percentage, remain statistically insignificant in the breakdown of religious beliefs in general.

Religion and State

While the study of religion and politics in Latin America points up numerous variations in the relationship between Church, State, and society, the presence of religion in the public sphere in most countries, and in the political realm in some, indicates that Latin American societies and cultures are imbued with a certain tolerance for, and recognition of, religion and various religious practices as vehicles for mobilization and social life. This contrasts sharply with the modern secular European republics which tend to confine religion to the realm of the subjective and private sphere.

As a result, religion in Latin America today is still an institution that produces and/or reproduces social cohesion — along with others that operate in a similar manner — and it continues to influence the political realm, although this plays out differently depending on the country and the religion. As we will see, several studies have shown that the link between religion and politics is in some cases very strong, and the boundaries between the two realms can be quite porous.

The spectrum of institutional relations between Church and State in Latin America is evidenced in an examination of national constitutions, which can be grouped into three categories of legal regimes: countries that adopt an official Church system (Argentina, Bolivia and Costa Rica — obviously the Catholic Church in all cases); countries that provide for the separation of Church and State, with certain provisos concerning the Catholic Church (Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay); and countries that adopt a model separating Church and State (Mexico, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil and Chile).

At least half of Latin American countries, then, are legally established as secular, modern, and liberal States that purport to accord the same legal status to all religious groups by espousing equal treatment for all religious organizations and guarantees of religious freedom for all citizens. This is still more an ideal than a reality, however, since Catholicism continues to pervade cultural life.
An analysis of five Latin American countries using data obtained mainly from working class sectors reveals the broad spectrum of relationships between Church and State, between religion and politics, and at the level of religious representations. Briefly, the Argentine grassroots imaginary associates the concepts of religion and nation: the Catholic faith is regarded as a “national asset.” Moreover, the Christianity of many Argentines is practical, and its practice is political. This is to say that it seeks to influence

In many western European countries, religion is much more closely tied to the state than in Latin America. In Ireland, all of the Catholic schools are state subsidized while different religions in Holland are part of the supply of public education. Of course there is the Anglican Church of England, not to mention the strong ties between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church.
the social order and therefore, political and religious imaginaries overlap and are interrelated. This link between political and religious imaginaries is also observed in Brazil, where religious beliefs are expressed in political language and conversely, views on the political organization of society are expressed in religious terms. Religious life in both of these countries — whether official or not — leads to collective interaction due to the powerfully ritualistic aspect of religious practices and to the social and assistential networks they have established.

The situation is somewhat different in Mexico, where the established religious and the political imaginary are less embedded, particularly among the disadvantaged. This is indicative of social distrust towards religious as well as political life. At the other end of the spectrum, in Venezuela the credibility of religions, and the trust vested in political institutions and the State, is high. It is no coincidence that Venezuela is among the most Catholic countries in Latin America and one of the most sensitive to a type of political discourse that marshals religious symbols and images. Uruguay bears a resemblance to Mexico in this regard, although with its own unique characteristics, having undergone a protracted and profound process of laicization, which featured the “de-Catholicization” of all religious symbols in the public sphere, in spite of the more recent reshaping of the public sphere which allows at least a limited display of religious symbols and practices.

*Religion and politics*

Religion in Latin America informs culture, permeates the public realm, and is influential in social aggregation. It operates in close proximity to politics in a relationship that varies among countries and religious institutions. Historically, the Catholic Church often became involved in political life, and did so through the most varied ideological leanings. More recently however, following the edicts of the Catholic hierarchy, the Church has tended to withdraw from politics except when what it regards as fundamental ethical-religious principles (abortion and the use of contraception, for example) or human rights are at stake. The Church’s social doctrine is supposed to serve as its inspiration, and that of Catholic politicians, in the quest for social justice and the defense of human rights.

In contrast, evangelical Christians have a different relationship with politics in some Latin American countries (Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Peru), where certain movements, particularly the Pentecostals, have insinuated
themselves into institutional political life in such a way that political parties cannot disregard them.

Wielding symbolic-discursive arguments (to exorcize political “demons” such as corruption and misappropriation of public revenues for example) or more practical ones (hoping to benefit as an institution), evangelical Christians, and particularly Pentecostals, assimilate some of the characteristics of Latin American political culture, such as political action “on behalf of the grassroots” and political clientelism. In this way, Pentecostals recreate in politics the model for action they practice on a daily basis in the religious sphere, where there is tremendous competition due to the “religious market” that has taken root in Latin America. Because of this “market,” however, it is virtually impossible for religions to act proactively in politics, except, as we have indicated, when it comes to certain specific moral issues. This has two important ramifications: first, it belies suspicions that what is occurring in Latin America is a “fundamentalist” attempt at the “religiosization” of politics and second, it invites us to consider that the churches have, to some extent, become venues for political learning, while not threatening or undermining democracy.

Religion, democracy and social cohesion

Religion is an inescapable aspect of social life in Latin American societies, albeit to varying degrees depending on the density of the religious culture in each individual country. In other words, the predominant trend in Latin America is that beliefs are not confined to the sphere of subjectivity: they are not exclusive to a particular faith system, but rather are embedded in the spheres of experience and action. They are, therefore, shared collectively and extend into the public realm through the rituals practiced by each religion, regardless of its legal or institutional status. In this way, religions create social ties and symbolic forms of belonging and both are critical for creating a sense of social cohesion. It goes hand in hand, however, with other social practices, institutions, and entities that inform meaning to varying degrees depending on the social group and the circumstances, such as the family, politics, school, art, sports, the sciences, institutions, and so forth.

Because of its unique historical and cultural qualities, then, the Latin American reality does not emulate the European secular republican ideal premised on an almost radical separation between the private (where religiosity is inserted) and the public (where the political reigns), despite the diversity of its institutionalized relations. Interactions between the
public and private spheres and between politics and religion in the region, are fraught with crisscrosses and alleyways, points of proximity and trade-offs. This suggests the possibility and/or existence of a democracy that must take into account — or would be hard-pressed to disregard — the religious sphere in general, and religious institutions in particular. Religion and politics are intertwined in one way or another in each of the five countries mentioned. They associate in Argentina, overlap in Brazil, and separate and mutually acknowledge each other in Uruguay. They are brought together by an immanent view of politics and religion in Mexico, and by a transcendent vision of religious life and political life in Venezuela. In Latin America, then, religion is not relegated to the private life of individuals. Rather, individuals carry it into the public sphere where it influences social relations and interfaces with other social institutions and with politics.

Significant cracks have appeared in this continuum, however particularly in light of the political impact that religion has always had on the continent. Three of them in particular should be highlighted. First, the traditional religious syncretism that ensured the hegemony of Catholicism is confronting a somewhat larval inter-church competition that is relatively unprecedented in Latin America. Secondly, in recent years, the association of different churches with authoritarian or democratizing processes has hinged more on national political circumstances than automatic alignments between belief systems and ideological positions. Third, as is true in many other places, religion is gradually becoming privatized and giving way to more individualized practices. Believers are tending to distance themselves from many aspects of the church’s authority (separation, contraception) and individuals (not just social groups any more) are leaning towards singularized spiritual forms expressed in increasingly customized combinations. Indeed, and contrary to what was believed in the past, religiosity has overtaken religion. And this religiosity is an amalgam of more or less personalized beliefs, accepted ecclesiastical dogmas, expressions of the “enchanted” world, as Weber would say, intense common experiences, and various other sorts of ties (and support systems) that are critical in societies where the level of vulnerability is massive.

But one aspect in particular is fundamental to the subject of this chapter and that is the social bond. Religion was never a parallel sphere to the state

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6 We should add Chile here, where the Catholic Church has a strong institutional role, the Christian democratic party is strong, and the Catholic University is government subsidized much like the public university.
in Latin America, due to its matricial role in the culture of the continent and its constant presence in the political realm. Having said that, contemporary religion also appears to have been deeply permeated by the democratic revolution.

Although the “naturalization” of the hierarchies of the past found a staunch ally in religion (particularly in rural areas), the religious matrix has gradually opened itself up to the influence of equality. This has not, as we have discussed, kept some religious representatives from lending their political backing to authoritarian regimes or from engaging in blatant attempts to influence people’s consciences and moral practices through methods reminiscent of the old tutelary mechanism (this has been particularly visible in policies concerning sexuality). But it is impossible not to conclude that a profound change has taken place. Ensnointed in the protracted and now largely consolidated process of normalization of Church-State relations, the social bond is no longer transmitted through religious beliefs (and their implicit naturalization of the hierarchy) but rather by the political matrix of democracy. The former no longer defines the meaning of the latter; instead politics have established the parameters — the equality — in which religion is inscribed.

3. Inter-ethnic relations and democratization

The transformation of the social bond is particularly visible in the context of inter-ethnic relations. Inextricably linked to diverse public policies that are at once the cause and consequence of these transformations (which are discussed in a subsequent chapter), the decline of the dual social bond and the rise of egalitarian aspirations has enormous consequences for inter-ethnic relations as well for everyday sociability. Here our discussion focuses specifically on indigenous peoples and their rights, particularly in the Andean context.

From societal dynamics to individual aspirations

Over the past few decades, the transformations wrought by the political and economic crisis of the developmentalist national model became the catalyst
for the eclosion of indigenous movements (leaving aside for a moment the variations in different local contexts). This phenomenon corroborates the correlation between indigenous movements and modernizing reforms observed throughout Latin American history, which we will discuss in the next chapter. A comparison of the liberal reforms of the 19th century, and more recently, those of the 20th century, however, reveals a number of significant differences.

In addition to advocating rights premised on individualistic conceptions, the substance of the proposals found in present-day reforms and demands opens up a rich space for the legitimization of traditional forms of governance, communal justice, and collective representation. The structural reforms advocated from the 1980s onward also proposed a decentralization of the state apparatus to accommodate longstanding demands for greater autonomy. This agenda clearly strengthened the allegiance of indigenous populations to the new state model, which came to be regarded as the guarantor of an ancestral pact in the sense of legitimizing traditional uses and customs.

