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ALBA: A decolonial delinking performance towards (western) modernity – An alternative to development project

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Abstract: Throughout the 20th century, ideological deficiency and disunity of the Third World have resulted in the principles of Bandung and South-South cooperation not fulfilling their historical decolonial objective. This paper seeks to identify The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) as an organization that has developed not only unity amongst its participants in opposing neoliberal (development) logic, but has successfully performed and implemented an alternative decolonial epistemology that seeks to dismantle the colonial matrix sustained by colonial subjects through local and global solidarities. ALBA is analyzed and conceptualized using concepts elaborated by decolonial scholars of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. As a decolonial delinking performance, ALBA proposes an alternative to development project that embodies the spirit of Bandung and principles of South-South Cooperation thereby counterploting the supposed belief that only (western) knowledge systems lead to economic and social development. This (decolonial performance) is noticed in ALBA’s theoretical framework which establishes an alternative regional development project contra the Washington consensus and more explicitly the ethos of Liberal-Capitalism. The last

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The establishment of ALBA in 2004 as a historical bloc based on local endogenous intellectual traditions of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region presented an alternative modality leading to socio-economic development. By rejecting the imported modality of neoliberalism, ALBA committed itself to a decolonial research program, thus highlighting the intricate relationship between (western) modernity and coloniality silencing alternative (non-western) blueprints to development. Another important advancement resulting from the establishment of ALBA is that its organizing principles constellate around the objective of establishing the Third World project by being committed to the principles of South-South Cooperation and the Spirit of Bandung consisting of: cooperation, solidarity, and reciprocity. Analysing ALBA using a decolonial approach emphasizes that the Global South is not lacking in ideas leading to economic and social prosperity as identified in the policies and projects successfully implemented by ALBA on a regional and global scale.
section highlights the epistemological differences between the BRICS and ALBA with the former being identified as de-westernized delinking, and the latter decolonial delinking.

Subjects: Globalization; Global Governance; International Organizations; Regionalism; Transnationalism; Politics& Development; Development Theory; Economics and Development; History; Theory, Method & Historiography; Colonial LatinAmerica

Key Terms: ALBA; BRICS; Decoloniality; colonial matrix; counterplot; modernity; development; neoliberalism; Patria Grande/Communal; SSC (South-South cooperation); Bandung Spirit; territorial trap; New Regionalism Theory (NRT); Western historicism; silenced histories; alternative to development

1. Introduction

“There is no master model of the communal: the communal is inscribed in all non-modern memories that, since 1500, have been pushed aside and placed in the past in relation to Western ideas of modernity”–W. Mignolo

Recently, the commitment of a number of scholars around the world pursuing the initiation of alternative modalities to development through conferences for the purpose of moving in the direction of life and abandoning the paradigm of growth has been growing (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Regrettably, the World Social Forum (WSF) has not been capable of unifying members in elaborating a logic that counterplots colonial development models. “Counterplots” derive from and are rooted in, indigenous colonial conditions that inform identity and politics of the colonized (Nash, 2001; Sajed, 2015). Even though the WSF was founded on the premise of countering neoliberal logic propagated at the annual World Economic Forum (WEF), the issue of ideological disunity amongst the participants made both the WSF Consensus and Appeal falter (Prashad, 2012, p. 242). The participants of the Porto Alegre Consensus in 2005 and the Bamako Appeal of 2006 demanded an alternative to the neoliberal logic transmitted by organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank as a necessary episteme for attaining developed and/or modern status. The WSF demands were explicit, construct “a political, economic and cultural consensus that is an alternative to militarized and neoliberal globalization and to the hegemony of the United States and its allies....and [construct] an internationalism joining the peoples of the South and the North who suffer the ravages engendered by the dictatorship of financial markets and by the uncontrolled global deployment of the transitional firms” (Prashad, 2012, p. 243). The author of both entreaties, Walden Bello, has expressed his discontent with the WSF by stating that it is an institution that is “unanchored in actual global political struggles, and this is turning into an annual festival with limited social impact” (Gautney, 2010, p. 89). Bello continues by stating that ideological deficiency and disunity has resulted in the WSF not “fulfilling its historic function aggregating and linking diverse counter-movements spawned by global capitalism” (Gautney, 2010, p. 89). The participants are united against neoliberal logic, yet they have not united in developing an alternative decolonial development ideology that will connect local and global solidarities in effort to dismantle the colonial matrix sustained by colonial subjects.

Mignolo (2005, p. 36) mentions that the “west was, and still is, the only geo-historical location that is both part of the classification of the world, and the only perspective that has the privilege of possessing dominant categories of thoughts from which and where the rest of the world can be described, classified, understood and improved". Therefore, orthodox ideas of sociology embody a hubristic Eurocentric conviction that only European history informs the natural and the universal because (western) modernity is supposedly the only blueprint which leads to developed, modern, and civilized status. Development according to Western modernization theory is solely attained by peoples adopting western contours of civilization such as Liberalism and Capitalism. It appears that western modernity is the blueprint; the holy writ of progress and without it, those “uncivilized” countries would be helpless. Countries that had a dissimilar (decolonial) theory of development to
the ready-made western framework of development were sentenced to clash with the West because of their inferior “unmodern” epistemology. Modernity it seemed was a totalized project exclusively articulated and engineered through the voice of the West and any other modalities of modernity developed prior to or succeeding formal decolonization were identified as challenging (western) modernity.

History did not end; it necessitates being rewritten by making salient that the impasse in development theory is ultimately linked to the inter-relationship between modernity and coloniality, thereby halting the Global South in proposing and/or imagining (non-western) delinked alternatives to development (Escobar, 1995; Munck, 1999, p. 203). Post-cold war developments and their effect on the economic and political developmental processes of the Global South have continuously developed underdevelopment. Structural adjustments programs (SAP) and regional projects such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) devised by (colonial) Bretton Wood institutions have faltered Global South economies by increasing new forms of dependency, thereby increasing social poverty and eroding organised grass-root social movements especially in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. In light of the occurring crises one cannot help but remember Basil Davidson’s article in the Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE) journal where he ponders the question as to “just what is it which causes positive change to begin, and then enables this change to become a route of escape so manifestly valid and worthwhile that persons will follow that route as though it might be as dear as life itself?” (Ishemo, 1993, p. 79). Davidson clearly states that change commences when we evoke empathy and are nonapathetic towards the suffering of dominated peoples (Davidson, 1984, p. 29). For empathy to become translated into actual change and participation, one needs to develop a theory that fits the conditions of the suffering peoples which results in the struggle against oppression becoming a movement in its own inner dynamism.

In terms of economic development policy, neoliberal ideas of development constellate around ideas adhering to policies that support the interests of big business, transnational corporations, and finance. It seeks not so much a free market, but rather a market free for powerful interests. Instead of seeing that poor countries would be best served through appropriate endogenous development policies, neoliberals claim that since global free markets are both the means and the desired end of development—the only viable object of development policy was to do whatever necessary to make local markets and societies “fit” with the new global imperatives dictated by the Washington Consensus (IR, Globalization, and Development such as Slater (1998), Dussel (1995), Escobar (1995), Hart (2002), Hart-Landsberg (2006), Mckinnon (2007), Mignolo (2011), and Muhr (2013), development is defined as a teleological narrative in terms of a power/knowledge system originating in the West that seamlessly produces subjects whom are defined as backward and underdeveloped. According to Slater (1998, p. 662), the ethos of neoliberalism consisting of individualism and competition has resulted in attacks against (non-western) intellectuals attempting to develop an alternative to development modality to neoliberalism; thereby rescinding any possibility of perceiving the Global South as being capable of producing a development project without needing to automatically revert to western intellectual zones for knowledge production (Slater, 1998).
Motivated thus, the research question informing ALBA’s alternative to development project to neoliberalism is concerned in revealing through praxis how ALBA’s decolonial delinking gestures informing its development epistemology and ontology—embodying Bandungian and South-South Cooperation principles—are aesthetically counterploting (western) hegemonic knowledge structures which are supposedly the sole authors of the project of modernity and civilization since 1492 in the LAC region. It should be noted that the decolonial approach adopted to analyze ALBA is by no means anti-capitalist and/or anti-communist, on the contrary, ALBA's alternative to development project destabilizes the myth that the LAC cannot navigate different and/or produce (development) modalities dissimilar to European blueprints of economic and social development. In other words, the novelty of ALBA's decolonial alternative development project is that it accentuates the relationship between modernity and coloniality and aims at rejecting its naturalizing assumptions.

The first section of this paper attempts to sketch out the conceptual framework informing ALBA by elaborating on the history and meaning of decoloniality as a critical theory used to approach modernity/development and (neoliberal) globalization (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007; Vallega, 2014). Decoloniality is identified as a form of “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 122), and/or “epistemic de-linking” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 450) as highlighted in one of the primary decolonial epistemic delinking performances occurring in 1955 at the Bandung Conference. As any decolonial performance, Third World development projects are intellectually silenced by Western historicism and escape any sustained engagement in Western IR scholarship (Pasha, 2013, p. 147) because the symbolic gesture of any decolonial performance lies principally in repudiating the belief that the West is the sole maker of history and producer and/or zone of knowledge. The second section seeks to draw parallels between the history of Bandung and the history of ALBA being tampered with and silenced in Western historical narratives thus creating a segue to the third section which proposes that the Third World is not barren of ideas and is not lacking in dynamism to rethink and work out solutions that fit its own impasses and conditions of underdevelopment. ALBA’s regional decolonial delinking epistemic project is identified as an original body of ideas that possesses non-western linked zones of knowledge informed by Simon Bolivar’s vision of La Patria Grande (Great Homeland), Cuban Jose Marti’s Our America, and Nicaraguan anti-imperialist Augusto Cesar Sandinos Plan For the Realisation of Bolivar’s Supreme Dream. ALBA is characterized as a locomotive in establishing Third Worldism or the Third World project by being identified as a decolonial performance that produced a regional development project that counterplots (western) modernity by demanding and proposing ALBA as an alternative to (western) development in place of the refined alternative development project characterizing the Washington consensus led FTAA. By highlighting the success of ALBA’s policies and projects, ALBA is identified as an endogenous development model that espouses a decolonial logic that seeks to rejuvenate principles of South-South cooperation, and the Bandung Spirit—especially in the LAC region. Motivated thus, ALBA is presented as a regional decolonial project that is unafraid to revise (western) temporal and spatial ontologies informing the nation-state by countering (colonial) knowledge systems appraising the (neoliberal) FTAA regional project which silenced any alternative theoretical epistemology delinked from (western) intellectual zones of knowledge as being conducive to development. The last section seeks to highlight the differences between the BRICS and ALBA with the former being identified with dewesternized delinking, and the latter decolonial delinking.

2. Methodology and conceptual framework

2.1. Approaching the theoretical and structural foundations of ALBA using a decolonial research program—alternative to development and decolonial delinking performances

In 1949, Raul Prebisch a member of the Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA) presented his ground-breaking work entitled “The Economic Development of Latin American and Its Principal Problems” in Havana (Prashad, 2012, p. 24). His work—later labeled as the “Havana manifesto”—critiqued the international political-economic model established at the Bretton Woods conference.
at Mount Washington Hotel in 1944 by highlighting the absence of the Global South as participants in the architecture of the post-World War political-economic order. His critique elaborated a set of alternatives that plead the victors of WWII at remodeling the architectural design of International Relations (IR) and the Global Political Economy (GPE) thereby making it more economically egalitarian and institutionally democratic. He emphasized that the rules of the game were established when the majority of humanity was still colonized and that most of humanity—located in the Global South—had its post-independence “development” fate already decided by the Global North (Prashad, 2012, p. 24). To highlight Dr. Prebisch’s frustration at the hubris emanating from delegates at Bretton woods, consider John Maynard Keynes comments at the conference when asked about the (agency) of colonized subject in the colonies. Keynes’s states that the [colonized subjects] “clearly have nothing to contribute and will merely encumber the ground” (Prashad, 2012, p. 25). This a priori lack of cooperation with the East is identified with Western interlocutors silencing and refusing to hear their articulations and suggestions concerning the post-World War model of the GPE. Raul Prebisch notes that “one of the conspicuous deficiencies of the general economic theory—from the point of view of the periphery—is its false sense of universality” (Prashad, 2012, p. 25).

