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Trajectories of post-authoritarian transitions: A comparative interpretation of Chile and South Africa, 1990–2010

Trayectorias de las transiciones post-autoritarias: Una interpretación comparativa de Chile y Sudáfrica, 1990–2010

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study delves into the post-authoritarian transitions of Chile and South Africa between 1990 and 2010, with a particular focus on the neoliberal economic institutional trajectories that have shaped their development regimes. Employing elite interviews and documentary analysis, we unveil six mechanisms through which these institutional pathways are legitimised and perpetuated, providing a nuanced understanding of the role neoliberalism plays in economic policies and institutional transformations within democratic transition contexts. Despite economic successes marked by reduced poverty levels and GDP growth, both countries have sustained high levels of inequality, challenging the efficacy of neoliberalism in addressing structural inequality issues. Our findings contribute to the comparative sociology debate on neoliberalism in economic policies, offering insights into the complexities and challenges faced by Chile and South Africa during their democratic transitions. This analysis not only highlights the persistence of neoliberal economic structures but also sheds light on their implications for social equity. By comparing these distinct yet similarly challenged transitions, this paper aims to enrich the understanding of neoliberalism's impact on post-authoritarian societies, providing valuable lessons for other nations navigating the precarious path from authoritarianism to democracy.

RESUMEN

Este estudio comparativo se enfoca en las transiciones post-autoritarias de Chile y Sudáfrica entre 1990 y 2010, con especial atención en las trayectorias institucionales económicas neoliberales que han dado forma a sus regímenes de desarrollo. Empleando entrevistas de élite y análisis documental, revelamos seis mecanismos a través de los cuales estos caminos institucionales se legitiman y perpetúan, proporcionando una comprensión matizada del papel que juega el neoliberalismo en las políticas económicas y las transformaciones institucionales dentro de los contextos de transición democrática. A pesar de los éxitos económicos marcados por la reducción de los niveles de

KEYWORDS
Chile; South Africa; Neoliberalism; Post-Authoritarian transition; Inequality; Economic institutional trajectories

PALABRAS CLAVES
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pobreza y el crecimiento del PIB, ambos países han mantenido altos niveles de desigualdad, desafiando la eficacia del neoliberalismo para abordar los problemas de inequidad estructural. Nuestros hallazgos contribuyen al debate de la sociología comparada sobre el neoliberalismo en las políticas económicas, ofreciendo ideas sobre las complejidades y desafíos que enfrentaron Chile y Sudáfrica durante sus transiciones democráticas. Este análisis no sólo destaca la persistencia de las estructuras económicas neoliberales sino que también arroja luz sobre sus implicaciones para la equidad social. Al comparar estas transiciones distintas pero igualmente desafiantes, este artículo pretende enriquecer la comprensión del impacto del neoliberalismo en las sociedades post-autoritarias, proporcionando lecciones valiosas para otras naciones que navegan por el precario camino del autoritarismo a la democracia.

Post-authoritarian transitions and the role of neoliberalism

The transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance represents a critical juncture in the political and economic history of any nation. These periods of transformation offer an opportunity to redefine the social contract and realign the state's role in the economy. The late twentieth century witnessed such pivotal changes in countries across the globe, with Chile and South Africa standing out as emblematic cases of this global shift towards democracy. This work focuses on these two nations, exploring how, amidst their democratic transitions, neoliberal economic policies became central to their development strategies. This approach is influenced by Peter Wagner (2015), who emphasises the transformative potential of political transitions, and Huntington (1994), who articulates the complexities inherent in shifting from authoritarian to democratic governance.

The neoliberal paradigm, characterised by market liberalisation, privatisation of state assets, and a diminution of state intervention in the economy, has been both lauded for its economic efficiencies and criticised for its role in exacerbating inequalities (Palma 2011; Habib 2013; Bond 2007). Scholars like Przeworski (1995) argue that the adoption of such policies during democratic transitions can significantly influence the trajectory of institutional development and social equity. Similarly, O'Donnell (1994) and Offe (2004) highlight the dilemmas and challenges that emerge in balancing economic liberalisation with the democratic imperative of inclusivity and equality.

Nelson Mandela and Patricio Aylwin, although both pivotal figures in their respective transitions, represent distinct trajectories of leadership. Mandela, as a global symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle and a lifelong social fighter, approached South Africa's democratic transition with a deep commitment to reconciliation and social justice. However, his role as a freedom fighter required him to balance these ideals with the pragmatic economic realities imposed by both domestic elites and international pressures. As he reflects in *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), "Negotiation and compromise were the only way to achieve peace and build the new South Africa", acknowledging the necessity of making concessions to stabilise the fledgling democracy. Aylwin, by contrast, inherited a deeply entrenched neoliberal economic structure in Chile and, although committed to

democratic consolidation, famously governed "as far as possible"—a reflection of his pragmatic approach to implementing social reforms within the constraints of the post-dictatorship economic order (Garretón 2012; Huneeus 2000). This comparison highlights how Mandela's legacy as a social fighter and Aylwin's role as a statesman navigating post-dictatorial Chile shaped their distinct yet converging paths towards neoliberalism (Ffrench-Davis 2003).