In the case of Bolivia, for example, the combined effect of processes dating back to the 1952 revolution and reforms associated with globalization has thrust the indigenous population onto the political stage, exposing traditional communities to the frontal impact of national crises. Here we should note the significant levels of migration from indigenous communities. These migrants have maintained their social, economic and family ties to their countries of origin and they are demanding from their authorities protection of their rights abroad. It is likewise important to note the role of international cooperation and international NGOs in promoting indigenous groups, which frequently find that international forums offer a platform for expression not always available in their own societies.

Modernization has had an impact on the whole of the indigenous population insofar as its expectations and demands — which are accentuated by the demonstration effect — are currently organized around new horizons of consumption and political participation. Such phenomena, as they are inserted into the international dynamics, have increased the dependency of indigenous populations on state resources and institutional channels. This dependency will no doubt be a difficult bridge to cross for ethnic or regional chiefs demanding greater autonomy for their communities or those who espouse a more extreme, separatist agenda. Even more so since the need to process the explosion of increasingly diverse and heterogeneous demands ultimately will reinforce the state’s protagonist role nationally and
internationally. The ethnic question, in this context, will continue to be activated as a political resource by various opposing forces. In all likelihood, however, it will become less relevant as a national issue, particularly for the indigenous movements themselves, as they become incorporated more fully into the state matrix and enjoys greater access to the civic sphere from which it had been excluded since the founding of the republics. Which is not to say, of course, that ethnic identities, as they become a source of specific benefits, will not become increasingly consolidated and give rise to self-reproducing interests.

It should be noted that the demands of indigenous groups affect a substantial portion of the population in only a few countries. A satisfactory response to such demands in other countries, then, is just one aspect, albeit an important one, of democracy-building. Just as it should not be undervalued, a unilateral over-emphasis on the issue of ethnic diversity should not be allowed to veil the broader matter of a nation-building project for the 21st century that takes into account the different social sectors.

The impact of these structural transformations — which we will discuss in more depth later on — is not confined to the political sphere. They have set in motion other crucial changes in social relations as the previous verticality of the social bond (with its impenetrable mix of economic inequality and racial denigration) is buffeted by new democratizing pressures.

Social inequality, social bond, and the ethnic question in the Andean world

Andean societies are culturally and socio-economically heterogeneous and this heterogeneity became the historical underpinnings of “arguments” to justify the exclusion and inequality that constitute an obstacle to democracy and social cohesion today.

Inequality in the political culture and in everyday social relations and socio-economic inequality are mutually reinforcing. A focus on its cultural dimensions, however, by no means implies a vision of inequality as natural or culturally determined. In reality, deeply ingrained and extremely complex behavior patterns and dynamics “reinvent” forms and mechanisms of inequality depending on the historical contexts. In the pre-colonial period,

8 This section is based on Alicia Szmukler, “Culturas de desigualdad, democracia y cohesión social en la región andina.”
Andean societies were quite heterogeneous and culturally diverse, with relations of dominance between ethnic groups. It was not until after the colonization, however, that ethnic identity became the main argument for exclusion, arbitrariness and inequality: and this ethno-racial “reason” endures and is manifested in many different ways in these societies today.

Discrimination toward indigenous and mestizo (mixed-race) populations has been a matter of course, beginning with the racist ideology of the colonial powers and the hacienda system, which deemed such groups to be inferior based on their ethnic origins in order to exploit them economically. Prejudice against non white or Creole Spanish identities became the basis to legitimize the economic and cultural abuse of these groups. Truly hierarchical and racialized relations developed in this context.

Inequality based on ethnic origin persists today, although with different features. The national revolutions and nationalist governments of the latter half of the 20th century embarked on a path to rectify many of the factors of inequality affecting majority mestizo and indigenous groups in Andean societies. Democratic governments since the early 1980s have done much to broaden and strengthen citizenship. Today, legal recognition of the equality of these groups is a fact and a remarkable achievement of democratic consolidation and of the struggle waged by indigenous and cultural movements. Inequality still persists, however, in daily social interactions and practices and in the political culture.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the national revolution in Bolivia and the national-populist governments in Peru and Ecuador promoted a developmentalist economic model leading to the political inclusion and expanded social rights of broad sectors of the population heretofore excluded from citizens’ rights. These policies benefited peasant sectors, which were also indigenous. The class category, however, subsumed the identitary one and cultural heterogeneity was therefore subordinated to national unity. Moreover, while these governments made valiant efforts to further social and cultural equality, they also reproduced mechanisms for exclusion by rejecting those who thought differently or who rejected the clientelistic networks through which the ruling parties obtained political allies in exchange for posts and perks.

In recent years, poverty and the ability and opportunities to access markets have changed the face of inequality in day to day interactions. Acute economic inequality in the Andean region is now the objective substratum underlying the rejection of the “other.” Rising expectations of access to consumption and public goods (spurred by globalization processes, the
broader reach of the mass media and information technology, and increased educational coverage) come up against harsh limitations in terms of the actual possibilities of fulfilling those expectations and achieving upward mobility.

The transformation has nonetheless been profound from the standpoint of the social bond. Throughout the region, extremely hierarchical relations have given way to genuinely dual ones: the tension between hierarchy and equality is palpable and the emergence of truly egalitarian relations is increasingly observed. Of course, this latter aspiration acquires concrete cultural forms to the extent that it is accompanied by the state's affirmation of a national-indigenous identity (as is the case, in part, in Bolivia) or when it emerges as the result of a new urban, mestizo and grassroots culture (as illustrated by the changing meaning, increasingly positive, of the word cholo in Peru).

Of course in view of the cultural and social heterogeneity of these societies — and the lingering effects of hierarchy that continue to influence everyday social relations and the political culture they reflect — it is worth asking ourselves exactly what conditions are in place to deepen more democratic and pluralistic ties that could produce consensus around renewed principles of social cohesion?

In this context it would appear necessary to propose new principles upon which to reconstruct an idea of nation and a sense of belonging. The principle of different but equal is currently the basis — and one that is not without difficulties and contradictions — for efforts to address demands for justice based on the principles of a democratic State.

Despite persistent and serious difficulties, it is important to stress, however, that progress has been made in terms of legal and civic equality. Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, all countries with high percentages of indigenous and mestizo populations, have taken enormous steps forward in terms of legal recognition of indigenous and gender rights. This has been the result of the mobilization and political reorganization of social actors, in the case at hand, indigenous people and women in particular. But these achievements in the area of rights — and the opportunities for expression accorded to their advocates — are also linked to the deepening of the democratic system in the region. And both of these things ultimately have had a concrete and visible influence in day to day social interactions. For example, abuse by “superiors” is increasingly criticized, even as the latter attest to being victims of “abuse” by their “subordinates” (an example of this being repeated complaints of an achoramiento ["scofflaw" culture] in Lima...
society). Paradoxical as it may seem, in this context one should not discard the notion that the deregulation and generalization of inter-ethnic conflicts, even when they have racist overtones, may also be a normal expression of the democratization of everyday life.

Of course, these distinct planes are not isomorphic. The conditions that give rise to unequal social relations do not change merely because legal advances have been achieved. Similarly, while such advances are certainly important, particularly in terms of symbolic and political inclusion, they do not cause longstanding stereotypes and prejudices to disappear overnight. Between the legal responses and indigenous demands on the one hand, and the tepidity of the dual social bond on the other (since there are those who persist in placing more weight on what they regard as the "natural" hierarchy), the dialectic is subtler and doubtlessly more sluggish than some would like. While one is not a substitute for the other, favorable legislation on ethnic identities raises awareness about particular rights and spotlights situations of inequality affecting these groups. At the same time, the quest for more egalitarian social relations in everyday life encourages new legal and political aspirations. For this reason, even though legal recognition, while absolutely necessary, is insufficient to establish equality in social bonds, the affirmation of ethnic rights contributes actively to the democratization of social relations. Cultural changes and the democratization of everyday life travel on slower tracks fraught with tensions and conflicts, as is the case with any process of change. But here again the break from the dual social bond is evident.

4. Urban spaces and dynamics

We are living in what some authors have described as a period of symbolic mutation and while no one can really know where it is leading us, we can point out some of its new forms of expression. Manuel Castells (1998) describes one of these phenomena as a "deterritorialization" process, which
he rightly accords a strategic relevance. The crisis of modern territories is a fundamental aspect of the changing times. Territories can no longer be reduced to the geography of nation-state, meaning the physical borders that demarcated countries. Instead, institutions, values, beliefs, ideologies, and public and private spaces are what define political and social, and family or personal territory. Indeed, while they have not dissolved completely, the everyday points of reference that gave shape to society — its symbolic frames of reference and understanding — have certainly lost their stability and this is especially visible in metropolitan urban settings.

In Latin America, progress (and setbacks) in the modernization/globalization process are experienced as a malaise, sometimes explicit and sometimes diffuse, but persistent over time. Individuals become mutually distrustful. According to some interpretations, in this process the “other” comes to be regarded as a threat. A single watchword appears to traverse all areas of social life: “insecurity.” The threats are manifold. The “erosion of norms of civility” (Lechner, 1999), is a consequence of a modernization/globalization process that exacerbates social differentiation while weakening the notion of a collective order and alters behaviors and perceptions with the attendant impact on social coexistence. Before exploring further this extremely important point, we will review some of the main transformations in contemporary urban Latin America.

The city as a setting for modernization and cultural fragmentation

Urban cultures today comprise over 70% of the Latin American population. They are made up of culturally hybrid groups that are residentially fragmented and destabilized, and simultaneously homogenized by the information generated by the mass media. Contemporary modernity, or the culture of post-modern capitalism if you will, impregnates every one of the cultural hybridization processes observed in cities in particular.

A sensual, pleasure-driven circuit fed by money is one of the most obvious poles in large Latin American cities, which are hubs for tourists and middle classes sectors with access to fashionable restaurants, nightlife and entertainment. In these highly concentrated mediatic cities entertainment also has its geography: restaurants, bars, cinemas, theaters and concert halls are confined to a narrow strip of the city.