Prebisch's comments also highlight Michel-Rolph Trouillot's concept of silences produced by power (Trouillot, 1997) which is a process that evacuates, ignores, and erases knowledge produced or suggested by non-western subjects from making history. Despite a critical turn in the 1990s known as the widening and deepening era of IR and Security Studies (S.S) (Buzan & Hansen, 2009), IR and GPE presently remain soundly a Euro-American intellectual and political enterprise with the self-evident verities of realpolitik including its foundational problem-solving positivist logic denoting the final (universal claim) of social scientific evolution. The discipline of IR is structured around two narratives that help shape, and continuously rejuvenate the fiction of continuity, coherence, and self-identity of the field. The first narrative follows a linear trajectory of history and time dotted with epochal moments of transcendence such as the Westphalian treaty of 1648 supposedly ending religious warfare thereby moving Europe or the West to a rebirth (Renaissance) that leads to the Enlightened land of secular reason and sovereignty (Al-Kassimi, 2015; Osiander, 2001; Pasha, 2013). The second discourse constructs the international system using a Hobbesian lens characterized by anarchy, fear, and violence on one side, and order, freedom, and security on the other (Pasha, 2013). The erasure of non-western knowledges and the silencing of non-western narratives substantiate the Euro-centric narrative that only part of humanity is endowed with cognitive faculties that enable orderly governance, prosperity, and freedom, while the rest is condemned to a perpetual state of war and insecurity (Pasha, 2013).

The anthropological hubris underwriting both narratives is that the liberal political order is a distinctive achievement of Western civilization which a priori extends the West the “chief burden of civilization” because those “outside” IR—labeled as non-western spaces—need to emulate European epistemological thought to proximate modern and/or civilized status. Both narratives are assembled in relation to an “outside” that resists civilization, a world that is irrational and illogical, therefore incapable of being “inside” international “civil” society (Mamdani, 2005; Pasha, 2013). Furthermore, both narratives also emit cultural relativist claims categorized by Pasha (2013, p. 145) as “conventional development understanding of humanity which presumes the threshold of modernity that divides the past from the present, the West from the Rest”. Colonized peoples were deemed incompetent to apprehend the ethos of Western modernity/civilization—mainly Freedom and Liberty. Western anthropologists are complicit in denying non-European peoples coevalness. Spatially and temporally, Western modernity suspended, and permanently froze non-Europeans in a category of backwardness (Helliwell & Hindess, 2013; Pasha, 2013). The history of knowledge procured in the Third World is predictably ignored and replaced with a “universal” (western) linear international history which extends exclusively Euro-American pathologies. The story line of such (Eurocentric) history endows exclusively their staging into the global public sphere, which is perceived as the sole episteme in providing content and meaning to the flow of time (Pasha, 2013, p. 146).
The gestured rejection of universal narratives perceiving the Third World or the Global South as spaces/zones vacant of “agents of knowledge” (Slater, 1998, p. 662)—and/or a “Third” World that “simply produces cultures to be studied by anthropologists and ethnohistorians”, (Mignolo, 1993, p. 131)—rather than endowed with “intellectuals who generate theories and reflect their own culture and history” (Mignolo, 1993, p. 131) was initially performed at the historic Bandung Conference of 1955 which is properly regarded as a decolonial moment that articulated an alternative international system by eliminating the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2011; Pasha, 2013, p. 147) by expressing South-South Cooperation (SSC) as a key organising concept entailing a set of practices in pursuit of historical changes through a vision of mutual benefit and solidarity among the disadvantaged commune of the world system (Gray & Gills, 2016). Before I highlight the decolonial performance at Bandung, let us first examine the concepts encapsulating the decolonial research program developed principally by a Latin American movement. These include coloniality of power (colonial matrix); decolonial delinking; alternative to development; and decolonial gestures (Dussel, 1995, 2012; Escobar, 1995; Grosfoguel, 2007, 2013; Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Vallega, 2014).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, decolonial thinking emerged during the impasse of development studies to become one of the most distinctive sociological approaches engaging the supposed belief that modernity/development can only be attained by adhering to European knowledge structures relating to social humanities. Biccum (2005), Dussel (1995, 1998), Escobar (1995), Mignolo and Escobar (2010) highlight that development similar to modernity is a teleological narrative of history and progress which positions European knowledge at the center of all social, economical, and political processes. Development theory in the late 1970s, similar to Modernization theory of the 1950s were nothing more than macronarratives articulated exclusively by western interlocutors—that amounted to little more than the west’s convenient “discovery” of poverty in the third world for the purposes of reasserting its moral and cultural superiority in supposedly post-colonial times (Lentin, 2017). Escobar (1995) identifies development as an ideological export and a simultaneous act of cultural imperialism. With its highly technocratic language and forthright deployment of norms and value judgments, it is also a form of cultural imperialism that poor countries had little means of declining politely (Said, 1994). Escobar (1995, p. 195) says concerning development: “Perhaps no other idea has been so insidious, no other idea gone so unchallenged” since it so strongly set the terms for how people in underdeveloped countries could and should develop. With peoples in the Global South told how to behave, they became objects of development. Therefore, the narrative of development is nothing more than a modern way of performing Orientalist gestures in technocratic guises—ultimately a way for the west to manage the rest.

Decolonial scholars demand the critical analyses of dominant discourses representing power/knowledge relations that reinforce the belief that there are not multiple ways to attain modernity. Decolonial scholars advocate for the abandonment of the a priori belief that development is an exogenous concept based on an Orientalist belief that Europe miraculously possesses the required characteristic for industrialization, civilization, and modernity (Escobar, 1995; Jones, 2008). Decolonial scholars such as Escobar (1995) and Mignolo (2011) advocate that peoples search for alternatives to development, rather than refine alternative development modalities promoted by late scholars such as Ragnar Nursk, W.W. Rostow, Talcott Parsons, and Milton Friedman. Escobar (1995) makes a distinction between alternative development and alternatives to development. The former are exercises in reform having little effect on the underlying role of development in ordering and governing society, while the latter are exercises more likely to transform society and enhance human fulfillment. Escobar highlights that the “distinction, then, is between a partial [...] intervention-specific alternative, and a structure changing, radical, systemic alternative”. In other words, alternative developments exercises constellate around the colonial matrix, while alternatives to development seek to dismantle the colonial matrix by establishing decolonial knowledge structures that prioritize human dignity. ALBA being theorized using a decolonial approach reveals that it has developed an
epistemology that is based on ideas that are radically different from (western) alternative development.

Analyzing ALBA using a decolonial approach to examine the relationship between modernity and coloniality, and how this continues to impact global power relations, represents an advance in thinking about the condition of coloniality and its impact on the impasse in (alternative) development studies. Decoloniality goes towards engaging deeply with the theme of interrelatedness and/or translocalness which Bhambra (2007), Dussle (2012), and Bhambra and Santos (2017) suggest is fundamental for de-privileging western historicism and (re)writing more inclusive histories. Decolonial thinking originates mainly with Latin American scholars such as Anibal Quijano, Ramon Grosfoguel, Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, and Arturo Escobar. Decolonizing approaches are useful because they focus not only on theoretical deconstructions of the colonial structures—which many critics argue continue to shape relationships between states and peoples across the globe—but also on the proposition of alternatives to them, sometimes through an appeal to the precolonial. Understanding the relationship between modernity and coloniality is crucial if we are to go towards decolonizing knowledge and the resultant (hegemonic) power structures that sustain it. According to Mignolo (2006, p. 312), “the rhetoric of modernity is that of salvation, whereas the logic of coloniality is a logic of imperial oppression. They go hand in hand, and you cannot have modernity without coloniality; the unfinished project of modernity carries over its shoulders the unfinished project of coloniality.” The reason for this interrelationship is in the fact that naturalized beliefs about the world order are imperial-colonial, and continue to be so. The beliefs about the inherent differences between the West and the majority of the world, established by the teleological discourse of modernity—mobilized by European Enlightenment thinkers—have shaped hegemonic understandings of the world for the last 500 years. These need to be debunked by an epistemic decolonial shift. Therefore, unlike postcolonialism, decolonial thinkers like Mignolo and Escobar are not calling for an analysis in terms of “post” or “neo” since both prefixes propose changes within the same modern colonial epistemology (Dussle, 2012; Dussel, Morana, & Jauregui, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2013). Instead, a decolonial research program entails a delinking from the rules of the game—decolonizing of the mind. This process of delinking doesn’t mean attempting to exist outside of modernity or indeed Liberalism—Capitalism and/or Communism—rather the aim is to reject the naturalizing assumptions made by these macro-narratives that only European epistemology leads to modernity/development.

For instance, Kelly (2009) analyses British policy of free trade at the height of British imperialism as not anti-imperial but an alternative form of imperialism to colonialism. According to Kelly (2009, p. 6–7), the intrinsic relationship between colonialism and industrialization—which according to a decolonial lens led to European Development/Modernity—is salient when he states that “nineteenth-century great powers such as Great Britain and the USA in relation to Latin America, realised that they could orchestrate the formation of legal and political regimes in non-European countries so they would function to ‘open’ their resources, labor, and markets to ‘free trade’ dominated by economic competition among European powers, without the need for the expensive and increasingly unpopular old imperial system of formal colonies and monopoly trading companies.” He goes on to highlight that a series of publications by Bernard Semmel and the German imperial historian Wolfgang J. Mommsen documented the long and complex history of Free Trade Imperialism (FTI) by arguing that “decolonisation and the Cold War...involved the dismantling of the remaining formal colonies, mandates, and trusteeships; the transfer of limited powers of self-determination to the westernised elites of nominally sovereign, yet dependent local governments in a global network of free trade imperialism; and the transfer of hegemony from Great Britain to the USA. They called this complex transition period ‘the imperialism of decolonization’ and ‘the end of empire and the continuity of imperialism’ (Kelly, 2009, p. 7). In addition, in his classic study of theories of imperialism, Mommsen argued that the theory of informal imperialism was the most important advance in the understanding of imperialism in the twentieth century.
A decolonial alternative denaturalizes assumptions about development being attained by adopting a one-size fits all theory of development by privileging human dignity—even though this is constantly denied by the rhetoric of (western) modernity where human dignity takes second place to progress. Thus, decoloniality is committed to decolonizing knowledge. By decolonizing knowledge, we can no longer continue to privilege exclusively western development modalities because that would result in prioritizing processes that persist in constellating the colonial matrix. Grosfoguel (2007, 2013) highlights that by approaching modernity and development using a decolonial lens does not mean becoming inward-looking, anti-European, fundamentalist, or more dangerously reductionist. On the contrary, analyzing ALBA through a decolonial approach highlights its truly universal outlook concerning development which looks, as Bhambra (2007) highlights, at how ideas are always arrived at from a variety of sources—there is not one truth out there, but a multiplicity of truths.

A decolonial approach grasps colonialism as constitutive of modernity. Modernity—as a teleological narrative—should be viewed as a world-wide process rather than an intra-European phenomenon which is then rolled out across the rest of the world. Dussel (1998, 2012) proposes the notion of trans-modernity as a way of encapsulating this process of decolonial thinking while Escobar (1995, 2011) calls “the expression of an ethics of liberation” brought about through the action of subaltern groups and/or social movements as necessary (local) mobilization in dismantling the colonial matrix. The domination of non-Europeans as integral to modernity in intrinsic in adhering to a decolonial research program. This process of domination led to the silencing of alternative to development knowledges and cultures which are then expressed as a lack in comparison to European knowledge systems. A decolonial approach resurrects knowledge buried by the colonial matrix which prioritizes European knowledge systems informing spatiality, temporality, and culturalism. Therefore, a decolonial approach accentuates Eurocentrism dominating narratives of modernity and development by unveiling the way in which particularized European knowledge constitutes itself as universal to the exclusion and repudiation of other knowledges. In other words, decoloniality is cognizant of the danger in making the particular history of Europe the general history of the world.

Coloniality of power is based on a Eurocentric epistemology which a priori perceives race as a naturalization of colonial relations between European and non-Europeans thereby prioritizing the adoption of European ways of knowledge. Quijano (2000, p. 540) makes this point pointedly when highlighting that “Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony”. The colonial matrix is directly involved in silencing and denying knowledge production performed or situated in zones occupied by non-western interlocutors on the basis of European knowledge being the standard of civilization and the only road to modernity (Quijano, 2000). Therefore, decoloniality is a response to the relation of direct political, social, and cultural domination established by Europeans (Quijano, 2007, p. 168). The “de” in decoloniality emphasizes the confrontation with “colonial” hegemonic structures at the very moment they appear since “decolonial” is part and parcel of the history of modernity which demanded coloniality (Mignolo & Escobar, 2010). This makes decoloniality both a political, and epistemic project (Mignolo, 2011) that refers to analytics related to socio-economic political practices opposed to pillars which inform Western civilization/modernity (Capitalism, Communism, (Neo)Liberalism, (Hobbesian) Nation-State; Secularism). In other words, Decoloniality has been identified as a form of “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2011, p .122), and/or “epistemic de-linking” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 450).