Chile and South Africa, despite their differing historical contexts, embarked on neoliberal economic reforms during their respective transitions (Ffrench-Davis 2003; Bond 2010). These reforms were driven by a combination of internal decision-making and external pressures, reflecting a broader global trend towards neoliberalism (Lawson 2005). The experiences of these two countries offer valuable lessons on the implications of neoliberal policies for democratic consolidation and social welfare. This study draws on the work of Bond (2014) or Terreblanche (2012) in South Africa, or Undurraga (2014), Mascareño (2011) or Chávez Albarrán and Mujica Coopman (2015), who examine the role of political and economic elites in shaping the post-transition economic landscape. Additionally, Adorno's concept of domination unveils a sophisticated strategy employed by elites to perpetuate their hegemony: the delegation of violence to the oppressed themselves. In this process, elites not only maintain control but do so without the overt use of coercion, allowing the dominated to exercise symbolic or limited power within a framework that ultimately serves the interests of those in power. Structural violence, thus, does not vanish, but becomes diffused and normalised in everyday practices, creating the illusion of emancipation while ensuring that the formerly oppressed never forget their subordinate position. This mechanism becomes a tool of legitimation for the elites, reinforcing their authority without the need for visible force, generating a more insidious and enduring form of domination within the social order.

By comparing the trajectories of Chile and South Africa, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between economic policies, democratic governance, and inequality. It interrogates the neoliberal assumption that market-driven reforms inherently lead to a more prosperous and equitable society, challenging the notion through the lens of post-authoritarian transitions. This comparative analysis aims not only to elucidate the specific experiences of Chile and South Africa but also to engage with broader theoretical debates on neoliberalism, democracy, and development.

The paradox of neoliberalism in Chile and South Africa

Despite their historical and geographical differences, Chile and South Africa share some aspects in common that make their comparison relevant. In both cases we see the adoption and strengthening of neoliberal policies in periods of democratic transition that were oriented towards a general liberalisation of the economy and institutions. In Chile after the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, the policies of the new left-wing coalition government failed to break down the institutional roots of neoliberal policy (Garretón 2012). This resulted in an essentially discursive critique of the continuity of neoliberalism, without practical consequences (Morales-Olivares 2016; Madariaga 2020). In the long run, this ended up strengthening the process of economic liberalisation and the deterioration of social cohesion. Similarly, in South Africa, the end of Apartheid in 1994 brought with it

a string of centre-left governments that were characterised by the implementation of multiple neoliberal policies to promote growth, while defending the values of social democracy (Bond 2014; Morales-Olivares 2016). In doing so, they seriously affected the possibility of equitable economic development while continuing the authoritarian barriers to social mobility put in place by the political elite during apartheid (Van der Berg 2010).

On the other hand, both Chile and South Africa experienced successful periods of economic development after the implementation of neoliberal policies, in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and poverty reduction (Ffrench-Davis 2003; Morales-Olivares 2016). However, in both cases these successes have failed to help overcome the most important social problems related to social exclusion and inequality. By 2013 South Africa was already the most unequal country in the world (Habib 2013). And in the case of Chile, inequality has been one of the central problems since the return to democracy (Palma 2011). This has also meant that, due to the concentration of capital, both countries still find it difficult to develop their economies beyond the production of commodities.

On the basis of these common political and economic conditions, the adoption of neoliberal economic policies during the post-authoritarian transitions of Chile and South Africa raises significant questions about the capacity of these models to foster inclusive and equitable development. Despite promises of growth, efficiency, and welfare, as indicated, the implementation of neoliberalism has coincided with persistently high levels of inequality in both countries, a phenomenon Karl Polanyi warned against by critiquing the commodification of society without considering social implications (Polanyi 1994). This dilemma invokes a critical examination of the relationship between neoliberal policies and the democratic ideals of equality and social justice, using Polanyi's terminology to understand economic and social transformations in post-authoritarian contexts.

The embrace of neoliberal economic reforms, characterised by privatisation, market deregulation, and a reduction in the state's role in the economy, has often been justified as a means to achieve economic stability and attract foreign investment. However, the experiences of Chile and South Africa show that such policies can have counterproductive consequences for social cohesion and equality, in Weberian terms, by promoting an "iron cage" of economic rationality that subordinates other social considerations (Weber, cited in Jeremy Seekings 2015).

Beckert's theory of imagined futures (2020) provides an essential framework to understand how elites in both Chile and South Africa legitimised neoliberal reforms during their respective transitions. These reforms were not only reactions to present economic conditions but also driven by narratives projecting future prosperity and global integration. Political elites constructed visions of future success tied to market liberalisation, which justified the continuation of neoliberal policies even when immediate results were socially or economically disruptive. This forward-looking logic aligns with Beckert's argument that economic actors, especially in periods of uncertainty, rely on imagined futures to guide decision-making, embedding market-driven reforms as both inevitable and necessary for long-term stability.

Critiques of neoliberalism, as articulated by Varoufakis (2010), Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), and Harvey (2005), suggest that the adoption of these policies often results in increased inequality and the marginalisation of the less privileged. Patrick Bond (2015) expands this analysis by considering neoliberalism as a phase of contemporary capitalism

that privileges market logic over the protection of social and environmental well-being. This perspective is complemented by the observations of Pettit (2006), who argues that protection against market interferences is essential for ensuring freedom and well-being in society.