Countless everyday tensions surface alongside this growing diversity. The consolidation of significant forms of urban violence (which are
discussed in a separate chapter), consumer frustrations and expectations, political apathy and disenchantment, the scant opportunities available to vast numbers of urban youth — who create their own often music-centered spaces for entertainment — are becoming permanent fixtures of the new Latin American city even in societies with a relatively more integrated tradition of urban life, such as Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Modes of sociability take on different meanings in these new contexts. The family at the center of social life is still part of the ideology of daily living and of the social imaginary in the region. And yet, internal hierarchies and gender identities are undergoing profound changes particularly under the influence of new types of mass communication. Social differentiation and individuation processes derived from modernization are changing the moral economy of the family. While access to new universes of education and consumption, of comparison and contrast, does not destroy family-
centered socialization as a moral model and material infrastructure, it does transform it significantly.

As the more harmonious and homogeneous era of national cultural integration has become a thing of the past, we are compelled to acknowledge an urban space that reflects differentiated, heterogeneous societies. This urban space, however, does not emerge as a genuinely public space, because the practices associated with it are frequently on the margins of law enforcement. This is observed not only in the more obvious fight against gangs or organized crime, it is also evident in collective expressions such as dances in poor neighborhoods, where the music might blare until dawn at intolerable volumes for neighbors hoping to get some sleep.

In any event, Latin American cities have a key role to define due to their new position in cultural production and forms of sociability in the context of globalization. Beyond the issue of who controls the urban space, it is critical to recognize the existence of a diverse range of actors who are actively creating new forms of sociability. The national state is no longer the only actor on the stage and Latin American statist nationalism has acquired a distinctly anachronistic, anti-modern air. The negotiation of conflicts among NGOs, the media, and civil society organizations is part the decision-making process and one that is necessary for the effective functioning of contemporary democracy. A certain “disorder” in this regard is part of the essential pluralism and a democratic pedagogy of negotiation could become the terrain for new forms of social integration capable of counteracting apparently anomic trends. The fact is that identities and forms of participation are not a priori affairs, nor do they develop outside of the more general processes underway in our societies. A public identified with democratic values is the result of, rather than the premise behind, the democratic game. And this democratic game relies on participation, debate, and confrontation in the public space, and in the territory of institutions.

The city and social exclusion

New forms of capitalism influence, and in general weaken, cities in their capacity as hubs of civic life. In addition to modes of production, transformations in this sphere reshape patterns of consumption and social reproduction, and this has an enormous impact on social interaction in large cities. Indeed, opportunities for face to face interaction between socially different and unequal individuals have been greatly reduced in the
workplace, in residential areas, and in the institutions that provide essential
services for collective living.

Unskilled workers have experienced the most dramatic change in the
labor market. The dramatically higher qualifications levels required to
access stable, protected jobs exclude these segments of workers from
mainstream economic circuits. Many urban micro-enterprises were harmed by the gradual penetration of large-scale, globalized capital in the
service industry and in the production of consumer goods directly related
to the social reproduction of the poorest sectors of the population. The
changing labor market shattered many of the dreams of upward mobility
held by unskilled manual and nonmanual laborers, whether that meant
entry into the urban world of stable, protected employment, or into the
urban petite bourgeoisie. Moreover, new labor market trends accentuate
the historically unjust income distribution structure, situating the winners
of new modes of capitalism in strata dramatically set apart from the rest of
society in terms of relative income as well as their ability to adopt globalized
cultural models.

The social organization of space in big cities, which is associated
with rising violence, has accentuated the territorial division between
sectors excluded from the dynamic labor market and the rest of the city.
The territorial gap widens as excluded sectors are displaced to outlying
areas of the city, and to increasingly precarious low-income housing in
decaying downtown areas including squatter settlements [villas-miseria]
or low-income tenement buildings [conventillos] and the like. A parallel
phenomenon is the urban flight of the “winning” social strata, which
choose various means of territorial self-isolation (private condominiums,
country condominiums, gated communities and the like). Such social-
territorial organization patterns in large cities reduces opportunities for
social interaction among the different and unequal, whether in the streets
or in the context of geographically-based services such as schools, health
care, transportation and recreation.

Various mechanisms are at work to segment collective services. One
of them is the impact of residential segregation on the ability of different
social groups to finance such services through their tax contributions.
The concentration of poor people in peripheral municipal areas is often
accompanied by lower quality local collective services used only by those
population sectors. At the same time, the middle class sectors that have
most benefited from new forms of accumulation turn increasingly to the
market for basic services such as education, health, pension plans and
public security. This reinforces urban flight, further limiting opportunities for interaction among the different and unequal.

Another relevant phenomenon that affects the quality of social interaction in the city is the rapid rise in expectations as material and symbolic consumption patterns serve as sources of social differentiation. Here the mass media play an important role, as do universal educational coverage and widely disseminated political rhetoric proclaiming the universality of social rights. These processes spotlight class disparities in the consumption of goods and services that define social status and lead to unfulfilled expectations and aspirations among the urban population, which also inhibits social interaction in big cities.

The revolution of aspirations combined with the desertion of spaces where people learn how to coexist in differential, unequal settings rends the social fabric in large cities. These two general trends, however, leave us only on the threshold of grasping the impact of new forms of capitalism on models of sociability in large Latin American cities. We must explore three additional angles to more fully grasp what is happening. The first enables us to distinguish between cities based on the influence of models of historical domination; the second examines levels of unequal distribution of wealth; and, the third points up the seriousness of trends towards residential segregation and the segmentation of collective services.

These trends reduce opportunities for interaction among social classes and isolate them from each other. This has many repercussions for the social fabric. In contrast to the city that provided the origins of modernity, this city is no longer a sphere of social experience in which people learn to live together in their differences and inequality. When encounters between classes are rare or nonexistent, it is less vital that urban sociability create common codes, develop a sense of moral obligation, or foster the construction of associative norms to regulate the negotiation of conflicting interests. To the contrary, the simultaneous separation of these two venues for social interaction — housing and services — fosters stereotypical inter-class perceptions that hamper dialogue and preclude the objective evaluation of the intrinsic merits of one or the other group.

Social isolation is particularly problematic in neighborhoods with large concentrations of unskilled workers with fragile ties to the labor market. Compounding their poverty of access to information and contacts, these workers now have fewer opportunities to interact with others who might have useful information and contacts to facilitate their access to the market.
Even more importantly, however, criminal groups often exercise control in such poor neighborhoods, a tangible symptom of the State's failure to ensure basic human rights. Terror and fear reign in gang-dominated neighborhoods. The law does not emanate from the state in the criminal-controlled slums [favelas] of Rio de Janeiro (where traffickers or self-styled militias “keep order” by levying different types of “taxes”). In some favelas, certain colors of clothing might be prohibited as being associated with rival gangs, and the same sort of censorship might be applied to songs that mention favelas dominated by other bands. These groups directly resolve their local conflicts, including theft or any other act that might attract the police. Penalties include torture, death, or a bullet wound. They also enforce expulsions or restrict movement, directly control certain services (such as gas distribution, since the companies refrain from entering certain areas), and compel businesses to close as a sign of mourning when a trafficker is killed by the police. They also forbid people to circulate between favelas or sectors of favelas controlled by enemy factions, which in some cases means that relatives or friends literally wishing to cross the street are obliged to take a bus. A mandatory law of silence (“I didn't see anything or hear anything. I don't know”) is in effect and those who disobey it, or merely are suspected of disobeying it, often pay with their lives.

But even in this context of social exclusion, where the price of poverty is paid in human lives, individual initiatives abound in the form of urban invasions, unauthorized building, diversion of electricity, water and cable TV, informal commerce and drug trafficking, as well as constant efforts to organize community life, sometimes with the support of NGOs. The villas miserias are a paroxysm of a society in which individual initiative is not state regulated, where the legal system does not support or regulate individual and social relations.

**Urban space and virtual communication channels**

Even as housing construction and transportation systems segregate, the mass media create and unify new spaces of communication. Radio and television initiated the process of creating virtual communication worlds shared by the most diverse social sectors, including the illiterate. In the past, however, such media outlets were characterized by their verticality and virtual lack of interactivity. This situation changed dramatically with the spread of cellular phones and the Internet (although as we will see later, the latter has had little impact among grassroots sectors).
In most Latin American countries, telephone networks never really penetrated low income sectors, where people traditionally relied on public telephones, the local store, or a privileged neighbor to make a call. This has begun to change over the past decade, with the exponential growth in cell phone use.

The spread of the cellular telephone cannot be dissociated from the unequal distribution of wealth and does not extend into the poorest rural

ICT Statistics by Country

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Source: APC.org — Monitor Políticas TIC y Derechos en Internet en América Latina y El Caribe. Available at: http://lac.derechos.apc.org/es.shtml?apc=se_1
sectors where infrastructure is lacking. In contrast, it has penetrated massively in metropolitan areas. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the availability of lines (in many countries landlines required a long wait or had to be purchased on parallel markets at a high price), for which the only cost is the purchase of the telephone itself at a price usually subsidized by the service provider. Second, there is no fixed cost to maintain it, which means that one can stop using it to make calls for a period of time without risk of charges or complications associated with service interruptions, as occurs with landlines. Third, the portability of the cellular telephone, which goes wherever the user goes, increases its utility (for example, working parents can be located wherever they happen to be and the logistics of service industry and informal sector workers are facilitated since they can be readily located by their customers).

The dissemination of the cellular telephone among the poorest sectors was made possible by the pre-pay system. While the per minute cost of communication is much higher than for those who purchase a monthly subscription, the poorest sectors develop their own systems to minimize costs. Basically the telephone is used to receive calls (at no cost to the receiver) while outgoing calls are placed from public telephones or landlines, or else kept very short. The main cost, then, is the purchase of a card that offers a certain number of minutes and is valid for a certain time period, which entails periodic card purchases. Therefore, while the quantity and quality of communication is income dependent, this in no way nullifies the enormous revolution brought about by the advent of the cellular telephone.