Decoloniality is a term that focuses on understanding modernity using a form of critical theory that consists of analytical and practical “options of confronting and delinking from the colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo, 2011). Coloniality of power or the colonial matrix refers to the “underlying logic of the foundation and unfolding of Western civilization from the Renaissance to today” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 2). Coloniality of power identifies and describes the enduring legacy of colonialism even after formal colonialism has ended, in the form of knowledge systems related to the
social, cultural, and economic system of hierarchies that outlived formal colonialism and became integrated into succeeding social orders (Quijano, 2000). Rethinking development through the idea of hegemonic struggle highlights that development itself and the exercises it adopts are part of a political (colonial) process (Biccum, 2005; Escobar, 1995; Mignolo & Escobar, 2010). Rather than seeing development as a universal good, and something that can be brought into being, it can be reframed as a field for social struggle and a zone of political engagement (Mckinnon, 2007). In a Gramscian lens, hegemony is used to highlight the “never-ending process of political struggle that occurs not just in the domain of formal politics [...] but as part of relationships of power across all social relations.” (Mckinnon, 2007, p. 778). This is evident when Gramsci highlights the importance of developing a counter-hegemonic movement that engages in a war of attrition against the hegemonic (bourgeois) political and civil society.

Therefore, ALBA is identified as a counter-hegemonic decolonial delinking project that is struggling to implement an alternative development model that fits the conditions of the LAC region. ALBA from a decolonial (Gramscian) lens is involved in a historical crisis that is in a struggle to destroy the (colonial) superstructure identified as neoliberalism by extending an alternative philosophy and ideology based on La Patria Grande. Thus, ALBA has created a space—intellectually organic first and foremost—for “local agency” to assert itself in the political and civil society thereby developing alternative modalities leading to development that fit their own historical conditions. In practice, this means that ALBA is a radical systematic alternative that encourages local communities and traditions rooted in local identities to address their own problems and voice their ideas about development processes.

At this point, it is important to note that there are two trajectories of de-linking: Decoloniality and Dewesternization. While the former trajectory informs the conceptual framework of this paper, the later trajectory of de-linking—elaborated in the final section—in difference to the former does not dispute the systems of knowledge upholding the colonial matrix, thereby preventing the construction of the communal (Mignolo, 2012b). Decolonial delinking means that there other options looming on the horizon which dispute the colonial matrix or the monopoly of (western) knowledge being perceived as the exclusive agent of knowledge production. It should be made clear that decolonial delinking does not mean ignoring and rejecting western philosophy since the founders of ALBA—Commandante Castro and Chávez—have founded political and social relations based on Marxism, however, both leaders have emphasized—contra dogmatic Marxists—that it is not only Marxism that leads to modernity. The audacity of Castro and Chávez was that they destabilized the belief that the west is the only spatial location that has the privilege of producing epistemologies that the rest of the world is expected to adopt. The aspirations of Castro and Chávez are reminiscent of decolonial performances that occurred on October 1978 in a People’s seminar entitled “The Transitional State in Latin America” published by the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla in 1980, and the Culiácn Conference of 1980 which dealt with the work of José Carlos Mariátegui. With the LAC region confronted in 1970s and 1980s with an absence in the field of political thought of a theory capable of uniting democratic and socialist moments, dogmatic Marxist intellectuals have insisted on the classical idea that a class alliance led by the proletariat and a particular political organization could ignite a mass movement of social protest, capable of generating a social crisis leading to the transformation of the existing political order. However, as long as this “accumulation of forces” is considered solely instrumentally as a tool for unity and not as the conscious expression of a strategic basis for a theory of transition, it cannot serve as a vehicle for uniting the heterogeneous popular classes in an all-encompassing social project. Not being the result of true and effective political and social unification of the masses, past (dогmatic Marxist) political processes led to a transitory conquest of power (Burgos, 2002, p. 13).

Therefore, dogmatic Marxists were not prepared to perform the difficult tasks that a complete political, social, and economic transformation of a country requires. Unable to achieve the full consensus of the popular classes, they quickly turned to authoritarian solutions. In this respect, the seminar’s objective was to consider the possibilities of establishing an integrative analytical field...
that would not only disarticulate theory and reality, but also create a conflict between them (Burgos, 2002, p. 13). The seminar’s objectives, synthesized by Aricó and Labastida, demonstrate the theoretical-political challenge to many of the period’s intellectuals. Two accomplishments of left intellectuals during the period of the 1970s should be highlighted: the discovery of José Carlos Mariátegui’s search for the construction of a non-dogmatic Marxist indigenous socialist project with Latin American roots, and a rereading of Gramsci’s works through new formulas. Gramscian thought in Latin America produced two principal models operationalized in ALBA: the “national popular” culturalist model and the worker’s “council” model. Both models attempted to understand the problems encountered by earlier developmental projects which they tried to impose themselves into the “exotic” Latin American reality (Burgos, 2002, p. 13).

In succeeding decades, the new perspective radically transformed the foundation for thought and became a key factor in future innovations by changing the logic of thinking about social transformation in Latin America. The previous model for discussing the work of Gramsci advocated by so-called Western Marxism was based on the logic of the assault on power, a theory of the transformation process that finds its most relevant theoretician in Lenin (Burgos, 2002, p. 13). The new perspective offered an alternative way of thinking about the radical transformation of society: one goes from the logic of the assault on power to the logic of the construction of new centers of power within the present society—the logic of the construction of a counter-hegemony. Concerning the nature of the reading that Gramsci received in Brazil at the end of the 1960s, Carlos Nelson Coutinho wrote: “We did not embrace the Gramsci who was the critical theoretician of the ‘all-encompassing’ state and the socialist revolution in the ‘West’ or the one who researched the ‘non-classical’ forms of the transition to capitalist modernity...we focused on the ‘philosopher of praxis’ who proposed a humanistic and historicist reading of Marxism that differed from the predominant Soviet vulgate.” (Burgos, 2002, p. 14)

Similarly, decolonial logic advocates being eclectic and reflexive in navigating different intellectual zones of knowledge to produce development policies that supersede the current naturalized developmental assumption that exclusively places Western narratives and ideas—Marxism and/or Liberalism—as leading to development.5 In the words of Mignolo (2012b) “It is the hegemony of Western knowledge that justifies the hegemony of Capitalism and the State, and that establishes ‘Development’ as a condition of freedom”. Decolonial delinking is therefore the recognition and implementation of a border gnosis or subaltern reason (Mignolo, 2000, p. 88) that is cognizant that “modernity” understood as only revolving around and based on (European) epistemology is but one among several options, and that “this option was defined by those who lead and benefit from it, which is in part how it became hegemonic...[modernity] suggests that there is only one option and that the best we can do is to improve on this single option” (Mignolo, 2012b). In this sense, decolonial delinking refers to a kind of “thinking in radical exteriority” (Vallega, 2015, p. x) which is a means of eliminating the tendency of provincializing Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000), and to pretend that Western European modes of thinking are in fact the universal ones (Quijano, 2000, p. 544). Understanding the definition of decoloniality allows us to define its interrelated concept called “decolonial gestures”. With gesture defined as the movement of the body that expresses or emphasizes an idea, sentiment, or attitude, we can deduce that a decolonial gesture is a body movement that carries a decolonial sentiment and/or intention, intending to highlight and subvert “colonial gestures” by adhering to an ontology which highlights that universal meanings are never constituted in themselves, but are always in relation to networks of differences (Mignolo, 2012b). Mignolo (2012b) states that when decolonial gestures delink from Western “performance”, they become part of decolonial options and turns at the same time that decolonial options and turns need decolonial gestures to be constituted and felt as such.

Therefore epistemic-delinking is a decolonial performance that includes any gesture engaged directly or indirectly in disobeying the directives of the colonial matrix, and contributes to building the “communal”—defined by Mignolo (2014) as “the building of the human species on the planet in harmony with the life on the planet of which human species is only a minimal part and of which...
it depends”. The communal (Mignolo, 2012b)—as alluded to in the introductory quotation—is not to be confused with Western ideas of the “common good” or the “commonwealth”—the first being Liberal and the second Marxist—since the communal is neither Capitalist nor Marxist, but decolonial. The communal “is a way to advance one of the legacies of the Bandung conference” (Mignolo, 2012b) which suggested neither Capitalism nor Communism as the way to development, and the elimination of the colonial matrix. As a result, the establishment of the communal necessarily demands the elimination of the colonial matrix because its establishment demands the re-inscription of non-capitalist economic organizations and “non-modern” knowledges that have co-existed with capitalism but have been marginalized or incorporated into a capitalist mentality (Mignolo, 2009, 2012b, 2014). To operationalize the concept of the communal, decolonial delinking performances enacted by ALBA attempt at reinscribing into contemporary debates non-European conceptions of social, political, and economical organization which the colonial matrix banned and silenced by standardizing progressive discourses of Marxism/Communism and/or Liberalism/Capitalism as the only narratives leading to salvation/modernity (Mignolo, 2014)

From a decolonial delinking perspective, the Bandung Conference of 1955 remains a defining decolonial gesture in 20th century IR history in that it critically recognized that even though formal colonization ended, the structures of power situated after formal colonialism concluded continued to be organized on, and around the colonial axis (Quijano, 2000, p. 568). President Sukarno of Indonesia acknowledges the presence of the colonial matrix by warning delegates at the conference to not be deceived or soothed by the thought of colonialism ending. Sukarno pleads to the delegates by saying: “I beg of you do not think of colonialism only in the classic form which we of Indonesia, and our brothers in different parts of Asia and Africa, knew. Colonialism has also its modern dress, in the form of economic control, intellectual control, actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation. It is a skillful and determined enemy, and it appears in many guises. It does not give up its loot easily. Wherever, whenever and however it appears, colonialism is an evil thing and one which must be eradicated from the earth” (Sukarno, 1955).

3. The Bandung Conference: a silenced decolonial delinking performance
Bandung’s decolonial gestures inaugurated the Third World project (Mignolo, 2012b, 2013, Prashad, 2012) and the organizing concept known as South-South Cooperation (SSC). It should be noted that South-South Cooperation was a reaction to Northern relationships refusing to cooperate with Southern interlocutors by rejecting dialogue and/or any alternative to development models that made salient the structural inequalities in the global political economy. In the 1970s, North-South relations had the Chicago Boys as its primary intellectual architect by promoting exogenous development concepts such as free trade and laissez-faire i.e: neoliberalism; while intellectual proponents of South-South relations spurred on by the influence of thinkers located in schools of thought including underdevelopment and dependency theory in the 1960s and 1970s, and critical development studies in the late 1980s, extending endogenous development policies which emphasized fair trade and cooperative advantage (Fridell, 2010). Therefore, galvanized by mass movements and the failures of Bretton Woods (under)development in the Third World, Bandung as a decolonial gesture intended, and currently remains, involved in the struggle to challenge Northern-dominated political and economic systems of knowledge—even though the Third World project has witnessed a series of starts and stops, surges, and retreats (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 558). Bandung’s demands were carefully developed through institutions such as the United Nations and what would become the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of 1961 which underscored the political possibility of a non-alignment through “Third World Solidarity” (Pasha, 2013, p. 148). The decolonial gestures expressed at the conference transformed the “Third World” being viewed as a pejorative term in Western knowledge systems, to a marker of virtue and positivity (Pasha, 2013, p. 148). Even though there were internal differences at the conference in relation to ideology and/or political alignments, Bandung’s Third World solidarity ethos represents a defining moment of “dissidence against superpower arrogance” and the “hope of transcendence” (Pasha, 2013, pp. 156–157).
The decolonial performance at Bandung is made evident when we notice that the decolonial gesture offered a new form of political socialization based on equality and mutual respect, not the “standard of civilization” which perceives politics as a zero-sum game security dilemma and a “war of all against all”. The delegates at Bandung understood that they were in no position to engage in power politics (realpolitik) to enforce Bandung’s decolonial communiqué. Sukarno made this clear when he stated that “What is left for this Third World on a planet where the atom bomb and the dollar determined the course of human history?” (Prashad, 2007, p. 34). The decolonial proposition offered by Sukarno and the delegates urged the reconstruction of the international system by “injecting the voice of reason into world affairs” thus we “can mobilize the entire spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace” (Prashad, 2007, p. 34). The delegates expressed that the Third World as a decolonial project—with an objective of establishing the communal—had a duty toward “humanity and civilization to proclaim their support for disarmament” thereby freeing them “from the burden of annihilation and insecurity” (Prashad, 2007, p. 34). The secretary-general of the conference, Roselan Abdulgani, sums up this alternative decolonial option of performing politics by stating that the purpose of the conference was to “determine the standards and procedures of present-day international relations and to contribute to the formulation and establishment of certain norms for the conduct of present-day international relations and the instruments for the practical application of these norms.” (Pasha, 2013, p. 148). Motivated thus, Bandung is a decolonial moment (Mignolo, 2013) that challenges the Western story of what constitutes “good governance”, “modernization” and/or “democratization”. Bandung expressed epistemic disobedience by deliberating options other than communism and capitalism as the required macro-narratives for development (Pasha, 2013, p. 157).