The persistence of neoliberalism in Chile and South Africa, despite its adverse effects on equality and social cohesion, suggests a deeper analysis of the reasons behind its continuity (Madariaga 2020). Manuel Antonio Garretón (2012) identifies neoliberalism as a dominant ideology that has shaped economic and social policies at the end of the twentieth century, despite the erosion of its social legitimacy. This view is supported by David Harvey, who argues that the neoliberalisation of the economy has distanced itself from its initial theoretical foundations, emerging as a potential antidote to the threats historically generated by capitalism against society. Michelle Foucault (2007) and Peter Hall (1989) provide a framework for understanding how the neoliberal state, far from diminishing its intervention, actively engages in the reorganisation of the market and society, underscoring the co-dependence between the market and the state, an idea that Polanyi (1994) reaffirms by stating that the market is indeed a state construction.

Comparative methodological design of neoliberal trajectories

This research employs a comparative case study approach, meticulously designed to examine the neoliberal economic trajectories of Chile and South Africa during their critical periods of post-authoritarian transition. The selection of these case studies is predicated on both their representative nature and the unique insights they offer into the interplay between economic policy and democratic development in the aftermath of authoritarian rule. This section outlines the methodological framework, including data collection and analysis strategies, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which neoliberal policies were adopted and their implications for social inequality and democratic consolidation.

Data collection methods

To capture the complexity of neoliberal policy implementation and its effects, this study utilises a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative elite interviews with extensive documentary analysis. The inclusion of elite interviews is crucial, as it provides direct insights into the decision-making processes, rationales, and reflections of those who were at the forefront of economic policymaking during the transitions. A purposive sampling strategy guided the selection of interview participants, aiming to encompass a broad spectrum of perspectives across political, economic, and civil society sectors. In total, 35 in-depth interviews were conducted, 18 in Chile and 17 in South Africa, ensuring a balanced representation of views.

A complementary press analysis was also conducted covering the period between 1988 and 2010, using the "fictitiously constructed week" technique, which allowed for the selection of Sunday articles from key newspapers such as *La Nación* and *El Mercurio* in Chile, and *The Sunday Independent* and *The Sunday Times* in South Africa, representing the progressive and right-wing elites of the period. This approach allowed us to study the media representation of neoliberal mechanisms in both countries. Specific months of

each year were chosen, filtering front-page articles that included topics such as public spending, labour and tax reforms, the role of elites, and other central aspects of the economic policy debate in the two national contexts.

Documentary analysis served as a complementary data source, involving a thorough review of policy documents, economic reports, legislative texts, and archival materials from both national and international sources. This method allowed for the triangulation of data, enhancing the study's reliability by corroborating interview findings with documented evidence of policy decisions, economic outcomes, and public discourse on neoliberal reforms.

Analytical approach

Adopting a grounded theory approach, the work proceeded without a predetermined theoretical framework, allowing for theories to emerge organically from the data. This inductive method facilitated the identification of six key mechanisms through which neoliberal policies were legitimised and perpetuated in the case studies. Data coding and analysis were performed using NVivo software, enabling a systematic organisation of themes and subthemes identified across both interviews and documentary sources.

The analysis focused on elucidating the processes of neoliberal policy adoption, the role of internal and external actors in shaping these policies, and the socioeconomic outcomes, with a particular emphasis on indicators of inequality. This approach provided a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play, revealing both commonalities and divergences in the neoliberal trajectories of Chile and South Africa.

Legitimisation of neoliberalism in Chile and South Africa

The comparative analysis of Chile and South Africa's post-authoritarian transitions reveals significant insights into the mechanisms through which neoliberal economic policies were legitimised and perpetuated, and their implications for inequality and democratic consolidation. Despite the distinct historical and sociopolitical contexts of the two countries, our findings highlight a convergence in the neoliberal pathways they pursued, mediated by six key mechanisms.

These results offer a comprehensive overview of the neoliberal trajectories in Chile and South Africa, highlighting the complex interplay between economic policies, institutional change, and democratic governance. The convergence in their experiences provides valuable lessons for understanding the broader implications of neoliberalism in post-authoritarian contexts.

Interpretation through recourse to social mechanisms offers a specific way to solve the problem of distinguishing between the economic policy transition of the period and the phenomena that shape it. There is a large body of methodological literature on social mechanisms (see for example Tilly 2001; Elster 2007; Gross 2009; Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010; Delanty 2011). Social mechanisms provide the means of explanation and interpretation, but not prediction. They are frequently used in the social sciences and include in their analysis social dimensions of trajectories of change, such as competition, adaptation, conflict, and conformity. Social mechanisms are forces that not only generate

and establish discourses, structures, institutions, and other macro-level entities, but also have the capacity to transform such emergent phenomena.

The democratic trajectories in Chile and South Africa reveal common mechanisms associated with the continuity and consolidation of their neoliberal socioeconomic development systems. Six mechanisms have emerged in this research, namely:

(1) The limits of contestation and the systematic blocking of more radical left alternatives
(2) The international strategic image
(3) Moral capital: the dark side of the legitimacy of the oppressed
(4) The influence of the think tanks: the conflation of knowledge and neoliberalism
(5) Authoritarian enclaves and the facticity of path dependence
(6) Elites in transition and networks of endogamy

The limits of contestation and the systematic blocking of more radical left alternatives

The mechanism of seduction or co-optation of the opposition from the left accounts for the notable institutional limitation of the possibilities for democratic competition that emerged in the early post-authoritarian period, as a combined consequence of the electoral support structure after the end of the authoritarian period, during the transition and the particular institutionalisation of the rules of democratic representation. The effect of this was to achieve, in both countries, a weak and almost non-existent presence of more radical criticisms of neoliberal economic policy, even though many of these criticisms had had a strong voice and great importance in times of resistance (Morales-Olivares 2016; Madariaga 2020).