The cellular telephone has had a profound impact on social relations. Landline telephones, even among the upper classes, are a product for family consumption. The whole family shares a single telephone number: one answers the phone with the classic, “who is calling?” and “with whom do you wish to speak?” In this sense it was conducive to powerful social controls, in particular by parents over their children, but also between spouses, or in the workplace or by the department head over subordinates. The cell phone, in contrast, is for personal consumption (one would suppose that the person on the other end is calling for one, and the only possible control question is “where are you?”). This strengthens the horizontality of relations and individuation (particularly of children in relation to their parents).10

10 This assertion refers to the current state of the technology. In the future, new locator and tracking devices will curtail the freedom currently supplied by the cell phone.
Parents who give their children cell phones in order to keep track of them rapidly discover that the only thing they have actually accomplished is to bolster the latter’s communications autonomy.

In some cases the strong penetration of the cellular telephone is associated with emigration. El Salvador, poorer than Costa Rica and Panama, and with the highest communication costs, features the highest cell phone penetration levels, due to the remittances sent by their emigrants and the communication possibilities available in the destination country. In the case of Ecuador, which sends large numbers of emigrants to Spain, a telephone company headquartered in both countries offers special plans in response to the new international telecommunications market for low income sectors.

Criminal groups also rapidly discovered the potential of the cellular telephone and the Internet. Telephone tapping is routinely used by traffickers in the favelas — especially in confrontations with the police — to monitor calls from local residents in order to make sure that they do not inform or collaborate with the police. Traffickers also attempt to control the use of local cybercafés, in particular when they suspect that someone may be sending information or complaints. The cellular telephone enables imprisoned leaders of criminal bands to remain in constant contact with the outside world, for the purpose of organizing drug distribution or “virtual kidnappings.” This type of criminal operation has reached epidemic proportions in San Pablo and Río de Janeiro. It works like this: all of the landlines in a particular area (usually a middle class neighborhood) are called systematically and the person who answers hears a distant voice crying, immediately followed by a demand for payment of a particular sum of money within one half hour or else the kidnapped individual (presumably a son or daughter) will suffer the consequences. The Internet is also used to distribute drugs among the middle classes or — as occurred in a recent case in San Pablo when criminal groups conducted a series of attacks — to disseminate fictitious news in order to intensify the panic.

The Internet is increasingly permeating society, although to a large extent, the residential divide continues to parallel the digital divide.\(^\text{11}\) Even so, low income sectors gradually are obtaining access to Internet use whether in the workplace, at the home of friends, and especially in cybercafés. The latter, the vast majority of which are private microenterprises, have become

\(^{11}\) See Sorj and Guedes (2006) for an analysis of the relationship between space and digital exclusion.
the main source of Internet access for low income sectors in many Latin American countries, transforming the pioneering initiatives of NGOs or even governments into relatively minor players. s. The digital inclusion process could accelerate rapidly with the advent of interactive Internet and the new combined communications systems. This might have the effect of strengthening the barriers to access by the poorest sectors. We must not forget that electronic products used to be educationally neutral (in other words, no particular educational level was required for their use) and there was no cost associated with having them (except for electricity). In contrast, the new media devices generally have a strong reading and writing component and require some sort of monthly or per use payment.

As in the case of cellular telephones, here too there is an enormous gap in the amount of communications time available to the rich and the poor, and among those with different educational levels (a critical variable in Internet use among the poorest sectors). Access to connectivity is not synonymous with exploiting the Internet’s vast information potential, which varies tremendously according to educational level and the potential social network of the user (Sorj and Guedes, 2006). In any case, whether for games or schoolwork (for teenagers and young adults) or to send a curriculum vitae and job hunt, the Internet has become a unifier in the realm of communications. And like the cellular telephone, it is an individualizing product in the sense that the family (or the boss) forfeits social control over its members (or subordinates).

The city, reticence and social cohesion

Alongside cultural modernization and spatial segregation, several important phenomena have emerged associated with violence and crime, which we will discuss in more depth later on. This has brought to the fore a new sort of relational sentiment. Various terms have been suggested to describe it: fear, uncertainty, insecurity. While these expressions may be apt in many ways, they have the downside of painting a perhaps overly dramatic picture of urban social bonds. To us, therefore, it seems more appropriate to refer simply to a constant feeling of alert and of reticence.

13 This section is based on Luis Alberto Quevedo, “Identidades, jóvenes y sociabilidad. Una vuelta sobre el lazo social en democracia.”
In reality, we are embarked on a process in which much is new, but there is also some continuity. For example, our societies already were marked by social heterogeneity in the 1960s, but the institutional framework and individual action has changed profoundly. And just as we debate in Latin America today the ambiguous simultaneity of globalization and localization trends, as far back as the 19th century, and to an even greater degree in the 20th century, the ambiguous dissolvent effects of modernization were being discussed. Individuals who emancipated themselves from traditional ties also forfeited the support those ties had afforded them. This was the case, in part, for instance, of religious secularization. Just as people then turned to the secular “religions” of political ideologies seeking expressions of their need for social ties, young people today attempt to construct social ties and communities in ways that are generally more distanced from the public space.

The city, then, caught up in a two-pronged operation, a pincer maneuver that threatens to dissolve its modern configuration: on one side, there is spatial segregation of a new sort, which requires a redefinition of the concept of “neighborhood” and by extension the types of relationships that develop there. On the other, there is cultural self-segregation, that is, a de-centering of cultural practices and consumption patterns, which no longer use the city as a point of reference, but instead are locally inscribed and based on new global configurations, particularly among the middle and upper classes.

The city recedes not only as a space where identities are constructed, but also as an equalizer of the symbolic possibilities available to its residents. In gathering places such as the block, the café, or the club, the local development association, and the political committee, differences were mitigated by proximity. In this model, the school was an important mechanism for integration and for equalizing opportunities to urban access. But the city has changed and insecurity has dramatically altered neighborhood sociability. The combination of all of these factors (segregation and self-segregation, new urban fears, the differentials produced by globalization in some sectors of the city, and so forth) led to a de-urbanization process (García Canclini) due “in part to insecurity and also to trends, driven by electronic communications, towards a preference for at-home culture piped in via radio, television and video over going to the movies, the theater or sports events that may require traveling long distances and through dangerous areas of the city.”

Neighborhood living, the experience of insecurity, the impact of the media, the widening economic gap and new phenomena of social exclusion and segmentation create a very different panorama of people's lives. What are its main features?

- The perception of the public space as risky, especially for more vulnerable citizens such as children, youth, the elderly and, in particular, low income sectors.
- The proliferation of huge shopping centers and supermarkets which alter consumption habits. The decline of neighborhood “mom and pop” establishments.
- Fewer opportunities for face to face interactions in the goods and services market.
- Changes in movie consumption: decline of the old neighborhood exhibition halls (now converted into evangelical churches) and emergence of expensive state-of-the-art cineplexes owned by international distribution chains and featuring multiple small theaters and a food court packed with large screens.
- Retreat of the family into the home (cut off from its surroundings by bars and protected with alarms or private security guards). The home is at once isolated from its immediate surroundings (the neighborhood) and very connected to the outside world through technology.
- Proliferation and personalization of domestic screens and monitors (televisions, computers, cellular phones, notebooks, iPods, videogames, etc.)
- Transformation of the typical venues to see and be seen, or meet up with others, namely, the local bar or café. No longer are they routine stomping grounds where one might stop in without knowing in advance who might be there.
- Changes in relational aesthetics and styles (from the owner tending bar to the restaurant-bar staffed by post-modern youth with little interest in service or the connection). Many of the “old style” bars manage to survive by being declared sites of cultural and historical interest in the city.
- Local proliferation of U.S.-style fast-food establishments, with standardized aesthetics, products, and service mechanisms. The television is prominently located and always on.
- Emptying out of the city on weekends by residents who literally are able to escape it. Permanent congestion on roadways in and out of the city.
In brief, where the old dual social bond — hierarchy and equality, with
the former predominating — assigned each actor a clear position in the
social space, dictating his or her behavior and restricting the spectrum
interactive transgressions, in the new framework of sociability that is more
horizontal and more demanding in egalitarian terms, interactions with
strangers are universally perceived as less structured. Even more so since
the egalitarian imperative occurs in the framework of segmented urban
experiences and tremendous cultural pluralism. This does not transform
"all" social relations into "uncertain" interactions, nor does it magnify a
generalized "fear" towards others or even unleash an obsessive "insecurity."
What it does exact in retaliation, however, is a constant sense of vigilance,
of alert, indeed a broad spectrum of attitudes of constant reticence and
strategies of enclosure and privatization.

Cities, as we know, are a blend of "streets" and "houses." When the streets
are perceived as being dangerous, the only option is retreat into the houses.
And even more so now that new cultural props (Internet, DVDs, etc) and
the growing availability of home-based services and commercial delivery,
encourage this type of reclusive, long-distance sociability.

5. The media, cultural industry
and social cohesion

Do the communications media and culture industry (CM & CI) help to
maintain or erode social cohesion? This is not an idle question. Cohesion is
generally produced through the actions of the state, institutions, and civil
society. At present, all of these actors are relatively weak in Latin America and
the main traditional factors of cohesion based on reciprocal relationships
(religiosity, leisure pursuits, fraternity, strong family ties, political parties,
trade unions) are undergoing major processes of mutation, erosion, or
abandonment, as we will discuss.

In this context, the CM & CI, along with culture in the broader sense (from
arts, literature, music, and traditional crafts to anthropological phenomena
known as “intangible heritage,” encompassing religion, festivals, rituals,
language, cuisine, etc.), play a very important role in the new social make-

15 This section is based on George Yúdice, “Medios de comunicación e industrias culturales,
identidades colectivas y cohesión social”; Luis Alberto Quevedo, “Identidades, Jóvenes y
Sociabilidad. Una vuelta sobre el Lazo Social en Democracia”.