Bandung is further substantiated as a decolonial delinking performance when noticing the conference being subjugated to colonial narratives which silence Bandung’s authentic decolonial message. Bandung’s decolonial gesture escaping any sustained engagement in Western IR scholarship (Pasha, 2013, p. 147) is expected since the principal symbolic gesture of the conference rests principally in “repudiating the belief that the West alone is the maker of history—the idea that the world has a permanent geographical center and a permanent periphery: an Inside and an Outside. Inside leads, Outside lags. Inside innovates, Outside imitates” (Blaunt, 1993; Pasha, 2013, p. 147). This colonial belief that non-western subjects cannot be agents of knowledge results in most, if not all histories of decolonial performances being silenced, erased and/or trivialized. IR silencing the principle decolonial message of Bandung emanates from Western epistemology (modernity) being incapable of entertaining the possible idea of post-colonial nations forging solidarity and unity, but more cynically, not being sufficiently “rational” and/or “logical” and/or “intellectually competent” in developing an alternative to the “standard of civilization”. Said (1994, p. 335, emphases added) makes salient the power of the colonial matrix silencing knowledge produced by non-western subjects and finding limited space for discussing their ideas when he says “in the nature of things the work of a western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others [non-western subjects] who must strain to achieve it”.

The silencing of Bandung’s decolonial message is directly linked to Richard Wright’s travelogue entitled The color curtain: A report on the Bandung Conference being ranked among the “primary” source of the conference in 1955. Recent scholarly work such as Indonesian Notebook: A source-book on Richard Wright and The Bandung Conference has refused to approach the conference with pieties and romances by pushing Bandung scholarship away from theoretical treatments of a “mythic Bandung”, toward a heightened valorization of engagement with historical archives (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 4). Since the occurrence of the conference, Bandung’s principle decolonial message has been subjugated to counterproductive narratives which undermine the decolonial performance of politics performed by delegates at the conference that produced the crystallization of the idea of the Third World “as a unity of Asian, African and Latin American peoples on the basis of a common experience of colonialism and racism” (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 2). G.H Jansen Faber (1966, p. 182) inaccurately remarks that “two conferences were held at Bandung in April 1955. One was the real conference, about which not very much is known...the
other was quite different conference, a crystallization of what people wanted to believe had happened which, as a myth, took on reality in… the Bandung Spirit”.

These silenced histories are important to resolve since they seek to historicize and consequently reframe a major (decolonial) moment that has been pivotal in the initiation of (critical) disciplinary narratives adopted by transnational African studies, postcolonial studies, and decolonial studies. They seek to rectify the scholarly trend of deploying Wright’s Color Curtain as a mythic stand-in to Bandung’s actual decolonial history. The mythicization of Bandung, and the failure to remember the event as a decolonial delinking performance that elaborated the possibility of political alternatives delinked from western systems of knowledge is largely due to the method in which Wright’s trip to Indonesia was funded and arranged. Wright’s coverage of the Bandung conference was funded and orchestrated by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) which was backed by the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016). This is understandable when we realize that the CCF was the publisher of The Color Curtain. CCF publishers requested that Wright produce controversial articles on the conference which invite discussion and counter-attack, but most importantly treat the conference as a “new and dangerous racism” with strong mystical religious elements (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016).

CCF required Wright to interact with Indonesians that had ties to the CCF and identified with “universal humanist” circles that were content with the knowledge system established by the colonial matrix. Individuals such as Mochtar Lubis, a Pen club journalist; Konfrontasi Study Club authors and intellectuals such Sutan Takdir, Beby Vuyk, Hazil Tanzil and Siti Nurani were all amongst the interlocutors selected by CCF to provide Wright with an impression of Bandung’s content and the cultural traffic of Indonesia (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016). Altogether, these Westernized universal humanist interlocutors selected by CCF identified with the aspirations of The Cultural life of Indonesia: Religion, the Arts Education booklet published in 1951 in the Indonesian embassy of Washington D.C. The booklet defines (western) literature in Indonesia as a product of “modern” cultural nationalism that emerged among the Dutch-educated and ethnically “pure” Indonesian nationalist from the late 1920’s. The silencing of Bandung’s decolonial history becomes more apparent when realizing that CCF omitted entire lectures beheld during Wright’s visit to Indonesia that seemed to locate an alternative “planetary epistemology of modernity” (Friedman, 2010, p. 483), or a “planetary cultural traffic” (Friedman, 2010, p. 477) that contested the convictions of the universal humanist circle which perceived Western epistemology being the only model that can lead to modernity (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016). For instance, the Balai Budaja lecture presented at Takdir’s residence received no mention in Wright’s Color Curtain, yet it represents an important though “largely unknown window on the cultural traffic that Wright engaged in with his Indonesian counterparts” (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 14). The lecture reveals that Wright located in Indonesia a group he terms the “tragic elite”. Wright describes these groups as identifying with the culture of the colonizer, the Dutch, and that they are “more western than the west” (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 14). He states in White Man, Listen! that the tragic elite is “the westernized and tragic elite of Asia, Africa and the West Indies, [who are], the lonely outsiders, who exist precariously on the cliff-like margins of many cultures- men who are distrusted” (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 111).

The Color Curtain is responsible for intensifying the depiction of the conference to the international reader as a gathering of “colored people” opposed to the white man. In May 1955, CCF director Michael Josselson—along European based CCF magazines—was eager to organize a symposium on “Asia Hating the West” (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 146). Even though the symposium did not materialize, he felt that “Richard Wright’s treatment of Bandung and Indonesia might provide the proper point of departure” because his material on Bandung and Indonesian cultural traffic includes an impression of a “new and dangerous racism” that attracted CCF editors and U.S. State Department (Roberts & Foulcher, 2016, p. 146). In a rare March 1956 intervention piece written by Tillman Durdin of the New York Times, he remarks contra Wright that “the importance of Bandung has been exaggerated in the minds of many person…the conference
did not represent as some commentators seem to feel, the consolidation of an Asia-Africa front against the West... Mr. Wright overplays the color angle and attributes to Asians and Africans uniformity of attitude on color that does not exist. He does not sufficiently bring out that western manifestations of racial superiority in Asia and, to a lesser degree, even in Africa are largely a by-product of past western political domination over the two continents” (Durbin, 1956). Vitali also corrects Wright’s historical inaccuracy by stating that none of Bandung’s delegates emphasized race as the motive for congregating and that “color was a fact for some, not for others, but for no one was it what united them. To the contrary, many rejected the idea that color mattered. They called it racialism and warned against appealing to it.” (Vitalis, 2013, p. 270).

Ironically, Bandung’s “exoticism” in (western) historicism highlights the deliberate silencing of Third World interlocutors who have imagined a different world order. This accentuates the colonial character of dominant IR governing modalities persisting in solidifying a racialized world order (Pasha, 2013, p. 151). Bandung’s decolonial message is silenced because it highlighted that coloniality remains a major trait of the international system since “other races” are excluded from the structures of decision making. This exclusion makes poignant the continued presence of structures of racial distinction and (selective) incorporation in IR which necessitates remembering decolonial gestures as registers that imagine the international system outside the “prison-house of Westphalia” (Pasha, 2013, p. 151) resulting in the elimination of the colonial matrix and the establishment of the communal.

Western positivist historicism silences Bandung’s achievements in deliberating an alternative vision of an international system that is multivocal in its agents of knowledge, and inclusive of all cultures and peoples. The suppressed lessons of Bandung’s decolonial gesture demands rejuvenation since it is an attitude in which a specific ontology of (common) political consciousness resides in helping shape a more just and equitable world. The following section identifies ALBA—established in 2004 by Commandante Fidel Castro and Commandante Hugo Chávez—as one of the most recent decolonial performances in the 21st century to emulate Bandung’s decolonial delinking gestures. The Bolivarian regional bloc explicitly counterplots (western) modernity by elaborating an alternative epistemic framework that is compatible with the social, economical, and cultural conditions of the LAC region. The ultimate objective of ALBA is to eliminate the colonial matrix and establish the communal by eliminating the (colonial) belief that non-western zones are vacant of knowledge, and that the adoption of Western ontologies based on neoliberalism is mandatory for economic, and social development.

4. Alba’s (decolonial) theoretical foundation

4.1. Alternative to development and decolonial delinking performances

Since institutions of coloniality naturally excluded (non-western) knowledge systems which informed the Third World project articulated by non-western interlocutors, newly decolonized countries reverted to building and founding their own institutions—based on the traditions of egalitarianism and the promise of the UN charter—to develop an intellectual tradition, and a set of coherent policies that strived in taking the planet out of its miserable present (Prashad, 2012, p. 26). Several decolonial gestures occurred following the conference at Bandung that are beyond the scope of this paper, however, a few gestures deserve attention since they deliberated an alternative to development roadmap to attain “modern” and developed status by moving beyond the conceptual straightjacket induced by (neo)liberal-capitalism. A notable decolonial gesture post-Bandung is the establishment of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964 with Raul Prebisch as its founding secretary-general. UNCTAD called for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) to tackle the unequal technological and financial structures—favoring G7 countries—embedded in the Global Political Economy (GPE). The NIEO emphasized sovereignty over natural resources, the means of productions, and most importantly the right to nationalize key industries instead of reverting to free-market principles, since the means of production and natural resources in newly decolonized countries were in several cases
controlled by classes (petty bourgeoisie and/or oligarchs) and groups (i.e: Alliance of Progress) that worked with the exploiters of the North to uphold the colonial matrix (Prashad, 2012, p. 130). When declaring the NIEO as the economic arm of the Third World project, Prebisch affirmed that a “new international economic order [is required] so that the market functions properly not only for the big countries but the developing countries in their relations with the developed” (Prashad, 2012, p. 2). Prebisch utilized the UNCTAD as a podium to challenge Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the IMF whom he called “a conspiracy against the laws of the market” (Prashad, 2012, p. 2).

The political arm of the Third World project—known as Non-Aligned movement created in 1961 in Belgrade—was another decolonial gesture that acted on behalf of the global south at the U.N since it has been hijacked by the five permanent members of the Security Council. In 1970, the Lusaka accord headed by the NAM deliberated a decolonial performance by pronouncing justice and solidarity as a force to ideologically challenge the Atlantic bloc. The NAM declared that the IMF, World Bank, and GATT were designed to expand the colonial matrix and undermine any attempt by decolonized nations to revise the international economic order. Since the G7 silenced any decolonial articulation, the accord stressed the need for equality and cooperation in the financial, technological, and production sectors of the GPE which starts by reducing the power of the United Nations Security Council, and enhancing the power of the United Nations General Assembly (Prashad, 2012, p. 26). Nigerian foreign minister Jaja Wachuku in 1963 stated plainly in the UN: “does this organization want the African states to be just vocal members, with no right to express their views on any particular matter in important organs of the United Nations? Are we going to continue to be veranda boys” (Prashad, 2012, p. 3). The demands of these decolonial gestures are rooted in the failure of decolonization in removing the colonial matrix, and the failure of the emerging postwar international order to provide space for postcolonial states to tackle the colonial matrix of power by establishing their own endogenous approaches to development.