In both Chile and South Africa, the logic of exclusion, in the Chilean case, and seduction, in the South African case, of the more radical social movements and progressive left-wing parties took shape. The ANC alliance quickly gained a hegemonic position in South African politics, approaching a two-thirds majority in parliament through its transformation-oriented agenda. Until now, little space has been left for left-wing opposition.

In turn, the Communist Party (SACP)[1]—and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)[2]—were seduced by the possibility of co-exercising power in the new South Africa, although in the course of this practice the programme of the political left was increasingly abandoned, even though it had initially been shared within the ANC alliance; for example the Freedom Charter and its abandonment, is a recurring theme in the debate on the subject. In Chile, the Communist Party (PCCh)[3] has been part of the Nueva Mayoría[4] coalition since 2013, but not without the cost of having abandoned the radical

[1]The South African Communist Party (SACP) is a South African party. It was founded in 1921 as the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) but was tactically dissolved in 1950 when it was declared illegal. From 1953 it was reconstituted and helped in the struggle against Apartheid. Since the return to democracy it has been part of the Tripartite Alliance.
[2]The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is a South African trade union federation. It was founded in 1985 and is the largest of the three main trade union federations in the country, with 21 affiliated unions. It was involved in the struggle against Apartheid and is part of the Tripartite Alliance, playing a crucial role in sustaining ANC policies.
[3]The Communist Party of Chile is a Chilean political party founded in 1922. It was banned after the military coup of 11 September 1973, and in the 1980s, as part of the opposition, it participated in the struggle for democratic recovery. After the return to democracy on 11 March 1990, it opposed different governments until 2013, when it joined the Nueva Mayoría coalition.
[4]The New Majority (NM) was a political coalition grouping a set of centre-left and left-wing parties, created in 2013. An important part of its political organisations, such as the Christian Democratic Party, Socialist Party of Chile, Party for

left programme. After a history of controversy and criticism of the former Concertación,[5] as a result of its active participation in the Student Movement since 2006, the Communist Party finally became part of the ruling coalition after the return of democracy. In both cases it is possible to observe the existence of a co-optation to negotiation, which refers to elite control in democratic transitions.

The international strategic image

International strategic image can be defined as the concessions made by dominant domestic groups to foreign power groups as well as strategic policies and actions aimed at these groups of private actors, with the objective of preserving institutions in a context in which subordinate domestic groups increase their bargaining power. This mechanism is a common feature of both South Africa and Chile. The case of the adherence to the Washington consensus proposed by the Klerk government in South Africa resulted in the determination of an economic policy subject to the logic that there is only one way or form of managing the economy. In the Chilean case, subsidies to the private sector were accompanied by increases in social spending in order to maintain institutional stabilisation. In Chile, the overall trajectory of the system's regulation seems to be an interesting story of how incompatibility is increased by the incorporation of new interests and potentially controversial objectives within the existing institutional design, driving the whole development regime towards instability.

In the case of Chile, neoliberal policies began to be implemented during the dictatorship and were deepened in the years following the end of it, such as the consolidation of Central Bank automation undertaken by Pinochet. In the case of South Africa, after the debt incurred during apartheid, the need to rebuild the country and transform the post-apartheid economy led to the implementation of economic programmes such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), both with a strong neoliberal slant such as deregulation of the economy, privatisation, trade liberalisation, etc.

Moral capital: the dark side of the legitimacy of the oppressed

Moral capital is one of the main mechanisms underlying the apparent non-progressive immobility that took place in the subsequent economic policy of post-authoritarian democratic transitions. Moreover, it illustrates the point that morality, as a symbolic element of capital, is a symbolic value that is embedded in factual capital in decision-making processes. It is the factual dimension of this capital that operates in the process of institutional design, the factual capital that it affects by playing a unique economic

Democracy, Radical Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party had been part of the opposition to the military dictatorship. It is a coalition born with the purpose of becoming a left-wing referent capable of promoting transformations against neoliberalism.

[5]The Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia was a coalition of left, centre-left and centre political parties that governed Chile for four administrations after the dictatorship. It was created on 2 February 1988 as Concertación de Partidos por el No. It brought together the main sectors of the opposition to the military dictatorship. It was made up of the Democracia Cristiana Party (PDC), the Partido por la Democracia (PPD), the Partido Radical (PRSD), and various organisations of the Partido Socialista (PS). On the other hand, it excluded the Communist Party (PCCh).

role. In the words of John Kane, from his book *The Politics of Moral Capital*, moral capital is moral prestige, whether individual, organisational, or cause-serving (Kane 2001).

Moral judgement is intrinsic, this postulate is acceptable in the analysis; however, its observation from the theory has been conceptualised from the point of view of its favourable, energising, strategic use in combination with other resources. In this view, the mechanism of moral capital functions as a limit to argumentation and deliberation, as Max Weber has argued, ultimately possible attitudes are irreconcilable, and therefore struggle (deliberation) can never be brought to a final conclusion. Moral capital acts as a conclusive decision. In other words, it acts on the basis of valuation or an extreme value judgement about which nothing substantive can be said. In both cases, the reference to the moral capital that has been acquired due to resistance to oppression in the past becomes limiting, rather than an energising aspect of the present. Habermas (1998) reminds us of the close relationship between historical consciousness, the self-understanding of the collective in the present, and the importance of adopting a critical attitude towards the historical past.