The Latin American Challenge - SOCIAL COHESION AND DEMOCRACY
Bernardo Sorj & Danilo Martuccelli
Throughout the 20th century the media were a powerful catalyzing agent of collective identity. The CM & CI will acquire even greater protagonism as technological advances increasingly channel culture into the digital convergence (television, Internet and telecommunications). According to some observers, however, these changes are already causing modifying relations of reciprocity. Many — perhaps most — people see this as negative, although for some it might seem promising. Once again, as we will see, what is at stake is the endurance or erosion of the dual social bond and the advent of more egalitarian relations.

A new ligature of social cohesion?

In the pessimistic view, if traditional symbolic lubricants and glues are diluted in an atmosphere in which neither the state, institutions, nor civil society are playing the “proper” cohesive role, other agents will have to emerge to fill in the gaps. The future, then, might bring powerful, charismatic caudillos capable of averting disorder, but only at the price of submission and tyranny. Alternatively, new interactive media might revolutionize the unidirectional transmission of our culture and render it truly interactive, recreating at the virtual level phenomena similar to presentational rituals in traditional communities. In this scenario, new communications media would be conducive to the flowering of democracy, one that is interactive, rather than representative. A third possibility, of course, is that the current discouraging, but not disastrous, reality will simply continue.

But something is missing in both lines of reasoning. While the CM & CI play a significant role, society is not automatically better or the worse for them. Of course, access to CM & CI could improve, which would have an effect on the quality of participation. But the CM & CI cannot be singled out from other social factors as if they, in and of themselves, could lead the way to a more cohesive society. The CM & CI have to be understood in their intersection with other spheres of social life. While it would be of little use to take an apocalyptic or all-encompassing view of the contribution of the CM & CI, this does not mean we should not try to understand its effects, to fine-tune its relationship with other aspects of social dynamics. In any event, it is important to bear in mind that its effects are varied and ambivalent.

The CM & CI, for example, comprise a highly creative sector with tremendous potential for transversal expansion that can enhance performance in other areas of activity (e.g. the contribution of the arts
to urban revitalization and reintegration or the incorporation of artistic creativity in software innovations). This is critical in today's information and knowledge-based economy. According to recent studies, the contribution of the CM & CI to Latin American economies is as high as 7% of the GDP in some countries.

We bring this up because the transversality of the CM & CI vis-à-vis the so-called creative industries and education gives us to understand that its role in society today may not be to “produce cohesion,” at least in the traditional sense, but rather to create synergies, which could benefit organized crime as much as globalized economic and social sectors, the integration of rural communities, or poor urban-dwellers.

The question, then, is how the CM & CI can contribute to the synergy of building social cohesion in democracy? We must first understand that the new CM & CI and contemporary culture in general are oriented toward individuals and their interactions in loosely constructed, shifting networks. The very notion of community has been transformed. According to network theory, a community can be defined as a dense network in which the same actors are found everywhere, as is the case in small towns where everybody attends the same school, the same church, frequents the same park, and so forth. Information and communication technologies, however, together with the territorial complexity of cities and the ease of transportation, extend the radius of connectivity; thereby rendering the networks ever more diffuse (something that, as we shall see later on, is very significant in contemporary migration processes).

The change has been profound. By empowering individual possibilities, the CM & CI literally alter the meaning of social cohesion. No longer a flow exclusively from “society” toward “actors,” it takes shape as a cluster of networks of greater or lesser density that change in function of the moment or the activity and can sustain themselves in, or activate, divergent identitary, affective, ethnic or familial elements. In this sense, it could be said that a growing number of individuals are, in effect, the protagonists of their own social cohesion. Each person, from different positions and using different resources, interweaves different networks. And if one takes a closer look, the most important thing is not so much their “density” (as in the number or longevity of the contacts) as their consistency, in other words, the differential solidity of the various relational scaffolds.

Some networks are voluntarily diffuse; we might say their importance lies in their ability to evaporate. The individual feels inserted into society based on a series of labile interchanges. Peer-to-peer exchanges of audio
recordings and videos are a tangible illustration of contacts so diffuse as to be imperceptible. Similarly, socialization or "social networking" sites such as MySpace, Orkut and YouTube — with growing participation by young people from slum communities — facilitate the creation of diffuse, but no less enthusiastic, “communities” built around certain tastes and participatory consumption. (It is obvious from the interactive modus operandi of such sites that they are not about passive consumption as in the previous culture of mass consumption.)

One initial reaction to this reality, especially from those of us who are wed to the notion of stable “communities,” is to condemn the diffuse bonds of the CM & CI, arguing that such volatility cannot possibly beget solidarity. The contention is that the mass culture of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, with all of its problems, fostered the development of national communities and subsequently the welfare state in developed countries. In Latin America, the traditional CM & CI projected an imaginary national community in which everyone was represented — examples of this being the rancheras or the Cantinflas or Sandrini shows — despite the disjunction in traditional mass culture between the consumption of such images and actual participation. Nonetheless, the cinema and radio of the 1940s and 1950s transmitted and translated people's dreams, fears, and aspirations.

Not enough empirical research is available to compare the cinema and music from that period with contemporary CM & CI. Today sensationalism reigns, particularly in the violence and individualism that is daily fare on reality shows. What are the effects of this predilection for the sensationalized lives of others? It is hard to say for sure. Besides, the press and news programs broadcast ad infinitum images of young people who are gang members, or foreigners, or slum dwellers, or at risk, or drug traffickers. When in the late 19th century, Durkheim wrote that “crime brings together upright consciences and concentrates them,” he was saying that crime had an integrating function in that it illustrated or dramatized the way in which norms create cohesion among those who comply, or imagine themselves complying, with the law. In other words, there is no better cohesive agent than the “public temper” of those who seek each other out to “talk of the event and to wax indignant in common.” (1995: 76). This process also created scapegoats, however: those who did not subscribe to the norms or who were “not like us” for reasons such as race, religion or sexual orientation (Jews, homosexuals, “dandies,” and so forth).

Could it be true that the new exhibitionist societies are eroding social cohesion? As many empirical studies have shown, it is not that the CM
& CI incite their audiences to violence, but they do contribute to the atmosphere of fear that pervades most Latin American cities, including places like Montevideo or San José, where levels of crime and violence levels are more comparable to those of European countries. And fears have their ramifications. As we have pointed out, people retreat into their homes, what was once public space is privatized (the street, squares), private security agencies are contracted or people move to gated communities. It is not that the CM & CI create this situation, but they do aid and abet it by encouraging the real dynamics and fears produced by social distancing.

It is not all negative. The CM & CI (especially, but not exclusively, nonhegemonic ones) have been at the forefront of initiatives to transform imaginaries and influence systems that propagate racialization and criminalization. In Brazil, groups such as Afro Reggae and the Central Única das Favelas, are popular in the media, but they have also mobilized to change police treatment of youth, especially young people with African-American features from poor neighborhoods. Likewise, some newspapers have bowed to the petitions of organized groups to change the way they cover crime. The goal is to change the current connotation of insecurity derived from the fear instilled by criminality.

Moreover, while the CM & CI in general tend to stereotype the poorest social groups, they have also at times promoted interculturality. Examples of this are world music on the international scene or participatory and inclusive websites such as Overmundo, which provides virtually across the board coverage of Brazilian culture and promotes new virtual networks which, while not communities in the traditional sense, certainly create a basis for bonds of solidarity.16

The CM & CI of yesterday and today probably have one thing in common. In this context, it would be remiss not to draw attention to the irreducible ambivalence they convey. On one side, they transmit a cultural plurality that profoundly transforms the universe of signs permeating our societies. A relatively homogeneous and unique national culture is assailed by a plethora of diverse microcultures that are at once global and national, national and local, local and generational, and so forth, in a virtually endless chain. In this sense, the CM & CI emerge as an important vector of cultural division and fragmentation particularly, as we have noted, in the midst of large cities swept up in rapid and intense urbanization and segmentation.

16 http://www.overmundo.com.br/
processes. On the other side however, despite their plurality, the CM & CI serve as a relevant agent of social cohesion insofar as they transmit a common collective imaginary. This affirmation is only paradoxical on the surface, and depends in large measure on the society being examined. The main contribution of the CM & CI to Latin American societies has been to transmit across social classes and regions a series of common fictional intrigues and media heroes. Dances, for example, are events of mass appeal and participation and song lyrics play a key role in developing the discourse and self-awareness of youth.

Of course the new CM & CI no longer play their former role of building the imagined communities that were nations. But this is not to say that they no longer transmit certain shared principles, new ways of being, or world visions. In effect, despite their multiplicity, most of them convey elements generally associated with cultural modernization and steadily rising expectations (an aspect which, as we will see later, is particularly relevant in its intersection with consumption).

But what is the unifying principle transmitted by the plurality of the CM & CI? Equality. Or to put it more aptly, an individualized aspiration toward equality. The principles conveyed are globally distanced from the vision that attributed the durability of the social bond to a naturalized version of hierarchy and reflect instead a tangible and growing relational equality. Generation-specific interactions more than gender relations — and power or labor relations to an even lesser degree — are clearly the preferred target for this virtual pedagogy and even so, their relevance cannot be discarded (even in the transmission of norms as we discuss later).

Obviously, this cultural opening can create aspirations with contradictory results, depending on whether the demonstration effect or the fusion effect prevails. In Germani’s famous interpretation, in the previous context of politically stifled societies, the fusion effect prevailed triggering the emergence of mass societies, followed by populist or authoritarian military regimes. Today, in contrast, the demonstration effect appears to be insinuating itself globally. The reason for this is found in the proliferation of initiatives actually available to individuals who are in a position to accomplish more things practically speaking and process more elements intellectually speaking, and who feel symbolically more included in the modern world. The process is, of course, fragile and gives rise to numerous frustrations. We will examine some of these in detail in our discussion of the consumption paradox. Here, however, how could we fail to note the democratizing power of the fictional intrigues circulated by the CM & CI?
The penetration of the dreams they crystallize and ultimately the yearning for equality they introduce into social life? If, on the one hand, urban segregation is conspiring against the ability of individuals to feel as if they belong to a society, the CM & CI, in contrast — and not without some degree of ambivalence — are contributing to the expansion of a common imaginary.