By the 1980s the UNCTAD general orientation would be transformed as Global South countries were flattened by the debt crisis with systems of knowledge attributed to western intellectuals such as Milton Friedman and Friedreich Hayek reconstructing the international political-economic order à la neoliberalism thus directly caging the Third World project and the prospects of eliminating the coloniality of power. Neoliberalism became an economic paradigm that was a marker of modernity and development (Fotopoulos, 2005). The retreat of the Third World project and Global south solidarity was given no clearer indication than at the 1992 UNCTAD conference in Colombia. UNCTAD delegates relinquished their demands at adjusting the International Patent System by adopting a statement expressing trust in the World Intellectual Property Organization and GATT transferring technology to developing countries (Gray & Gills, 2016; Prashad, 2012). While UNCTAD is perceived as a counter-hegemonic organization resisting Global North institutions and demanding the elimination of the colonial matrix, by the end of the 1980s, UNCTAD became increasingly eclipsed by GATT and its successor the WTO. Even U.N members of the NAM found dialogical space limited by the G7 and therefore could not move an agenda on the world stage (Gills and Gray, 2016; Prashad, 2012). In 1981, U.N secretary general Javier Perez de Cuellar stated that the gap between the North and the South is a “breach of the most fundamental human right”. However, the organization was incapable of breaking away from colonial tutelage.

While the splendor of decolonial performances elaborated above highlight existing options, turns, and gestures delinked from western ontologies to attain “modernity” and/or “development”, their limited success is made evident when we notice that none of the gestures were successful in developing a theory (epistemologically) delinked from Western knowledge systems. Mignolo concurs with such a statement by claiming that even though Bandung inaugurated the spirit of decoloniality by claiming neither communism nor capitalism as roads to development, “its limit was to remain within the domain of (western) political and (western) economic delinking. The epistemic question was not raised” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 296). In Havana, almost decade after Bandung in 1966, Amilcar Cabral gave the most famous speech at the NAM raising the question...
of such deficiency in newly decolonized countries by stating: “We present here our opinion of the foundations and objectives of national liberation in relation to the social structure. This opinion is the result of our own experiences of the struggle and of a critical appreciation of the experiences of others. To those who see in it a theoretical character, we would recall that every practice produces a theory, and that if it is true that a revolution can fail even though it be based on perfectly conceived theories, nobody has yet made a successful revolution without a revolutionary theory” (Cabral, 1966).

What makes ALBA\textsuperscript{16} a bonafide decolonial delinking performance is that it not only re-performed gestures characterizing the spirit of Bandung, South-South cooperation, and the Non-Aligned Movement, but in addition, ALBA developed a socio-economic theory that is based on the history of the region that is completely delinked from knowledge systems relating to the political, social, and economical (colonial) knowledge structures. Before delving into ALBA’s decolonial epistemic project, let us briefly allude to colonial gestures that primed the initiation of ALBA’s decolonial performance.

4.2. Prelude to ALBA
Latin America and the Caribbean region have been at the center of the neoliberal economic colonial matrix. David Harvey reminds us that the first great experiment with neoliberalism state formation was Chile after Pinochet’s coup on 11 September 1973 (Harvey, 2006; Kellogg, 2007). This “shock doctrine” (Klein, 2007) began with the repression of the left, the worker’s movement, and popular organizations. This was justified because such groups were cumulatively categorized as belonging on the “wrong side of history” since they opposed the “natural (western) development of history” which is encapsulated by the ethos of the Neoliberal-Capitalism. The intellectuals that were the architects of neoliberalism in the LAC were none other than the Chicago Boys also remembered for their outstanding effort in eliminating the possibilities of a successful Third World Project following decolonization in the 20th century (Kellogg, 2007). The Washington Consensus of 1989—detailing the economic paradigm of neoliberalism—was clear in its demands: LAC should “reconstruct [their] economy along free-market lines, privatize public assets, open up natural resources to private exploitation and facilitate foreign direct investment and free trade” (Harvey, 2006, p. 12).

It should be mentioned that this consent for neoliberal orthodoxy being perceived as the only route to economic development was promoted and implemented by “Westernized” LAC national governments and economic intellectuals. This artificial consensus that continuous to permeate the region is characterized by the suppression of alternative to development strategies that hinder a “new regionalism” under the tutelage and hegemony of United States imperialism (Drake, 2006; Kellogg, 2007). The key (colonial) institution for this new regionalism is none other than the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); widely perceived as another colonial gesture that seeks to exacerbate the economic colonial matrix in the form of “trade colonization” by the U.S. in LAC region. Trade colonization is not novel to the FTAA of 1994, rather is a prominent performance of politics exhibited by the U.S. informal empire since the Cold War in the LAC region and Africa (Al-Kassimi, 2017). For instance, in 1948, to unite capitalist interest in LAC against the Soviet “threat”, 21 national delegates from the Americas adopted the charter of the Organization of American States (OAS). For the U.S. to further consolidate its hegemony in the region through its economic colonial matrix, President Kennedy initiated the Alliance for Progress (AP) by loaning over twenty billion dollars to strategic elite members to promote capitalist development (Cole, 2011a, 2011b). Since then, most LAC tragic elites/interest groups have exacerbated the colonial matrix by regionally organizing, and institutionally integrating their economies by adopting knowledge systems imbued by a colonial capitalist logic thereby creating and fomenting a regional, protective, and economic environment that promotes and protects national capitalist production and profitability (Cole, 2011a; Kellogg, 2007).
It is these aforementioned colonial gestures which paved the way for ALBA’s decolonial performance succeeding the end of the Cold War. In 1990, George H. Bush proclaimed the Enterprise for the Americas (EA) which intended to establish a competitive free-market zone from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. This gesture inaugurated in January of 1994 the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. NAFTA as a colonial gesture extended the logic of coloniality by deepening inequality in the Americas since it was “an agreement for the rich and powerful in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. Effectively excluding ordinary people” (Castaneda, 1995, 69; Kellogg, 2007; Cole, 2011a, p. 117). In Miami of the same year, members of the FTAA colonial gesture announced the intention to create a free-trade zone by 2005. The FTAA according to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell is intended to “guarantee the U.S. national business control of a territory that stretches from the Arctic to the Antarctic...with free access, without difficulties, for our products, services, technology, and capital throughout the hemisphere” (Cole, 2011a, p. 117). With decades of rising poverty, unemployment, and inequalities imposed by programs espoused by colonial institutions such as Bretton Woods’s IMF structural adjustment program, regional opposition to the FTAA from the Global South and Global North intensified as made explicit in the initiation of regional organizations such as the World Social Forum (WSF) and Alianza Social Continental (Hemispheric Social Alliance—HSC) which combined 30 mass movements from 19 countries organised into 18 regional networks demanding LAC countries to abandon the FTAA (Cole, 2011a). In 2001 Quebec City, 80,000 demonstrators including Dr. Paul Kellogg took the streets facing tear gas induced by law enforcement agencies in protest against the FTAA summit taking place. With the FTAA deadline approaching, at the summit of the Americas in Mar Del Plata in 2005, President George Bush Jr. attempted to revive the FTAA but it all “ended in a fiasco” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 188)—with Venezuela and Cuba explicitly opposing the deal—highlighting the inability of the U.S. to impose its “one size fits all” (neoliberal) development paradigm on the LAC region.

4.3. Theorizing ALBA as an epistemic (decolonial) project delinking from (colonial) modernity

The aforementioned colonial gestures performed by the G7—especially by the U.S.—in the LAC region during and after the Cold War perpetuated (western) knowledge systems (with the help of the tragic elite) which sustained the logic of the colonial matrix, thereby expanding the economic gap between North and South. These colonial knowledge systems were to be dealt their a decolonial gesture—revealing the initial sparks of a decolonial alternative to development project contra the U.S. led FTAA regionalism project—on December 13th, 1994 during an encuentro between Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro. It is not a coincidence that the decolonial encuentro between both revolutionary leaders took place during the same week the OAS announced the initiation of the FTAA. Chávez proclaimed—while speaking at the house of El Libertador (Simon Bolivar) in Havana—that the time has come to implement the Bolivarian Revolution; to realise the political project governed by principles of solidarity, cooperation, complementarity, and reciprocity that seeks the construction of the “communal” i.e. 21st-century socialism, through processes embodying the “state-in-revolution” and “organized society” (Muhr, 2012b, p. 230). To highlight ALBA’s (decolonial delinking) ontology of place, space, and scale, and how the initiatives epistemology constitutes a counter-hegemonic globalization project in geographical terms that operates across multiple spatial scales from the local to the global, I will first draw on the concept of “territorial trap” and New Regionalism Theory (NRT) to challenge the geographical basis of conventional (western) international relations theory to make a case for ALBA’s (decolonial) regional
theory; followed by the identification of ALBA’s organizational structures; and lastly, underline success stories among ALBA members that highlight ALBA’s decolonial performance.

4.4. Theorizing Alba’s (regional) space—La Patria Grande—using new regionalism theory (NRT)

Since scholars based in the Global North tend to reduce ALBA to a “bloc of nation-states” by using conventional mainstream international relations theories, this ontological limitation conceals the complexity, spatiality, and pluri-scalarity of the project (Muhr, 2012a, p. 769) resulting in mainstream positions related to realism, or liberalism failing to adequately grasp the objectives of the Bolivarian Project. Agnew (1994) and Muhr (2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) highlight that with the exception of critical international relations theory, the geographical assumption of the “territorial trap” underpin the field as a whole. The (western) “territorial trap” consists of imagining the world as made up of disconnected “national units, demarcated by state boundaries” that existed prior to and as containers of societies which in territorial terms builds on the inside/outside polarity as it reduces “society” to a national phenomenon (Muhr, 2012a, p. 769). Therefore, while the colonial nation-state paradigm is far from being obsolescent, it is no longer the primary scale of political, economic, and ideological struggles. Underlying this alternative perception of space is ALBA. As a decolonial epistemic project, ALBA does not ontologize the territorial state in Hobbesian/Westphalian terms—a “sacred” territorial unit beyond historical time—rather it recognizes space as the product of (historical) relationality and (cultural) encounters.

Theorizing ALBA using new regionalism theory (NRT) allows us to discover ALBA’s alternative counter-hegemonic project. NRT illuminates ALBA’s multi-dimensional and transnational processes which operate in tandem within and across a range of sectors and scales whilst being driven by the interplay of state and non-state actors (Muhr, 2010). NRT argues that regions are socially constructed and are constantly being reproduced “through processes of regionalization that transform a geographical area into an active subject” (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2000, p. 461; Muhr, 2010, p. 7). Motivated thus, ALBA’s decolonial regional space in difference to the Global North (neoliberal) regional project, is defined by the LAC peoples shared territoriality, common history, and cultural roots within which regional production chains prioritize non-capitalist forms of socio-economic organization. NRT informs ALBA’s counter-hegemonic project by emphasizing the importance implementing two interrelated characteristics of regionalism: regional community and regional society. The former emphasizes that a region becomes an active subject with a distinct identity when it includes the convergence of national interests, compatibility of ideas, and a transnational regional society thereby constructing a regional collective culture created by common fundamental values. The later level includes a multi-dimensional rule-based pattern of relations between state and non-state actors which occurs in a variety of different spatial levels. In these processes, the relationship between the de jure region (territorial trap) and ALBA’s region (de facto regionalization) deepen and widen, in which formal organizations and social institutions play a crucial role (Muhr, 2010, p. 7).

ALBA endorses NRT by emphasizing the point that these “levels of regionness” should not be understood in a Rostowian sense as a “series of stages and development” since these different levels in the case of ALBA’s epistemic project are occurring simultaneously in contrast to (colonial) regionalism projects such as FTAA, or NAFTA. The social dimension which informs ALBA’s regional project assumes a key integrationist role from the outset, in difference to NAFTA or the FTAA where the social dimension is either non-existent or enters the regional project at a later level (Muhr, 2010, p. 8). The social dimension in ALBA is not mere rhetoric or a normative end in itself, it is explicitly a means to equalise the geographies of uneven development exacerbated by the colonial matrix which is indispensable in the long term transition from a community to a union of nations (La Patria Grande). Another crucial (decolonial) epistemic logic located in ALBA’s counter-hegemonic regionalist project—clarified through NRT—is the significance it places on the role of ideational constructs in establishing the
communal. The dimension of shared identity is completely absent in the neoliberal regional project which directly reveals ALBA’s decolonial dimension as a counter-hegemonic project based on cooperation and solidarity that facilitates the construction of a regional community which includes both de jure and de facto regions. ALBA’s focus on its members shared identity plays a crucial foundational role in the development of regional governance that is based on what Hettne and Söderbaum (2000, p. 463) terms “collective memory”.