To achieve the revitalisation of the past in the present, however, also requires the emergence of a discursive space in which the critic of post-liberation practices is not immediately denounced as failing to understand the conditions of liberation, or even disregarding the realisation of full liberation. In this context, the very development of modernity has been understood under a future-oriented conception of time, which presents the present as a break with the past (Wagner 2015). In a neoliberal context it is predictable that the resource that enables this process takes on the character of moral capital. Problems arise, however, if the moral position begins to be treated primarily as a means to further ends. In ordinary life we assume that moral character is a value in itself, a resource that theoretically governs both the ends we choose as well as the means we deem appropriate to adopt towards them. Political standing, including moral reputation in relation to the past, is susceptible to being a means to political advantage. In other words, this mechanism reverses the usual order to some extent, causing moral characteristics to be judged by their utility rather than their implied significance (Wagner 2011).

As presented, moral capital plays a unique conciliatory and constraining role. Although a process of economic development requires harmonious interpersonal relations, moral capital, as presented in this last example, also plays an important role in the ultimately exacerbated blocking of deliberative dialogue.

The influence of the think tanks: the conflation of knowledge and neoliberalism

The think tanks' influence on the political agenda in both countries during the dictatorship and the transition to democracy was crucial. During the period of dictatorship in Chile, one of the main think tanks was undoubtedly the Chicago Boys. The role played by the Catholic University, specifically the university's Faculty of Economics, stands out here. In 1955, this university created alliances and agreements with the University of Chicago. This led a group of students to travel to that university to acquire more knowledge. These students would later become known as the "Chicago Boys", and they are notable for the importance they played in the process of implementing the new neoliberal model that would be put into practice in Chile. In the case of South Africa at the beginning of the transition, it was believed that the expert advice of the think tanks would allow the technocratic perspective to be anchored in the movement, thus guiding a restructuring of the country and a design

of economic policy based on the 1955 freedom charter. And indeed, experts began to appear everywhere; however, anchored not in the movement but in Washington's expertise. With pride, an interviewee from the political elite states:

> (…) in my view our policies are notorious, perhaps more than other countries, for not being evidence-based. We do not rely on academic analysis or scientific research to make informed decisions about the economy; much of the criticism is ideological.

But as in the Chilean case, there was not much chance of a decision. As historian Manuel Gárate (2012) argues, think tanks are not the only groupings oriented towards thinking about politics and economics, but what distinguishes them is the combination of theoretical foundations and their pragmatic orientation with respect to issues of high social impact.

Authoritarian enclaves and the facticity of path dependence

The idea of authoritarian enclaves is developed exhaustively by Garretón (2003) and concerns the fact that political institutionality is, even after the democratic transition, strongly anchored to non-democratic legacies. In this sense, an authoritarian enclave is an institutional backwardness that prevents or hinders progress, change and democratic debate, and whose origin is due to a dictatorial past that, through various mechanisms, survives within the framework of a democratic order. Its main characteristic is to avoid a structural transformation of the old order from which it originates and whose roots survive through it (Garretón 1990, 1997). As Streeck (2018) explains, the expansion of neoliberalism is only possible when accompanied by a series of decisions and omissions on the part of governments that make this possible. They favour, for various reasons, policies aimed at making states institutionally incapable of correcting or intervening in the self-regulation mechanisms of the economy, in order to move towards a liberalised market economy immune to any political pressure (Streeck 2014).

This can be clearly observed in the case of Chile, especially if we relate these authoritarian enclaves to the 1980 Constitution. Despite the fact that this Constitution was built during the military regime essentially to maintain the continuity of Augusto Pinochet (and in turn of the regime), it has remained in force to this day, which undoubtedly sheds light on how the continuity of this model has been expressed. On the one hand, its naturalisation and penetration in social behaviour, the adaptation of citizenship to the principles of the model that leads to extreme individualisation (Garretón 2012), and on the other hand, a growing distancing of society from institutional politics. Whether due to the impossibility of altering the correlation of forces through elections with respect to the right, or due to the links that Chile's big business has managed to establish with the top leadership of the former Concertación, behind the right-wing versus new majority cleavage there is an elitist pact or party of order, which manages to safeguard the dictatorial inheritance in economic and institutional matters (Mayol 2013). For the same reason, in some cases Chile has even been referred to as a semi-sovereign democracy precisely because of the permanence of these ties (Garretón 1994, 2012; Atria 2013; Huneeus 2014; Fuentes 2021).

This is directly related to Garretón's (1991) argument that during the transition to democracy there was an explicit acceptance of certain "authoritarian enclaves", of rules and institutions that could not be altered without the consent of the Chilean political right. The same author points out:

> A tacit consensus was imposed, because initially the tasks of ending the dictatorship and the transition prevented or closed off a debate on economic and social issues. Thus, the government leadership's position of maintaining the continuity of the economic model was presented as the only possible way to guarantee political democratisation. (Garretón 2012, 85)

In South Africa, with the early institutionalisation of the approach to altering the racially unequal structure of society, through semantic empowerment, normative and affirmative action policies in place throughout the transition, it has had a positive outcome, yet in the view of the political elite it has marked a minimum and a maximum. It operates as a justification and reduces the possibility of alternative approaches at later turning points.