We should reiterate here that the process is an ambivalent one since the audiences that watch some programs, would never watch others. This is characteristic of multiple programming. For example, in their study of the Second Festival of Mexico City, (1991) Nestor García Canclini and his research team found that those who enjoy one particular genre of music will not listen to anything else, even when diverse offerings are available in the same space. Alejandro Archondo studied two television programs in Bolivia: The first was “Sábados Populares” (the competition of a similar program entitled “Sábado Gigante”) hosted by “Don Francisco” Mario Kreutzberger and the second was “De Cerca”, a talk show — a Bolivian version of sorts of France’s acclaimed program “Apostrophes” — whose guests include public figures, writers, politicians, economists, artists and so forth. The first program courts a more grassroots audience with the Bolivian music — chicha — preferred by Aymara listeners — and rap. By adding lambada and some young couples, however, it was able to transcend its primarily “cholo” audience (in the words of host, Don Paco) in La Paz and El Alto and make it all the way to Santa Cruz where it joined a television network with better infrastructure. Similar to the approach adopted by some radio stations, the program uses a mixture of “popular, subcultural wisdom” to circumvent the law of differentiated audiences. As presenters began to moderate their speech and more salsa was played (popular among Santa Cruz residents) the program was evaluated as having served as an effective mediator.

The other program, “De Cerca”, compromises none of its principles to achieve popularity. Here the host “has intellectualized a normally dramatic medium and has imposed the preeminence of argumentation over exhibition.” The elites have sustained this program, which otherwise would have gone under. The coexistence of these two programs points to a demographic divide or one of “diverse communities imagined through screens and microphones” that should interact at the symbolic level to build a truly intercultural society. Despite this divide, however, the media “have fueled an accelerated political development in which people have become accustomed to talking about issues with total freedom.” There is no univocal conclusion.
If, despite their limitations, the CM & CI participate in the construction of a public sphere built around interculturality on the one hand, this only occurs in the midst of a real division of audiences or publics. In the final analysis, however, the point of convergence is found in the transmission of a common and more egalitarian imaginary of the social bond.

Youth identities and cohesion in the age of the media

Even if one acknowledges that the CM & CI play an important role in transmitting a common modern imaginary, this is not to say that they are not also a powerful factor in cultural division, as we have seen. Indeed, when classical institutions of modernity lost their monopoly over the production of meaning, what ensued was a proliferation of identities. Within this process, the growing social diffusion of the CM & CI led to an extraordinary proliferation of every possible type of relation and tie, multiplying in turn the number of identities available to individuals, institutions, groups and social movements.

How does social cohesion develop amid this abundance of signs and messages? Essentially by means of individual strategies or at best, those of very small groups, which negotiate identities in the framework of what has been referred to as “glocalization”: individual “identifications” are mediated by consumption and (reinvented) as particularist group identities. Indeed, what we are witnessing is the crafting of the local, including the re-creation of neighborhood features, using transnational cultural inputs. The result is a re-creation of the social bond that is no longer filtered, at least initially, through the institutional matrix. Instead, the CM & CI become the structuring realm between individual experiences and collective processes. Of course, the emergence of new social and cultural practices does not erase national traditions (or loyalty to symbols and values dating back to the formation of nation states). It merely complicates these things and exposes their strengths and weaknesses in everyday practices.

It is important to point out the age-related aspects of this process. Young people are not only the ones who experience more directly the deficit of meaning in the modern institutional fabric, they are also the ones who, most forcefully and out of the greatest need, create the interstices that

17 This section is based on Luis Alberto Quevedo, “Identidades, jóvenes y sociabilidad. Una vuelta sobre el lazo social en democracia.”
filter and combine new sources of identity. And they are also the most vulnerable. They struggle the hardest to obtain good jobs, benefit the least from public policy, must eke out their own spaces in the cultural landscape, and are the most exposed to insecurities in the public space — which has become hostile, aggressive, dangerous and hard to predict, particularly for the youngest — and to pressures to turn to crime.

Young people emerge as protagonists in CM & CI driven identity recreation processes. We should be clear that we are not talking about the mere resurgence of latent identities heretofore suppressed by the coercive force of the institutions that forged national identity (a common interpretation in the political sphere). Nor is this a case of the inertial resistance of traditional community forms to the expansive trend of modernity, according to the modernization theories disseminated from 1950 to 1970 (which found fertile ground in the Latin American social sciences). To the contrary, what we are observing is the genuine production of locality, in other words, the creation of new, often virtual, spaces for sociability. This production of locality — or these “reterritorializations” — takes on many different forms with respect to history and tradition and sometimes, and this is particularly true of youth, it means breaking away from them.

But the important thing is not mobilized cultural diversity, but rather the contemporary role of these identifications as social adhesives: “a function of paradoxical belonging and therefore of stabilization” (Marramao, 2006: 173). Marramao is right to refer to a paradoxical function. While it would not seem evident on the surface that (individual) consumption could function as a social adhesive, CM & CI consumption often restores a sense of belonging to those who share tastes, aesthetics, or identify with each other in the mass-mediatic enjoyment of certain stories. In this way, the television primarily, and radio and Internet to a lesser degree, insert the individual into a sphere of sociability (communities of meaning) that give him or her a certain sense of belonging in an increasingly complex, strange, and incomprehensible world.

There is no better illustration of this than the evolving notion of the neighborhood — “el barrio” — particularly in youth culture. Interestingly, despite the many transformations and new behaviors we have described in the urban and domestic spaces, it cannot be said that the barrio model of sociability is simply a thing of the past. The “values of the barrio” (face to face social relations, solidarity, reciprocity, mutual assistance) are restored and reinvented by certain cultural productions which — in Argentina at
least — surfaced with a vengeance at the peak of the country’s (economic, institutional and representational) crisis at the beginning of the 21st century. This “return” to neighborhood values of solidarity was very much in evidence in cinematography — *Luna de Avellaneda* was emblematic of the genre — and in music. “National rock” appeared on the scene with an gregarious and festive aesthetic that was, at the same time, moralistic and appealed to a “tribal” and Dionysiac identity. This had occurred before, in the early 1990s, when people began to listen to global music products, and it had engendered phenomena of localization (as well as reterritorializations) and group subjectivities.

But the barrio was also reinvented on the TV screen. Several widely viewed Argentine programs (“El sodero de mi vida”, “Gasoleros”, “Campeones”, “Son de fierro”) featured different versions of middle class families facing the economic crisis and recycled depictions of the national ethic of defending traditional values. For vast sectors, and particularly for the middle classes, the barrio has left off being a hub of socialization and of those early forays to discover the world beyond the front door of the family home. Those unable to “retreat” to safer enclaves find their place of residence marked by urban decay, distrust, and insecurity. The urban transformation we have described calls into question the image of the middle class neighborhood as the “matrix” or ideal model of social cohesion and mediation between the public and the private spheres.

This process also occurred in the 1990s with the birth of a rock subgenre that inspired a number of bands, many of which became extremely popular (or perhaps it would be more apt to say extremely visible, since in quantitative terms it wasn’t the music most young people listened to). Although the subgenre has been described in disparate terms (rock “chabón”, rock barrial, rock futbolero), the lyrics consistently evoke the difficulties youth face in envisioning their future due to the lack of job opportunities. In a distrustful, crisis-battered society, such expressions helped define identity enclaves that provided refuge, shelter and protection by extolling values of belonging, loyalty, and group fraternity. They essentially reinvent the barrio with a dose of nostalgia, more romanticism than illustration. In effect, these bands sing of neighborhood streets, neighborhood friends, neighborhood girls, soccer, and drug use, elements that construct the inner face of these

groups. The songs are full of allusions to the "other side", for example, the upper echelons: the chetos or "high society snobs" who side with the yuta (police) and, above all, the corrupt politicians, "the enemies of the people". Allusions may also be horizontal: there are the traitors (the one who "went to the other side of city" and, as in the local cumbia style of music, those who turned "snob" or went over to the police). 19

This imaginary and eminently nostalgic resurrection of the barrio in musical and audiovisual cultural productions is very significant. Especially since beyond simply expressing or reflecting through fiction the lifestyle of certain social sectors, these television programs reinvent their values and create from them a place of identification. This reaffirms the notion of "unanchoring" (Giddens, 1990), in other words of social relations that become uncoupled from their local contexts and reconstitute themselves in indefinite spatial-temporal intervals. It indicates too that mass culture continues to play an important role in social cohesion and inclusion. To do justice to the main change that has taken place when examining (the aesthetic) of popular music, “it is not a matter of how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces, how it creates and constructs an experience — a musical experience, an aesthetic experience — that we can only understand by assuming a subjective as well as a collective identity.” (Simon Frith, 1977: 109).

This is an important distinction. If the goal of the analysis is to establish some sort of relationship between material living conditions and the musical forms that give expression to them (in the classic model of a determinant relationship between base and superstructure), there is a real risk of reaching a conclusion that only confirms the fragmenting role of youth culture: when this type of evidence is encountered, it tends to be interpreted in terms of "subcultures.” In this way, there would be a sort of preconstituted social identity that latches onto a particular form of musical expression. But this is by no means evident in the practice of those who produce and listen to music, much less in the cultural practices of youth in urban spaces. To the contrary, it is the cultural supply — which is more interactive than representative — that co-produces the experiences of

19 An example of this is the “you aren’t the same anymore” theme in the CD "Puente Alsina" by the Dos Minutos band: “Carlos let his mustache grow/and he's got a nine millimeter/and he never went back/to Fabian's bar/and he forgot about playing/Sundays on the field./He knows full well a bullet/is waiting for him out there/ at night, on the street.” The police (yutas, ratis), are always featured as the eternal persecutors of the rockers and cumbieros.
collective identification, but it does so based on elements which have been experienced in profoundly subjective ways.

Indeed, in a country like Argentina a deep attitudinal schism can be observed when it comes to musical tastes and preferences. One group favors popular or mass culture selections while another is more inclined toward more segmented alternatives. In the former category are those who prefer tropical music and cumbia (including the villera), which is gaining ground among province dwellers, people under 34 years of age, and the lower classes. The other major musical preference is rock (national rock or pop music), which is also spearheaded by young people from all over the country, as well as the middle and upper classes. More segmented musical preferences include: folklore, tango, salsa, Brazilian music, disco, opera and classical, jazz/blues and techno, each of which has a unique support base.