ALBA’s collective memory refers to discourses articulated by LAC intellectuals (Sandino, Bolívar, Mariátegui, and Rodríguez) to construct a regional, popular-revolutionary consciousness that challenges the historical (colonial) monopolization of knowledge systems upheld by LAC tragic elites. It is here that we notice the importance of bringing international relations theory into dialogue with geography to make sense of ALBA’s (historical) regional space which is grounded in the peoples shared historical and cultural roots in terms of “Our America”. ALBA’s space is based on cross-border relationships and transnational cooperation that move to the center of analysis thereby revealing the distinction between a regionalism project led on one hand by a colonial logic (profit maximization, free-market, neoliberalism, transnational corporations/privatization), and on the other, a decolonial regional project motivated by disassembling the logic of coloniality. This is particularly true for ALBA in which both territorial states and nonstate actors alike operate through sets of dialectical political, social, and economical processes that reach into the entire LAC region (Muhr, 2012a, p. 771–772)

4.5. Advancing Alba’s epistemology by institutionalizing both organizational (social) power processes: the state-in-revolution and the organized society

The relevance of the above elaboration concerning ALBA’s ontology of space delinking from (western) spatial ontology—driven by the capitalist state and capitalist private actors—is that the Bolivarian counter-regional (decolonial) project is advanced jointly by organizational processes called the state-in-revolution and transnational organized societies (Muhr, 2010, p. 14, 2012a, p. 5, 2012b, p. 233). Since capitalist-individualist regional projects—reinforced by colonial knowledge systems—locate fertile space in areas controlled by tragic colonial subjects and/or oligarchs (Harvey, 1990, p. 237), both organizational processes associated with ALBA’s Patria Grande are tasked with dismantling the coloniality of power informing these spaces by restructuring the social configuration of (state and social) power. ALBA’s organizational processes explicitly reveal Bolivar’s decolonial (ontological) project by rejecting the hyphenated concept of the nation-state. ALBA’s project does not find it politically—let alone intellectually—useful to make a distinction between the nation and the state, considering that the line between the state and the nation in Bolivar’s Patria Grande operates in tandem through sets of political, economic, cultural and social processes that overlap and reach beyond the de jure (nation-state container) into the de facto region (entire LAC).

The state-in-revolution is defined as ALBA’s governing decolonial ethos that seeks to restructure the inherited bourgeois-colonial state towards constructing the communal encompassing the entire LAC region. The success of the process is contingent on the incorporation of organized civil society à la Gramsci, as the revolutionary materialization of social power relations with the goal of dismantling the hegemonic geometry of the colonial matrix. Thus, the state-in-revolution is a process that produces a new (decolonial) power geometry that penetrates “adversary” territories in the construction of the ALBA project and in the struggle over spaces produced, reproduced, and/or dominated by capitalist social relations (Muhr, 2012a, p. 772). Considered jointly, the state-in-revolution encourages and supports the organization of non-state forces and individuals at the local, international, and transnational scales in the construction of the “transnational organized society”. Since both processes are (decolonial) counter-hegemonic concepts antithetical to the liberal bourgeoisie conception of a political society à la Gramsci, ALBA’s organized civil society challenges the historical intellectual (western) hegemony associated with liberal individualism informing “society” by demanding that a popular, mass-based, bottom-up, and grass-roots movements collectively exercise “popular power” through councils, and
movements in constructing the communal (Muhr, 2012a, p. 772). Since ALBA is organisationally composed of two power pyramids—state-in-revolution and organized society—it is vital to highlight how ALBA institutionalizes both (decolonial) epistemic (governing) organizational processes to implement, monitor, and coordinate cross-border policies and projects among ALBA members.

Organisationally, as Figure 1 below, both processes are operationalized and institutionalized through the interaction, consultation, and cooperation of state (political society) and non-state actors (civil society). The Council of Presidents is legitimated by the procedures of what we can term "representative democracy"; the Political Council advises the Council of Presidents on political, social, and economic matters; and La pièce de résistance the Social Movement Council (SMC) consisting of (trans) national popular activists, indigenous social movements, workers unions, and environmentalist who cooperatively work together in implementing and monitoring the decisions proposed by the executive body of ALBA’s socio-economic programmes. The Council of Social Movements is in direct dialogue with the Council of Presidents as a mediator “between the organized society at different scales and the formal states-led bloc” (Muhr, 2012b, p. 233). SMC serves to integrate LAC’s organized societies in a bottom-up process to directly participate in the construction of La Patria Grande. The Council’s strategic relevance is characterized in the integration of organized societies from ALBA member countries and outside ALBA’s regional space that “identify with the efforts [in establishing the communal/Patria Grande] to globalize the struggle” (Muhr, 2012b, p. 235). Even though ALBA persists in being a “geo-economic, geo-political, social, cultural and ideological space” that is still under construction (Cole, 2011a, p. 116), the epistemic ontologies of its governing structures being based on solidarity, cooperation, integration, complementarity, and reciprocity are noted in its governing structures. Arnold August (2013) mentions that the processes adopted by ALBA members to govern their spaces should not be “limited to a singular U.S.-centric understanding of democracy. For example, democracy, as practiced in the U.S., is largely non-participatory, static and fixed in time. Cuba, by contrast, is a laboratory where the process of democratization is
continually in motion, an ongoing experiment to create new ways for people to participate”. Analyzing the actual inner workings of each dimension and processes reveal alternative (decolonial) governing ideas that are delinked from colonial modalities of governance.

ALBA’s (decolonial) development dimensions and institutional processes involve: the cultural (social-humanitarian), education and knowledge, energy, the environment, finance, industry and trade, the military, and finally the political-ideological (Muhr, 2012a, p. 773, 2012b, p. 233, 2010, p. 10). These dimensions operate in a complementary and holistic fashion, that is to say that in contrast to neoliberal regionalism, ALBA’s regional projects and policies—as mentioned earlier—prioritize the “social dimension” from the outset which comprises basic utilities such as water, electricity, transportation, infrastructure, food, housing, health, basic education, and disaster prevention measures (Muhr, 2012b, p. 233). Taking international (economic) asymmetries in consideration, the orthodox comparative advantage logic is replaced with cooperative advantage in the construction of a regional space vacant of the colonial matrix (Muhr, 2012b, p. 232). In contrast to neoliberal regional projects advanced by “Councils of Corporatists” that seek to maximise competition between territorially delimited spaces of capitalist production, ALBA’s 21st century Socialism channelled through processes of state-in-revolution and organized societies, pursue the reconfiguration of economic and political power across the social space of the “nation-state-society-complex”, resulting in the balance of historical geographies of uneven development developed by the colonial matrix.

By mobilizing Bolivar’s vision of La Patria Grande, the institutionalization of ALBA has involved the creation of transnational, bi- and multi-state strategies such as the Grand National enterprises (GNE), Grand National projects (GNP) and Grand National institutes (GNI) which operate in and across all the stated development dimensions through transnational social processes involving the state-in-revolution and transnational organized societies that reach beyond the de jure region into the de facto LAC region (Muhr, 2012b, p. 7-8). In other words, GNPs, GNCs, and GNIs operate within and across all ALBA dimensions and transcend “the national [territorial trap] to confront the global through a strengthening of the local capacities by amalgamating them” (Muhr, 2010, p. 11). Since these institutions are decolonial and possess strategies that are historically, geopolitically, ideologically, and socio-economically, countering (western) exogenous development, their performed gestures (policies, projects, agreements) inform an alternative decolonial epistemic project that counters (western-based) hegemonic regional projects and policies based on FTI. Before concluding this section, let us briefly consider a combination of projects and policies implemented by ALBA members who make salient ALBA’s performativity being an alternative decolonial delinking development performance.

5. Empirical findings and analysis

5.1. ALBA projects and policies in the LAC region and beyond

It is important to remember that ALBA’s transnational and pluriscalar territorialization projects do not abide by western ontologies of space and political knowledge systems. ALBA’s development strategies transcend the foreign spatial “territorial trap” ontology resulting in Bolivarian projects being initiated, negotiated, and coordinated not simply amongst the local westernized oligarchies of LAC region, but rather incorporates a transnational-pluriscalar (beyond borders) ethos vis-à-vis political performance and decision-making. This (decolonial) political participation—motivated by the state in revolution and organized society—involves different political agents such as the council of presidents, the council of social movements, municipal governments, political parties, civil and organized society groups, associations, and committed scholarly activists (Muhr, 2013, p. 4). The councils integrate movements and actors committed to the Bolivarian revolutionary cause stretching across the LAC region.
Since ALBA’s foundation in 2004, the Bolivarian Alliance has expanded from only two members—Cuba and Venezuela—to incorporate as full member’s countries from the LAC region such as: Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, the plurinational state of Bolivia, the Republic of Ecuador, the Republic of Honduras, the Republic of Nicaragua, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines. As of the year 2018, the Republic of Haiti and Suriname are in the process of accession, while the Republic of Paraguay, Syria, Iran, Grenada and the Dominican have observatory status (Muhr, 2012a, pp. 1–2; Portal ALBA, 2018; Hirst, n. d.). ALBA’s alternative decolonial development project is perhaps most attractive in the energy integration dimension of Petroamerica (Petrosur, Petroandina, Petrocaribe and CITGO) and within the social-humanitarian dimension (Mision Milagro and Yo Si puedo) (Muhr, 2008, 2012a, 2012b).

Beginning with the former dimension, the sub-regional energy bloc of Petrocaribe signed the Hydrocarbon Agreement with Petrocaribe on April 2006, thereby establishing ALBA Petroleos de Nicaragua (ALBANIC). The implementation of ALBANIC includes the Association of Nicaraguan Town Councils (AMUNIC) a non-profit civil association formed by all 153 municipalities presided by Managua’s mayor Dionisio Marenco. The project established that both parties (state and non-state) would be provided equal shares since it was emphasized that “all Nicaraguan municipalities, irrespective of political representation should equally benefit from the supply of 10 million barrels of fuel per annum” (Muhr, 2012a, p. 9). With the first shipment of petroleum arriving in 2006, an immediate 17% decrease in bus fares followed and the alleviation of 15-hour daily power cuts (CENIDH, 2006; Muhr, 2012a, p. 775). Another dimension involving transnational energy cooperation has been the import of urea from Venezuela’s petrochemical enterprise (Pequiven) to Nicaraguan producers mediated by a peasant organization called Nicarao Farming Cooperative Enterprise. As an expression of reciprocity and complementarity, Nicarao has in return provided expert knowledge transfer in the area of cooperative organization to Venezuela’s Nuclei of Endogenous Development program (NUDE)23—a form of socialist organization in Venezuela (Howard, 2008; Muhr, 2012a, 2012b). Similarly to the case of Nicaragua, El Salvador’s energy dimension involved the founding of the Intermunicipal Energy Association for El Salvador (ENEPASA) by 20 FMLC mayoralties in 2006. As a decentralized and autonomous non-profit organization, ENEPASA and Venezuela’s PDV signed the Energy Cooperation Convention which provided the former with 40% share and the latter a 60% share. ALBA Petroleos de El Salvador sells fuel, gas, and petroleum lubricants through a network of 32 contracts while company surplus is redistributed to social projects in the participating municipalities supporting water, electricity, health, education and infrastructure projects (Muhr, 2012a, p. 776; 2013, p. 5).

Furthermore, shocking as it might be to the audience in the Global North, ALBA’s development and integration cooperation ethos also reaches the U.S. and is operationalized via CITGO—a Venezuelan subsidized oil company. With ALBA’s foreign policy including the objective of developing a “New International Geopolitics” that extends support, and solidarity to excluded sectors in North American society, ALBA members in response to hurricane Katrina and Rita in the U.S. in 2005 sent USD 5$ million in emergency aid and petroleum supplies of approximately one million barrels to communities in New Orleans. In 2006–2007, following the hike in oil prices, 12 Democratic Party senators approached ten major petroleum companies operating in the U.S. requesting a redistribution of corporate profit to government heating fuel assistance programs for impoverished households. The only company that extended aid was CITGO which offered approximately one million gallons of heating oil (Muhr, 2013, p. 5). The example of the senators encouraged Indian nation Penobscot in the state of Maine to engage in local scale action by developing the Discount Home Heating Oil Program for Low-Income People. The nation asked CITGO if it could receive oil at a discounted price. CITGO responded by securing the nation a discount of around 1.40$ per gallon instead of 2.40$ for the 2006/2007 calendar year. According to the Penobscot Indian nation, the energy security program made it possible to heat over sixty-four homes in...
2006 (Penobscot Indian Nation, 2006, p. 8; Muhr, 2013). As of 2017, CITGO energy and its related programs are operating in 23 states in the U.S., a seasonal 190 million gallons of discounted heating oil are distributed, and over USD $400 million, to an average of over half a million people (approx. 167,000 households) (Muhr, 2013, pp. 2–3). These programs are transcending politics being exclusively performed using real politik ideas of politics being a game of self-interest competing states. ALBA’s multi-sectoral programs have instead transcended the limited categories produced by realist politics which dictates that an enemy state could not possibly be rational by daring to develop relations based on principles of solidarity and cooperative advantage at the time that the U.S. political is explicit in its negative views about Venezuela. These (decolonial) acts by ALBA are nothing short of an organization that has committed itself to humanist principles based on humanity rather than nationality.