The common expectation, as noted above, was that the Freedom Charter would guide the legislative model. Even before the transition, it was already known that there would be certain enclaves that would determine the subsequent development model, such as the Central Bank as an independent entity. The economist Padayachee, as well as the vast majority of the ANC in its early days, believed that monetary policy should serve the objectives of growth, employment and redistribution, so an autonomous Central Bank was not consistent with this idea.

Likewise, another enclave relates to the dismantling of the apartheid state. The government had some serious constraints because it didn't have enough money to do what it wants to do. This was one of the central arguments for pursuing growth, and undertaking actions to stimulate the economy, obtain high levels of economic growth, and the attempt to attract foreign direct investment, without this having determined the generation of universal policies.

> (…) Because in my opinion, I think we followed very conservative economic policies after 1994. And that's why we are still struggling with this challenge of growth and inequality and poverty and so on. So even though we have not been under the direct influence of the World Band or the IMF, there is no doubt that our eyes are still focused on economic policy and so on (…) (Interviewed political elite.)

Elites in transition and networks of endogamy

In both countries, the end of oppressive regimes meant that the groups that came to political power were those who had always been excluded from it. In the South African case, for example, there were the groups oppressed or disenfranchised under Apartheid who were strongly represented in the ANC, or in the Chilean case those who were exiled for at least two decades or displaced from any position of power. For those groups, the intentional creation of support bases in society and the strengthening of partisan or party supporters through the provision of power resources to potential allies have been important mechanisms in the reproduction of power.

Covenants, agreements, and social contracts occupy a substantive place in the movements for political transition. The way in which those who were clear that a neoliberal project would be the path to development convinced different actors, thinkers, and progressives, who gradually abdicated their basic principles. Negotiation became the basis for the consolidation of neoliberal economic policy in Chile and the emergence in South Africa, but the result was not only agreement on development, but also access to social positions.

Given the distrust, or at least the lack of full trust, on the part of the established business elites towards the new political elites, there was a special concern for the

creation of business groups favourable to the government in the dispute for social control in the economic field. These elites were understood as groups that had accumulated, either individually or by inheritance, one or more types of capital from various fields. This strategy operated through the creation of networks of reciprocity with previously established elites. The existence of such links between networks, although enhancing business support for the government, limited the power of progressive discourses of change and introduced a vested interest in policy decisions (Mascareño 2011). Moreover, according to Bond (2014), at this time and within scenario planning in South Africa, there was no question of challenging elite norms and practices.

Therefore, it is not unusual to think about this phenomenon considering that studies such as Higley and Gunther (1992) highlight the importance of those elites, especially in processes of democratic transition. In the Chilean case, this fact also fits in perfectly with what Silva (2011) has already said regarding the importance of the balance of power between the (right-wing) economic elite and the centre-left in the late 1980s, which generated what the author calls a "transversal party" that led to strong incentives to adopt technocratic formulas during the first years of the return to democracy. In short, this idea of the creation of formal and informal networks that allow certain elites to influence decision-making, promote interests or generate consensus has been extensively studied (Higley and Gunther 1992).

Something similar also occurred in South Africa. In terms of economic policy, this area was also not exempt from inter-elite negotiations, which meant that the ANC, NP[6] and business elites compromised on several issues, including: (1) the "accommodation" and accommodation of elites from the previous period; (2) power-sharing between the ANC, NP and IFP to implement a unity government; and (3) securing the independence of the South African Reserve Bank; among others (Van Wyk 2009).

However, there are also other, more critical, ironic views that reflect a certain frustration on the part of the most critical part of the elite. One interviewee, referring to the economic policy model, states:

> (…) You can call it Champagne socialism. Champagne, in the sense that it is not socialism in a market system. Socialism for people who call themselves communists who have access to markets. The South African Communist Party is not the centre of the proletariat and the people. They are members of the South African bourgeoisie (…) The members of the central committee are either prime ministers, members of political councils; they are members of the bourgeoisie. They benefit from liberal policies; they spend money on motorbikes, cars and restaurants, all of them. That is "Champagne socialism". It's all about drinking wine and talking (…) I think it's not the authentic socialism that was initially conceptualised! They enjoy living in conditions of neoliberalism.

Impacts of neoliberalism on equity and democratic governance

The mechanisms discussed above interpretatively explain the abandonment by the ANC and the Concertación of a developmental vision that would have furthered equality and been inclusive. This idea was present in their initial discourse and suggests that the combination of elements internal to the governing alliances and the national and international

[6]The National Party (NP) was a political party in South Africa from 1914 to 1997, which was responsible for the implementation of apartheid rule.

balance of power—deriving from the retention of property in the hands of the traditional elites—were contextual elements that were not favourable for the initial discourse and the normative and policy intentions accompanying it. As a result, the national elites gradually adjusted to these new constraints in order to take the decisions that they did.

In the cases of South Africa and Chile, Mbeki, Aylwin and Frei came up against two groups whose interests were diametrically opposed that defended divergent political decisions. On the one hand, foreign investors and the national business community who were pressing for the adoption of neoliberal economic policies, including privatisation, deregulation, financial and commercial deregulation, and the attainment of a low budget deficit. The main source of power for this interest group was investment. On the other hand, the citizens and the largest social movements, debilitated by the violence of the preceding periods of authoritarian rule, pressed for the recognition of basic needs, such as the necessity to overcome poverty and receive basic service provision as part of a wider transformative agenda along the lines of a welfare state discourse, with the hope that this would be gradually attained through the promises of the transition. The influence exercised by this group is based on the vote alone, at least until 2010 in Chile and 2015 in South Africa.