In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of a double frontier. On one side is the divide between young people and adults — not to exclude a transformation of the patterns associated with “being an adult” and the pressure on “mature” individuals to remain open to “youthful” ways and appearances — and on the other, the various strongly divergent cultural expressions observed among youth. This internal differentiation, however, cannot be compared to traditional social divisions except in the very roughest sense.

Groups of more or less ephemeral cultural sociability form around “listening regimens” (chosen for symbolic reasons and indicative of subjective imaginary inclinations) capable of producing collective identities that extend beyond their place of origin and the industrial circuits that produce them. Rock as a global/local phenomenon is a good example of this. It was perhaps the first musical genre with a readily identifiable public based on age (adolescents and young adults) rather than territory. It sparked a global cultural enthusiasm that enable it to quickly shed its local roots. This segmentation is not completely explained by the industrial creation of a “niche” to take advantage of the consumer power of young people. Far from a response to the demand or to the commercial strategies of the record industry, the rock music of the 1960s was the driving force behind it all. Clearly a paradoxical way of producing age-based social cohesion — ephemeral, segmented, at times hermetic, multiple — and yet capable of creating a genuine sense of collective belonging. A sense that, despite the distance and anonymity, the “we” is forged by the intensity of the subjective experience and by acknowledging it in the other person — which ultimately is an acknowledgment of his or her equality.
6. Emigration

A major receiver of immigrants in the first half of the 20th century, Latin America has since become a population-exporting continent. There are many and varied reasons for this: natural disasters, the armed conflicts in Central America and Colombia, exiles created by authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone, severe economic crises such as those in Argentina and Uruguay, but most importantly, the inability of economies to offer sufficient opportunities to obtain a decent job. It is imperative to understand this in all of its many facets. International emigration traces a new “frontier” in Latin America, one that has replaced the previous internal frontier of rural to urban migration. Much like the frontier in United States history, it diverts initiatives from their narrow path to social conflict and rechannels them towards exit — to borrow a term from Hirschman — and emigration processes. It is a broadening of horizons that accompanies and deepens a developing egalitarian imaginary increasingly looks to global patterns of consumption and well-being as its yardstick.

Emigration: a few figures

Emigration levels in Latin America have risen sharply in recent decades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin American population re-censused in the U.S.A.</th>
<th>Raw numbers</th>
<th>Growth base (1960 = 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>74,964 base 100</td>
<td>234,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>624,851 base 100</td>
<td>873,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>120,608 base 100</td>
<td>617,551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


20 This section is based on Angelina Peralva, “Globalização, migrações transnacionais e identidades nacionais”.
Emigrants do not only head towards the United States. In recent years, Latin America has increasingly exported migrants to continental Europe, particularly Spain. Data from that country’s National Statistics Institute reflect that 2,672,596 foreigners were living in Spanish territory at the beginning of 2003, accounting for 6.26% of the total population. Ecuador has overtaken Morocco as the main country of origin of foreigners in Spain, and Morocco is followed by Colombia, the United Kingdom, Romania, Germany and Argentina. Latin Americans now account for 38.61% of all foreigners living in Spain (Gil, 2004).

A total of 1,665,850 Peruvians, 51.7% of them women, migrated abroad from 1990 to 2005. Emigration rates accelerated beginning in 2001, when the number of passports issued tripled relative to previous years. The six main countries of destination were: the United States (30.9%), Spain (14.3%), Argentina (12.6%), Chile (10.5%), Italy (10.4%), and Japan (3.8%). Over 70% of this migration is transcontinental and 42.9% of migrants lived in Lima immediately prior to migrating abroad. Students are the most numerous group, followed by service sector workers (IOM, 2005; INEI, IOM, 2006).

Unlike past migration patterns, this migratory movement is more individual than family-based and men and women are represented in virtually identical percentages. Where they are not officially received, migrants work illegally (one would think, in fact, that the immigration policy of developed countries, the United States in particular, is to promote “undocumented” labor). This type of migration is frequently more of an “experiment” rather than a definitive decision to leave the country of origin. One favorable aspect of modern migration is that contact with loved ones left behind is no longer a matter of mail (which can delay weeks or months). Instead, it has become instantaneous and ongoing owing to the new forms of telecommunications and their drastically reduced costs.

Contemporary migratory movements actually reflect a double movement: one of individualization and personal autonomy and another of enduring ties facilitated by transportation and communications systems.21

Latin American emigration follows the universal pattern of modern migration flows, from poorer to richer countries. Some of this takes place within the region, with Bolivian and Paraguayan emigrants traveling to

21 The physical mobility of the undocumented emigrant, however, is limited by the fear of not being able to return.
Argentina and Brazil, or Central Americans heading towards Mexico. In some cases, the Latin American recipient country is but a stepping stone to other countries; this is particularly true of Mexico and the United States. Geographical factors clearly influence migratory flows. Mexicans and Central Americans tend to head to the United States because of its proximity, while South Americans usually turn toward Europe. Pioneering emigrant groups play a significant role in these flows by weaving social networks that attract their compatriots.

While we will not focus on the economic impacts of migration flows, it is important to note that remittances are of utmost importance worldwide and, as shown in a recent World Bank study, are absolutely essential to some countries. According to estimates, remittances for Latin America and the Caribbean surpassed 53.6 billion dollars in 2005, making the region the largest remittances market in the world. This amount exceeded, for the third consecutive year, the combined totals of all direct investments and official development assistance to the region, and this does not take into account money sent through informal channels.

Remittances account for over 50% of Haiti’s gross domestic product and for between 10% and 20% of the GDPs of Jamaica, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. While the percentages are lower in Ecuador, Barbados, Colombia, Paraguay and Mexico, remittances still have a significant impact on the standard of living of vast swaths of the population, especially the most impoverished sectors.

It is safe to say that in general there is a certain correlation between the percentage of remittances in the gross national product and the percentage of emigrants relative to the total population. Obviously the poorer the country, given equivalent figures for population and emigrants, the greater the weight of remittances in the GNP. Likewise, the longer the emigrant population has been outside of the country, the greater the tendency towards a decline in remittances (owing not only to weakening ties but also the tendency to start a family and incur more expenses locally). This has been the case, for example, with Uruguayan emigrants and, to a lesser degree, Mexicans.

Migratory flows of individuals, networks and cultures

Emigration affects more than economic flows. The type of migration also changes, as migrants assimilate the technical supports that made globalization possible. Contemporary migrations, then, are no longer international: in other words, they no longer involve a nation to nation transfer of populations under the auspices of two States, as was the case until recently. Population movements now occur independently — and, in part, despite States — and shape their own transnational territories. A transnationalization of contemporary migration has occurred.

Long distance communications technologies have made it possible to build multiloci networks. This opens up to migrants a supranational space to build social relations based on principles that articulate various types of identities, endowed with different resources for action and/or insertion in the global market. Identity may revolve around territory of origin (the municipality of Arbieto, Esteban Arze province in Bolivia, for example), or may be based on a culture featuring crafts with market value (such as the typical weavings studied by Kyle, which are created by rural Ecuadorians originally from the highlands and marketed in London, Paris and New York).

Emigrants bring with them their labor force, but also their culture, and the latter often becomes a source of income, whether in the form of artistic production (from private shows to street musicians) or “ethnic” food. Another example of this is “capoeira”, a fighting/dance style originally developed by native slaves in Brazil and often introduced in the racialist U.S. market as being of African origin.

Migratory flows also carry with them their belief systems and many native Brazilian evangelical churches have expanded their clientele through emigrants from Brazil or from other countries where these churches were already established. They operate as job information hubs and this, in turn, attracts other compatriots.

International circulation is a permanent and pervasive fixture of contemporary experience that transcends race, class or religion. Not only the elites travel. Those of the most modest means also circulate. In the latter case, the income gaps between countries become an important resource to be leveraged for individual and/or collective purposes, based on principles analogous, albeit without legal protection, to those that today determine the volatility of capitals. This type of circulation circumvents the territorial sovereignty of States, inasmuch as it involves economic transactions unfettered by any sort of controls. This may include illicit trade in licit — or
illicit — products and infrainstitutional forms of social regulation based on principles of word of mouth, which are exempt from the written rules of a contract and therefore subvert the operational foundations upon which 20th century democracies were built.

Many observers explain the intensity of these migratory flows as a result of the difficult living conditions migrants face in their countries of origin. While these conditions might explain why migration appears on the horizon of future migrants as a possibility at a given moment, they cannot account for the autonomization of migratory movements in relation to the specific circumstances that gave rise to them. A case in point is that of Brazilian migrant workers or dekasseguis in Japan. Their migration process began during the crisis that swept Brazil in the 1980s and persists today in the form of constant back and forth travel that has stabilized into a circulatory territory demarcated by the intensity of the exchanges between the two countries. The same is true of Ecuadorian migration flows originally triggered by the economic crisis in the late 1990s, which have continued unabated since that time. By all indications, the cumulative experience of migrants will be conducive to ongoing migration, which will become increasingly consolidated as a social dynamic. It is a dynamic that involves a growing number of women, whose migration experience has become autonomous from that of men, with the attendant impact on gender relations. Higher rates of violence against women has accompanied their increased autonomy. And while this violence cannot be regarded as specific to migratory situations, the two phenomena are often interrelated.