Most recently, with hurricane Harvey and Irma devastating the U.S. and the LAC region, Cuba has sent more than 750 health workers to Antigua, Barbuda, Saint Kitts, Nevis, Saint Lucia, the Bahamas, Dominica, and Haiti. The group of health workers collaborated with the Ministry of Public Health in Cuba and local embassies along with organized movements such as the Central Medical Cooperation Unit to assess the damages and provide assistance (Khan, 2017). Venezuela provided free gas to rescue workers, firefighters, and police in their efforts to help victims in areas affected by Harvey (Telesur, 2017a). At gas stations in Texas and Louisiana owned by CITGO, rescue forces have been able to fill up for free. Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza stated that the contribution was an act of solidarity with families affected by the hurricane (Telesur, 2017a). The minister’s statement came just a day after CITGO administrators announced a US$33 million donation to the Houston’s Harvey Relief Fund. He said, accompanied by the head of the PDVSA Nelson Martinez: “We express our solidarity with the Americans affected by the hurricane...When an American fills his tank at a Citgo gas station, he’ll be contributing to the rebuilding of the affected communities.” Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner expressed his appreciation for the generous donation, stating: “We are overwhelmed by the support from our corporate partners including CITGO Petroleum Corporation. Their social responsibility is amazing and their generous contribution will go a long way to help Houstonians get back on their feet, after this historic natural disaster.” (Telesur, 2017a)

Similar to the energy dimension, programs and initiatives concerning ALBA’s social-humanitarian programs entitled La Mision Milagro (Mission Miracle)—an ophthalmology (health) program—and Yo Si Puedo (I can do it)—an educational literacy campaign—were implemented with the cooperation and coordination of transnational multi-scalar processes which played a critical role in the territorialisation of both programs in Nicaragua and El Salvador. In both respective countries, the municipal scale played a crucial socio-structural role in facilitating the implementation of both health and educational dimensions. In the case of La Mision Milagro, the program was launched in 2004 as a bilateral health programme for impoverished Venezuelans incapable of affording medical treatment (eye, heart, cancer disease, or orthopedic surgery) to undergo medical treatment in Cuba. The mission was transnationalized through the Sandino Commitment, signed in Cuba on August 2005 where Cuba and Venezuela committed themselves in providing health support, free of charge, to six million deprived people from the LAC region. This social-humanitarian dimension intersects with the cultural dimension since the mission assumes a cultural function in the process of regionalizing the aspiration of the Bolivarian dream which seeks to foster transnational contact in the effect of building trust, regional identity—La Patria Grande (Muhr, 2008, 2012a, p. 776). In opposition to the FTAA regional project which privatizes education and health, qualification for treatment in La Mision Milagro does not abide by a (capitalist) profit maximization or economic investment liability rationale hence not placing an age limit for treatment. Over two million people from 33 LAC countries have regained their eyesight and millions of regular health exam checkups have been conducted (Muhr, 2012a, p. 776) with patients flying to Cuba or Venezuela. The mission includes free of charge surgery and post-
surgery treatment, travel, accommodation, food, medicine and family accompaniment (Muhr, 2012a, p. 778). In March 2006, La Mision Milagro was transnationalized to Nicaragua through the coordination of Cuban and Venezuelan embassies in conjunction with the Association of Municipalities of Nicaragua (AMUNIC). Mision Milagro offices were established in municipalities such as Rio San Juan—the municipal health centre—while coordinating and incorporating diverse local organizations and grassroots actors from the Council of Social movements (Muhr, 2012a, 2012b) i.e.: the Catholic Church, Medicos del Mundo, Local System for Integral Health Care (SILAIS), Communal Development Boards, Friend of Rio San Juan Foundation (FUNDAR), voluntary private doctors, and mayoralty coordinators of the mission. In El Salvador, Mission Milagro was established in December of 2005 following a similar structural social relation as Nicaragua. In close collaboration with Cuban and Venezuelan embassies by July 2009 close to 10,000 Salvadorans had received treatment from the health dimension encompassing La Mision Milagro. The mission was set up by Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) employing and placing party infrastructure in service of the mission. Offices in the entire national territory served as health care centers alongside schools, churches, and private homes (Muhr, 2012a, p. 778).

Yo Si Puedo (I can do it) an educational literacy campaign coordinated and cooperated with transnational multi-scalar processes (variety of actors at different scales) in successfully regionalizing ALBA’s epistemic decolonial (educational) project. The roots of the program can be traced to 2008 when the GNP-Literacy and Post-literacy and the GNP-ALBA-education were ratified. At the first ALBA meeting relating to education (March 12th: 2009), members articulated the need for an “integration transformation of Initial, Basic, Medium, and Higher Education” in the LAC region. By 24 June 2009, the 2nd ALBA Education Workshop in Nicaragua had agreed to regionalize the Higher Education For All (HEFA) rational according to which “any bachelor who wants to enter and/or continue tertiary level studies is legally entitled and actively supported to doing so” (Muhr, 2008, p. 91, 2010, p. 11). This decolonial epistemic rational emits a holistic and socially inclusive approach to higher education, where historically excluded individuals (peasant, campesino, country-side peoples) can now expand their intellectual capacities and partake in the construction of La Patria Grande. ALBA members in 2009 reclaimed education as a “public social good, fundamental human right and undeniable duty to the state” (Muhr, 2010, p. 11; Portal ALBA, 2018) directly undermining the FTAA regional (colonial) economic matrix that seeks to assert a Global North rationale that privatize education. The HEFA initiative adopted by ALBA members can be summed up as the pursuit of “the complementarian and solidarian integration of the national education systems in order to confront the expansion of the mercantilist higher education agendas and the educative and cultural imperialism and dependency associated with them, HEFA is at the service of the social economic and political transformation of the national and regional societies in the construction of La Patria Grande and the grand national conscience” (Muhr, 2010, p. 12; Portal ALBA, 2018).

Thus understood, the decolonial epistemic educational curriculum of HEFA does not only struggle in eliminating illiteracy, but also endeavors in dismantling the colonial logic embedded in educational systems in the LAC region. It is in the case of the former objective (eliminating illiteracy) that Yo Si Puedo endeavors to dismantle the neoliberal colonial educational logic which dictates the privatization of education and demanding excessive tuition charges. The Cuban Yo Si Puedo audiovisual literacy method funded by the education GNPs mentioned earlier has been adapted to 14 different linguistic and cultural contexts across 28 countries worldwide—20 countries being located in the LAC region. In the case of Nicaragua, the Carlos Fonseca Amador Popular Education Association (AEPFCFA) received from the Cuban government six consultants and material support such as television sets, video players, and facilitator guides. FSLN and non-FSLN members coordinating with AEPFCFA became collectively responsible bodies in establishing Municipal Commissions for Literacy which included over 5000 volunteers, employees of mayoralities, community members, and social movement members (Muhr, 2012a, p. 777). This is not
merely rhetoric, within a short period in 2008; Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua were declared illiteracy-free. According to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UIS), Venezuela is among the countries that have most substantially expanded higher education gross enrollment in the LAC region since the 1990s with 52% gross enrollment in 2006 (Muhr, 2010, p. 17).

With Yo Si Puedo developing literate societies, ALBA’s policy of eliminating the neoliberal colonial matrix which seeks the privatization of education in some LAC countries becomes a possible reality. In July 2009, Resolution 3.722 developed under- and post-graduate doctorate programmes in medicine, education, and oil geopolitics. The institution in charge of these programmes is the University of the Peoples of ALBA (UNIALBA) which includes regional and global networks of universities and research centers. Part of the UNIALBA mission involved the transformation of 29 state-financed universities and colleges into national experimental universities, as well as the creation of 17 territorial universities linked to productive, social, and cultural needs (Muhr, 2010, p. 12). The network of national universities such as the Latin American agroecological institute of Paulo Freire (IALA) and the Latin American School of Medicine of Venezuela (ELAM) support the notion of ALBA being an alternative development project to neoliberalism that seeks to transcend the territorial trap by regionalizing (decolonial) counter-hegemonic (knowledge) systems. HEFA is epistemologically decolonial since it is grounded in the epistemology of Simon Rodriguez (Bolivar’s educator). His philosophy rejects the reduction of education and knowledge to skills and competences to “function” in the capitalist economy but rather “views life as a holistic experience that includes lived and felt needs, expectations and aspirations” (Muhr, 2010, p. 15). To dismantle the colonial matrix that infiltrated every knowledge system in the LAC region, ALBA’s premise of morality requires formal and popular education for ethical and cultural growth in all systems. To achieve the ethical and moral recondition of the nation, Muhr (2010, p. 16) states that “intrinsic motivation and non-capitalist humanist values, principles, and incentives fuse with Bolivar’s thinking, where social justice, equity and solidarity are envisioned to reign the relations between individuals and state institutions, with the ultimate objective of the greatest happiness for each citizen”.

The missions and projects regionalized by ALBA members are identified as decolonial gestures that dismantled and disobeyed the categories that built and sustained a development project linked to the colonial matrix—neoliberalism. These decolonial gestures were performed by (de)colonial subjects (transnational groups, social movements, municipal mayors, councils, NGOs) that delinked and decolonized their subjectivities and engaged in a world- (re)making—La Patria Grande—not regulated by the colonial matrix. Since the colonial matrix is maintained through colonial gestures (FTAA), ALBA’s decolonial gestures purportedly denaturalized and counterploted the epistemic ontology of Western Civilization, by working toward re-constructing a world known in the LAC region as Our America. ALBA, unlike Bandung, solved the epistemic question and it is empirically evident that Bolivarian development contributed to planetary re-emergence, resurgence, and re-existence of people whose values, ways of being, languages, thoughts, and stories were degraded by the colonial matrix.

ALBA, similar to Bandung, also suffers from having its historicism and objectives distorted in Global North intellectual and political spaces. ALBA’s epistemic project is silenced and declared as an organization that “consists mainly of cheap oil and a rhetorical declaration against poverty” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 200) because its epistemology is an alternative to development. The language used in ALBA declarations is analogous to capitalist regional projects and bilateral trade deals. For instance, ALBA trade deals explicitly state that they are not simply based on solidarity principles but “also on the exchange of goods and services that are most beneficial for the economic and social needs of both countries”. Where traditional (profit driven) trade deals use language like “comparative advantage” or “structural
adjustment” or “quantitative easing”, ALBA instead contends that prior to any arrangement “political, economic and legal asymmetries of both countries have to be taken into account”, and perhaps economically most innovative is that “both governments accept the possibility of “compensated trade/trade-in-kind” which opens the door to an exchange ontology foreign to capitalist accumulation of wealth (Kellogg, 2007, p. 201).26 Institutionalizing “trade in kind” is a direct assault on the money-based trading networks that have dominated the world since the emergence of Scottish economic enlightened thinkers in the 18th century which places trade and economic relationships between countries on a completely different footing from that imposed by regional neoliberal logic. Instead of being at the mercy of price movements, countries can contest the colonial economic matrix; countries can identify areas of economic need and economic strengths by exchanging these goods and services without recourse to money. For instance, Bolivia exchanged agricultural produce for 200,000 Barrels of diesel a month; Venezuela traded oil for Argentinian cattle (Kellogg, 2007) and Petrocaribe signed a 17–25 years oil trading initiative fixed at 1% interest credit interest rate (Cole, 2011a, p. 120).