In the case of South Africa, the citizens were, nonetheless, debilitated by the existing structure of the political parties and the fact that none of them represented a real threat to the ANC (Habib and Taylor 2001). In the Chilean case, the explicit exclusion of the Communist Party, which represented (practically) the only organised model of leftist politics, undermined the successful realisation of these demands.

In this context, the pressure that foreign investors exerted was felt immediately and, as a result, Mbeki[7] chose to meet their demands, and Aylwin[8] decided to continue along the path of the possible, the path of "continuity". What conditions would have allowed for the realisation of alternative possibilities in the years immediately following 1994 in South Africa and 1990 in Chile?

The opinions of the governing elites of the time are reasonably clear: while the adoption of a radical economic programme wasn't possible, with the pursuit of a logic of responsibility and reform being considered essential, we believe that, at least hypothetically, a weak version of a social–democratic agenda would have been feasible. In fact, this was even anticipated by the business community and other interest groups, just as it had been proclaimed in the electoral discourse.

If one makes the attempt to visualise possible outcomes, it appears likely that a social–democratic agenda could have been formulated were it not for the existence of the mechanisms analysed in before. As a discursive justification for the absence of these more progressive and radical political practices, the elites claim that the anti-democratic discourse that had arisen in South African society immediately after 1994 and in Chilean society after 1990, as well as in the new international context of the 1990s, was a threat. In this sense fear was a threat to democratic institutions. However, a convincing case for the existence of such a threat is difficult to make. We believe that the conditions of the time were open-ended, and some type of leftist challenge to the governing coalitions

[7]South African politician, second president of South Africa from 1999 to 2008.
[8]Chilean politician. He served as president from 1990 through 1994. He was the first president of Chile after democracy was restored in 1990.

could have arisen from, for example, the trade union movement in South Africa (although not in Chile, owing to its disbanding and weakness).

However, this possibility for the empirical realisation of social democracy was closed down by the mechanisms that have been analysed in this article. Likewise, a popular insurrection was practically impossible in both societies, taking into account the experience of failure during the years preceding the transition in South Africa, and the deposition of a leftist government in the Chilean case. And, as we have seen throughout this article, the hypothesis of continuity in the economic development policies implemented by the "success stories" of the neoliberal regimes of the South was based on these same motives. However, in an international context based on the exercise of pressures to implement liberalisation, neoliberal institutions are not exempt from change, but rather subject to constant modification.

These modifications, as the analysis of policy discourse reveals, depend not only on the political context and internal obstructions to institutional change, but also on the relations between the different institutions and the manner in which the interested parties conceive of these institutions. In such a complex constellation, it would have been possible for a discourse of change to have won out, even at the summit of the institutional hierarchy: the elites. In particular, the inconsistency between discourse and institutions allows us to understand how political elites have tried to modify and maintain developmental regimes that are most suited to their own needs. Historically different situations, as in the cases of Chile and South Africa, are influenced by the mechanisms of continuity, discourses and practices in Chile and South Africa, and these mechanisms have succeeded in generating specific trajectories along which institutions have changed semantically, but only in order to maintain a general socioeconomic regime closely resembling that of the authoritarian period.

Identifying these six mechanisms, on the one hand, allows for a better understanding of how changes in the alignment of existing forces have shaped the post-authoritarian development of economic policies, while on the other hand also illuminating how these processes can lead to the possibility of political and economic change of a more substantial nature, precisely by opposing these mechanisms. One cross-cutting element of all these mechanisms is the apparent exclusion of subordinate groups able to challenge political power and use their strength to reveal the inconsistencies between the political discourses of the coalitions—aimed at winning majorities—and the reality that they have designed. It is nonetheless worthwhile interrogating the agency of these majorities, as well the obstacles to the exercise of this agency. it is possible to affirm that the institutional mechanisms have been—at the very least—obstructions to such a possibility for change. Neoliberalism has remained in place because the outcome of the political coalitions in political–economic terms has been insufficient and unsatisfactory when evaluated by the standards of their own initial premises and the indicators that we have assessed.

Reflections on the emergence and consolidation of neoliberalism in democratic transitions

This article has elaborated a systematisation of six concrete mechanisms that make it possible to understand the emergence, continuity, and consolidation of neoliberalism

in two countries with a recent authoritarian past. These six mechanisms have endured over time because they have been able to dominate and control the political and social blocs of both countries, given that this dominance has ultimately been best suited to their interests, independently of the dominant political discourses, and indeed allowing for a certain fluidity in the spaces that are not of substantial relevance to the institutional configuration of both countries, such as the case of organised civil society, whose demands have not been binding in the period analysed in this study.

One of the main findings of this work has been the inconsistency between the discursive level (along with the promises) of the coalitions in both countries and the empirical reality of institutional design. This tension is explained with reference to neoliberalism itself and its capacity to resist ideas, including those opposed to it as an institutional system. Ideas and discourses in capitalist, post-authoritarian economies that are newly emerging and battered by political crises are a breeding ground for the emergence of weak institutions, on the one hand, and for the unequal distribution of power between the main actors, on the other.