Luiz Lopez (2007) studied Mexico — U.S. relations in the border city of Tijuana whose social ambit, while situated in Mexican territory, extends to the outskirts of Los Angeles. Although there had been successive migratory waves dating back to the 1940s, demographic growth accelerated over the past 25 years, during which time the city’s population grew from 400,000 to 1,500,000. Spurring this unprecedented growth were the new jobs which opened up in the maquiladoras or assembly plants for various types of devices — in Tijuana mainly televisions — made with parts currently being manufactured mainly in Asia. Women play a particularly relevant role in this labor market, where they are recruited based on traits that presumably make them better suited than men to production demands. Some authors have proposed the notion of “productive femininity,” to describe a form of domination geared toward exploiting the traditional feminine identity to the benefit of production. The living conditions of these women are fraught with the difficulties associated with precarious jobs, lack of adequate
childcare and educational infrastructure, an equally precarious home and a rigid market poised on the threshold between legal and illegal. At the same time, however, women have staked out their own territory in terms of economic initiative and they have developed strategies of resistance to the domination experienced in labor relations. Similarly, they have carved out a space for collective action in the transnational framework. For example, several of their environmental mobilizations have found an echo in the United States. In this context, women's access to autonomy due to their work in the maquiladoras caused a true “moral panic” in Tijuana associated with the subversion of traditional representations of feminine identity. The city and the press are rife with virulent public criticism levied against the women workers, who are deemed “whores” and “irresponsible mothers,” and this in turn has created fertile ground for gender-based violence.

Emigration and social cohesion

Emigration has had a contradictory impact on social cohesion and it is easy to overstate its positive and its negative aspects. We will merely list the most salient impacts:

1) One important downside associated with emigration as a collective phenomenon is the sentiment that the patria is unable to offer alternatives that would allow its children to stay home. It is a feeling of failure, of economic unviability. It is the missing horizon that weakens the collective will to cast its lot with the future of the country. The undocumented emigrant's experience as a social pariah is perhaps the most painful phase of this process. Despite this, however, emigration has served as an escape valve that has a “regulating” effect on social conflictiveness in migrant-producing national societies.

2) Migration should be included in labor market and social mobility studies, which are usually confined to national contexts. It represents job opportunities for an often considerable segment of the population. And for those emigrants who return, sometimes with a certain amount of capital or new skills, it represents a path to social mobility to which they would probably never have had access had they remained in their home country.

3) Remittances are an important expression of the social ties operating in Latin America at the level of primary relations. Remittances help
mitigate poverty. Since emigrants are young and mostly single, a significant portion of remittances are directed toward their parents: older people with greater impediments to generating income.

4) On the other hand, emigration is often associated with the breakdown of families or the departure of a spouse who might remain abroad for a protracted period or might never return. But this aspect should not cause us to overlook the underlying cause of emigration (and often the reasons behind its duration): the desire of so many men — and an increasing number of women — to emigrate so that they can fulfill their parental role to support their families. The process restructures family ties in the countries of origin (where grandparents or other relatives assume the parental role) even as it accentuates the autonomy of women’s migration.

5) While emigration constitutes a brutal drain of human resources, those who do return often bring back new professional qualifications. In other cases, however, emigrants become involved in gangs and other criminal organizations and when they return (often deported by the local authorities) bring with them a culture of violence and international crime networks. There is some discussion as to what percentage of remittances actually represents laundered assets and financing from criminal activities.

6) Finally, we must point out the creation of a new “nation,” a transterritorial space consisting of the nation-state and its “diasporas.” This includes the vast physical infrastructure or “highway” of people, goods, information, and communication. How this new transterritorial “nation” affects the self-images of different peoples is a topic that should be studied carefully in the coming years.

The political challenges of migration flows

Migrants today account for a relatively minor, albeit significant, percentage of the world’s population (2.5%). Their presence has provoked a major nationalistic backlash and a harsh crackdown by law enforcement in the countries of the “north.” Migration, therefore, has become an extremely risky undertaking with a high human cost. Paradoxically, what attracts migrants toward the principle poles of globalization is the certainty that they will find attractive opportunities for economic insertion, often
informal and precarious, but well compensated nonetheless. The countries of the north close their doors to migrants and yet open them up at the same time. They close the doors on regular migrants who are considered undesirable as potential beneficiaries of social protection policies in rich countries, while leaving them open a crack for underground migrants who may be employed with no rights whatsoever. Qualitative studies detail these delicate transactions, in which the overlapping interests of migrants from the south and capitalist entrepreneurs from the north cause borders to become porous, even as the states of the north insist unconvincingly on their desire to close them.

Crossing borders requires access to information concerning travel conditions, which is frequently available through private companies, such as, for instance, the travel agencies that have proliferated in recent years in downtown Cochabamba, Bolivia. In addition to selling airline tickets, particularly to Spain, at prices set to undercut the competition, these companies show movies about the trip and how to navigate the different airports. Ávila (2006: 90-91) provides a word for word transcript of radio advertisements by Bolivian travel agencies promising successful illegal entry into several European counties, with a guaranteed refund of the ticket in the event of failure. Migration to Japan by Brazilians of Japanese descent, while legal, is strictly managed by entities that are part travel agency and part temporary employment agency. Based in La Libertad, the Japanese “neighborhood” of Sao Paolo, these agencies handle the migrant’s transportation from Brazil to Japan and guarantee a job and housing upon his or her arrival (Perroud, 2006). This is an indication of the extent to which individual emigration is indivisible from a host of collective resources.

Today, transnational migrations confront the nation state with a number of challenges arising from the combined phenomena of mobility and sedentarism. These include the organization of movements and political activity in territories where migrants pass through or settle. This occurred in Morocco with the Sub-Saharan African movements that emerged in 2005 and in the United States, which experienced significant Latin American migrant mobilizations in 2006. In light of such phenomena, the issue of social cohesion in democracy requires Latin American countries (and others as well) to rethink the very real disconnect between a democratic social dynamic in which mobility is an exercise of individual freedom, and a democratic institutional structure built on essentially sedentary, national foundations.

According to ECLAC, from 1990 to 2003, over 3,000 people have died in their attempts to cross the Mexican-United States border. Other sources
indicate that since 1998, 7,180 people have perished on the thresholds of Europe, while traversing the desert or attempting a sea crossing. This figure appears to be mounting as more and more people attempt such crossings, departing the African Coast for the Canary Islands in precarious vessels. The human cost of contemporary migration processes is even more shocking as the barriers erected to stop migrants prove incapable of stanching a flow spurred by the opportunities that are, in fact, available for insertion into a globalized economy. The porosity of borders and volatility of capital cannot be examined in isolation from each other. They are two facets of the decay of the democratic social models that enjoyed considerable legitimacy in the recent past, but were premised on a powerful correlation between the sovereignty of the people and the (territorial) sovereignty of states.

In this sense, the six South American conferences on international migration held from 2001 to 2006 — and the bilateral agreements recently signed between Ecuador and Spain — were organized to reflect on the rights of foreign populations and to regulate population flows taking into account the inevitability of contemporary mobility. At the same time, as Seyla Benhabib has observed, it would appear that emergent forms of citizenship, this time founded on a local territorial basis, are tending to broaden the spectrum of social and political rights through the partial uncoupling of the relationship between citizenship and national identity.

By all indications, then, the responsibility of nation states with respect to social cohesion and population management can no longer be premised on nationality and requires the consolidation of more efficient post-national agreements and international cooperation procedures to guarantee an entire range of citizens’ rights to moving populations. Moreover, while it would not eliminate the contemporary phenomenon of international mobility, the reduction of international asymmetries through the implementation of policies to jump-start development in “southern” countries would probably rein in the volatility of capitals, thereby improving guarantees of social rights in general.

7. Conclusions

The five topics discussed in this chapter are very different, not only because they refer to distinct social phenomena, but because they point to varying types of evolution from the standpoint of this study. Nonetheless, they all flow into a single channel towards a growing and widespread expectation...
of equality in society, coupled with the proliferation of new individual initiatives. The result is the same, whether we are discussing trends in religiosity where collective syncretism gives way to more individualized combinations; or the framework of interethnic relations and the break from the traditional social bond they represent; or emergent urban dynamics that transmit a principle of relational equality (at the moment die-cast as disorder and fear); or the CM & CI that unite and divide social actors based on a shared imaginary; or emigration and the ways in which it expands horizons. Social and cultural differentiation, and the institution of equality as a horizon of inter-relational expectations, do not conspire against social cohesion, but rather create it on a different basis.

Naturally, this new social bond may seem weak and ephemeral when compared to the “solidity” of the traditional social bond to which we had grown accustomed in Latin American thought — a bond ensured by the naturalization of the hierarchy and ties of personal dependency. This relational universe stopped being the reality many years ago and a functional substitute emerged in its stead: a dual social bond, an amalgam of equality and hierarchy which, through the pendulum swing from one to the other, demarcated and regulated social relations amidst economic inequalities, cultural barriers, and ethnic differences. The social and economic democratization of the 1960s and 1970s, and the consolidation of the middle classes, was only the beginning of the transformation of everyday sociability.

The remaining vestiges of the hierarchical order have vanished into thin air in recent decades. Equality has insinuated itself all over in the realm of social and symbolic representations. Of course, actual social relations often do not match that ideal and individuals have experienced numerous frustrations in their relationships at various levels, whether in the workplace, in the city, or in family life. This produces a pervasive sense of interactive fragility, as if individuals no longer know what they can mutually expect from each other. But underlying this experience, and through it, lies what may be the most important democratic revolution on the continent. The kind that, as de Tocqueville admonishes us, is inscribed in the very nature of social relations. The “hierarchy” is clearly insufficient to regulate the resulting interchanges. What will be required — indeed is already required — are more contractual agreements and strengthened observance of rules and norms. Which is to say, new demands on political institutions and entities at a time when, as we will see, both exhibit tangible signs of social reorganization.
A greater challenge is in the works: it will be necessary to reestablish authority based on a horizontal social bond. The evolution of authority from hierarchy to equality is only possible through an acceptance of criteria of civility premised on merit and respect for the norms. When traditional forms of authority are eroded, and a democratic authority is not established in its stead, the sense of mutual respect is lost and incivility permeates all relations.

It is impossible to predict the future. For the moment, however, a significant transformation of the mechanisms of social cohesion can be observed. Social cohesion is no longer premised on the “naturalness” of the traditional social bond and must put down new roots in a pluralistic form of sociability based on more horizontal and democratic principles. And based too on a reworking of the types of ties that Latin Americans have with norms and the law. At the present time, as we will see in the following chapters, this objective is still a long way off.