The empirical analysis has demonstrated that even though the dominant groups in South Africa have consolidated neoliberalism in a progressive manner, in Chile they have needed to maintain institutional control by means of the progressive incorporation of social–democratic elements following the consolidation phase of the 1990s. Consequently, while in South Africa the socially dominant bloc represented by the ANC has reinforced its commitment to neoliberalism, the dominant Chilean social bloc has run into ever-increasing problems owing to the need to incorporate both the largest business sectors and grassroots political support.

The following table sets out schematically the reality of the six mechanisms that define the continuity and the consolidation of neoliberalism in post-authoritarian societies in accordance with three key explanatory and comparative dimensions, which have been implicitly observed when analysing each of the six mechanisms, namely (Figure 1):

(1) Actor or protagonist of the mechanism
(2) Strategy of the mechanism
(3) Effects of the mechanism on economic policy

As the figure shows, for the two national cases it is possible to identify these common elements, both for the consolidation of neoliberalism in the case of Chile and for its emergence in the South African case.

The interpretation according to mechanisms in this sense reveals how at an institutional level political policies in Chile and South Africa vary internally in accordance with the context and the history of each state, temporally and in accordance with the people, groups and actors (1) that have endeavoured to form these policies according to their worldviews and interests, by means of strategies (2), generating an effect (3) on the post-authoritarian economic policy system of both countries. As these six mechanisms show, and as the theoretical framework has suggested, the economy is always embedded in society, in the collectivity, in Hall's terms. The economy operates as a polity and economic ideas have political power, contrary to what systemic and functionalist sociology have shown us. The construction of neoliberal capitalism, of neoliberalism,

	1.Actor or protagonist of the mechanism	2.Strategy of the mechanism	3.Effects of the mechanism on economic policy
i. The limits of the dispute and the systematic blocking of more radical leftist alternatives	Coalitions of the transitional government	Seduction and co-optation of leftist alternatives	Limitation of progressivism
ii. The strategic international image	International bodies	Concern for macroeconomic indicators	Conducting economic policy according to international standards
iii. Moral capital: The dark side of the legitimacy of the oppressed	Subaltern groups of the authoritarian period	Argumentation from the perspective of the victim	Exploitation of the condition of the victim
iv. The influence of think tanks: The blending of knowledge and neoliberalism	Academic centres	The generation of legitimate knowledge for the design of public policies	The installation of legitimate paradigms, absence of critique
v. The authoritarian enclaves and the facticity of path dependence	Groups in power from the authoritarian period	Factual limitation of future and present deliberation	Continuation of authoritarian legal cleavage
vi. Elites in transition and endogamous networks	Cross-cutting elites	Coordination of class, independently of political sector	Instrumentalization of decisions

Figure 1. Mechanisms of consolidation and emergency of the neoliberalism.

has led to the silencing and amplification of voices in order to administer external influences, adapt to new paradigms, manage endogamy, and administer the confrontations arising between distinct economic projects.

Despite its complexity and lack of universal acceptance, neoliberalism has been the term proposed here for the purpose of approaching the problem of the institutional design of the national economies in both countries. As such, it should be seen as a way of approaching the economic *problématique* in general. The economic *problématique* needs to be approached in all cases (Casassas and Wagner 2016), and by means of comparative analysis we have seen how neoliberalism came to some extent to co-opt the self-understanding of both nations, coming indeed to limit the autonomy of the actors coordinating the configuration of democracy, of society and its hierarchical order.

It is interesting to note that the alternatives have been represented, at least discursively, by very ideologically diverse civil society organisations, who were left out of disputes about economic policy and economic processes in both countries, being perceived as unqualified, unrealistic and demanding, according to one informant

(Economic Elite interview, South Africa), and who nonetheless succumbed to planning scenarios based on "stakeholders" and external demands for development. Both countries provided institutionally formulated responses that were unequal and often violent, and incapable of resolving the contradictions generated by neoliberalism in distinct areas, as we have seen before.

A question we pose throughout the article is: would it have been possible to expect that more would have come from the reforms in economic affairs? Analysing the historical path, it is apparent that there was always a possibility that the South African and Chilean communist parties—the only leftist parties with a consolidated electoral base—could have provoked a rupture. In the South African case, this would have entailed breaking free of the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC, and in the Chilean case consolidating electoral accords prior to the Nueva Mayoría. As things stand, however, "speaking left, and acting right" will apparently be how things will proceed over the short term. Undoubtedly, making such an observation based primarily on actors with decision-making power raises the question of the agency and the empirical evidence actors require when intervening in these more progressive policies.

Here it is worth making two observations. First, the aim of the article is not to claim that the six mechanisms identified here are solely responsible for continuity and consolidation. Rather, doing so seeks to address the question: how has the political–economic trajectory of Chile and South Africa been constituted in their post-authoritarian transition periods? The conclusion reached has been that the role of the elites has been substantial. Second, continuously humanising movements of the left is not entirely appropriate when observing the paradoxes of the struggle in both countries. Despite certain interferences that have been binding in the South African case, and non-binding in the Chilean case, they were unable to dynamite the unequal economic policies. It is likely that in both the South African and the Chilean cases, with increasing levels of democratisation and institutional opening, organisations may have more power to unite the intellectual, strategic, and tactical threads into a consolidated opposition. In this manner they might take steps towards a more genuine transformation than that offered by the reformist elites, both national and foreign. The transition from apartheid, or the civil–military dictatorship, to neoliberalism in the cases of South Africa and Chile is not only a switching of elites, or an elite transition (Bond 2014), but also an indicator of the weakness of popular sovereignty and the capacity to formulate demands.

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