In such (decolonial) arrangements there is no room for profit driven capitalist financial institutions, currency speculators, or private corporate actors since capital accumulation retreats into the background and the articulated (social) need of each Patria is prioritized. ALBA’s endogenous (bottom-up) development project is rooted in SSC principles of solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, and complementarity which reject capitalist greed instilled in orthodox economic principles of comparative advantage. By placing human rights over commercial interests, ALBA counters the FTAA deregulatory reform by curbing the power of the tragic elite and their oligopoly power (Muhr, 2008, p. 153). Through SSC arrangements, ALBA parties can reap more intangible benefits such as experience, knowledge, cultural exchange, capacity building, diplomatic solidarity, human rights promotion, and the visibility and recognition of the South (Gray & Gills, 2016). ALBA through SSC creates an asymmetric interdependent system based on an alternative model to the one suggested by Global North. ALBA’s endogenous development model is ensured by the role of non-traditional IR political actors’ namely social movements27 and transnational organized societies (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 567). Therefore, ALBA’s (historical) silencing is expected when we consider that the Bolivarian dream is epistemologically and ontologically motivated first and foremost by the enhancement of human dignity.

6. Conclusion: let us probe the (colonial) structures informing the BRICS and compare them to Alba’s (decolonial) structures
ALBA is characterized as a trajectory of delinking through decoloniality while the BRICS is identified here as delinking through dewesternization. Dewesternization is a welcoming trajectory for the future however it is not a trajectory that leads to the communal. Dewesternization is a political concept that refers to groups of states that have consolidated their economies without considering the diktats of the Group of Seven (G7). Delinking here does not mean delinking from capitalism (a colonial economy), but simply from the instructions of Bretton Woods institutions such as the WB and the IMF (Mignolo, 2012b). At a basic level, dewesternization then is political delinking from economic decisions. This is made clear in the BRICS 4th congregation in New Delhi when the announcement concerning the initiation of the New Development Bank (NDB) took place. The statement read: “We have considered the possibility of setting up a New Development Bank for mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries, to supplement the existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development” (Mignolo, 2012b).

Delinking through dewesternization does not tackle the colonial matrix; rather it exacerbates economic coloniality by simply modifying the actors involved in the transaction thereby demoralizing the principles SSC by preventing the construction of a fair global political-economic system. The BRICS delinking through dewesternization is at odds with ALBA’s epistemic project which opts
to delink through decoloniality. The former remains driven within the fantasy of development and growth at the expense of life—that is economic coloniality—while the later moves toward delinking from every colonial knowledge system including the economy. Put in Escobarian terms, the BRICS is conceptualized as an alternative development modality that persists in orbiting the colonial matrix, while ALBA is a decolonial project that developed an alternative to development project that delinked from the colonial matrix i.e. neoliberalism, and is committed to the Third World (communal) project.

The BRICS alliance has not been able to create new institutional foundations for its emergent authority; rather it flirts with Bretton Woods's institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Prashad, 2012, p. 11; Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 561). It is true that all BRICS members have stated their opposition to central banks and multilateral financial institutions being monopolized by the Global North, however, the group has proven to be divided in terms of its key demands on the reform of global development and governance (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 561). For instance, China and Brazil supported U.S. IMF candidate Christine Lagarde in the hopes that China would receive the number two position in the IMF, and Brazil the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 561). Similarly, when the position of the World Bank opened up following the departure of Zoellick in 2012, Brazil nominated Colombian economist Jose Antonio Campo; South Africa supported neo-liberal Nigerian finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; and China, India, and Russia supported the U.S. preferred candidate Jim Yong Kim who “was unlikely to facilitate reform at the Bank” (Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 561). These gestures identify with colonial performances rather than decolonial gestures since they lay bare the BRICS not being driven by Third World principles of solidarity, cooperation, and complementarity. Rather than unity, their relationship is characterized more by economic and political rivalry. Nayyar (2013) affirms that the BRICS needs to preserve and nurture the spirit of SSC “to facilitate cooperation among themselves and solidarity with others through consultation and inclusion” (Nayyar, 2013; Gray & Gills, 2016, p. 565)

As an organization that delinks by dewesternizing, the BRICS follows the general tenor of what Prashad (2012, p. 10) calls “Neoliberalism with Southern characteristics” with sales of commodities and low wages to workers, accompanying a recycled surplus turned over and extended back to the Global North. Considering the case of India, citizens experience high levels of poverty, yet India’s growth rate is high. The Indian state neglects to transfer the turned over surplus back into society to create more robust social change which begs the question whether India is following for mer World Bank president R. Zoellick’s advice to “turn over its surplus to help the global economy recover from the crisis” (Prashad, 2012, p. 10). Nayyar (2013), Gills and Gray (2016, p. 565) highlight the colonial pattern of trade reminiscent of the FTAA that exists within the BRICS grouping involving the export of primary commodities to China and the import of manufactured goods from China. It is a pattern that can hardly be perceived as indicative of a cooperative “trade in kind” partnership for development. China and India rising as manufacturing powers pose a threat to future manufacturing-based industrialization taking place in the developing South, unless the BRICS serves as improving trade terms, provide appropriate technologies, and new sources of finance for development (Gray & Gills, 2016).

According to Garcia and Bond (2015) and Gills and Gray (2016), financial developments initiated by the BRICS such as the New Development Bank, and the Contingency Research Arrangements (CRA) consist of “sub-imperialist finance” in the sense that these financial (colonial) institutions do little to provide an alternative to the prevailing world of sovereign debt and neoliberal exploitations. Instead, they serve as mechanisms for redirecting the capital surplus of the Global South to the Global North while exacerbating economic coloniality. These developments cast a possibility of the future bringing a debt repayment crisis as a result of “the end of the boom in commodity prices, thus challenging the hype surrounding Africa Rising” (Gray & Gills, 2016). The case of South Africa is pertinent in highlighting the
BRICS’s sub-imperialist expansion since the former government headed by President Zuma used military force to protect its local (neoliberal) mine investments as shown in the Marikana mine massacre, and its “transborder” (neoliberal) investments in conflict areas such as the Congo, and the Central African Republic. These financial developments need to be analyzed from a lens of delinking through decoloniality to make salient members of the BRICS’s intensifying the colonial matrix because the NDB and CRA shore up the dominant role of the U.S. dollar in the world economy. The BRICS opposing and distancing itself from the establishment of The Bank of the South in Venezuela in 2009 is also indicative of the BRICS preferring dewesternization rather than decoloniality. Therefore, the challenge to capitalist globalization and the colonial matrix is not likely to arise from organizations such as the BRICS because it has not endorsed an alternative epistemic project to neoliberalism—but rather has chosen to uphold the colonial matrix and undermine the principles of SSC. Even though there are many proposals for the creation of a more sustainable economic order, the actions of BRICS members seem to highlight that the organization persists in wanting to orbit colonial constellations consisting of neoliberal logics of profit maximization. It stands to reason that Western historicism does not silence the alternative development model proposed by the BRICS in comparison to the systematic manipulation of ALBA’s alternative to development project.

At the time of writing, Venezuela had been enduring colonial gestures by the Lima group seeking the removal of the PSUV party and President Maduro from the government. The importance of quickly highlighting the reaction of ALBA members to this northern colonial gesture is pertinent in light of members of the BRICS lacking such principles which are the foundation for engaging in decolonial performances. The colonial gesture targeting Venezuela was supported by colonial subjects/tragic elite members from the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD)—the largest group in the Venezuelan national assembly at the time—including Henrique Capriles Radonski, Henry Ramos Allup, and Leopoldo López. These individuals not only uphold the colonial matrix by asking the U.S.—one of the architects of the OAS—to place economic sanctions on Venezuela and halt the ALBA project, but have reverted to armed violence supported by the U.S. to overthrow President Maduro. In response, ALBA members stood in solidarity with Venezuela by stating that the unilateral economic sanctions imposed against the Venezuelian people are a flagrant violation of international law and human rights whose only purpose is to directly hinder the Bolivarian people and government of Venezuela in order to change the regime (Telesur, 2017b). Furthermore, ALBA members expressed solidarity by attending the OAS and voting against an interventionist motion supported by the U.S., Canada, and LAC tragic elite members located in Peru and Mexico, Panama and Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, and Argentina (Telesur, 2017c).

ALBA members at OAS engaged in SSC by disobeying and undermining the colonial matrix by stating that the OAS “cannot continue to be used by a country for political lynching against the government of Venezuela, it is regrettable that a group of brother countries have been biased in their appraisals and focus” and that “the countries of the region do not need protectorates or tutelage. Nothing that we do will be useful without the participation of Venezuela” (Telesur, 2017c). Further solidarity was accentuated by international movements declaring the slogan “inside the Bolivarian revolution” designed by grassroots movements involved in alternative news networks such as Venezuela Analysis (VA) created by Gregory Wilpert. Bolivarian organized social movement declared that “at the core of the delegations mission is to demystify the corporate media racist characterization of Venezuela as an unruly, ungovernable and a backward nation as well as to unmask the US active support for the right-wing colonial European-descendant opposition. Our objective is to re-invigorate solidarity with Venezuela and reshape the international point of reference for the Bolivarian Process.” (Charles, 2017)
The road to a communal world could only spring by developing a Bandung/SSC stimulated epistemic project à la ALBA that is: decolonial in its epistemology, bottom-up in its decision making structure (state-in-revolution and organised society), and counter-hegemonic in its objective in seeking to eliminate the colonial matrix upheld by Global North imperialism and BRICS sub-imperialism. One of the distinctive aspects of ALBA in contrast to the BRICS is that it provides political space for social movements from the outset to partake in building a regional space that is vacant of the colonial power. Analogous to capitalist globalization and (neoliberal) regional projects, ALBA operates through transnational modes and processes of integration in the construction of a political economy that fulfills the Bolivarian Dream in establishing the communal. ALBA, unlike the BRICS, overcomes the “territorial trap” integral to orthodox international relations theory which ontologically impedes grasping the complexities and spatiality of the Third World project.

The emergent alternative to development project headed by transnational organized society characterizing ALBA can be understood as a response to the “neoliberal transnationalism of the bourgeoisie civil society”, which according to Pijl (2002) and Muhr (2012a, 2013) is a strategic reaction to absorb, reverse, and transcend the democratic achievements within the national territories of the progressive leftists forces of the 21st century. In contrast to the BRICS, ALBA extends agency to historically dispossessed classes by allowing them to become authors of their own development in their (local) social communities. The transnational processes developed by ALBA pay homage to the Bandung spirit and principles of SSC which can be seen as a pre-requisite for a communal world. BRICS members who are still attached to European based modalities of development need to realize that development as it currently stands is unsustainable. The difficulty in building proper decolonial institutions and developing decolonial epistemic projects from below has everything to do with the absence of social conditions that highlight the relations between coloniality and modernity.

In this 21st century period of moral reduction and political degeneration, critical pedagogical educators’ worldwide need to develop non-universalistic theories of development based on their own endogenous local conditions. For these alternatives to be successful in implementing the communal they need to resist the logic of coloniality and embrace a social logic of decoloniality that is dedicated to countenancing us to “discover ourselves”. It is no longer historically accurate to proclaim that the Third World project is a thing of the past since the LAC region advanced the main breach with neoliberalism with the emergence of ALBA’s alternative decolonial development model. ALBA being nourished by a moral legitimacy unknown to neoliberal capitalism identified in the BRICS seeks to recognize the communal “as a legitimate vision for the present and the future” and to “expect that parallel contributions will come from other local histories that have been suppressed by imperial global designs” (Mignolo, 2012b). ALBA being committed in tackling the colonial matrix across the globe highlights the possibility of a pluriversal world where democracy and socialism will have their place, but where universal claims are already unsustainable because a decolonial research program welcomes the multiplicity of differences and ideas leading to development.

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Notes
1. Robbie Shilliam (2012, p. 100) describes how the Haitian revolution was purposely forgotten by (western) historicism because European “modern” logic could not fathom how “black savages [could] grasp providence from the pristine white hand of civilized Europeans”. The Haitian revolution offered an alternative logic to the peculiar, racially driven western civilizational science.

2. Andre Gunder Frank, a Marxist dependency theorist in his “Essays on the Development of Underdevelopment and the Immediate Enemy” that the development of underdevelopment is facilitated by a structure created by the former colonizer which he terms as the metropole-satellite relationship. The satellite countries serve to maintain the development of Western/Metropole affluence by always remaining in a “satellite development” stage. At this stage the national level of development is never self-perpetuating or self-generating. Even though he does not use the term “colonial structures” or “service-class”, the structures that uphold the development of underdevelopment are structures that were implanted by the Spanish conquest. See also Walter Rodney’s How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1973) for an analysis on the paradox of underdevelopment that is exacerbated by a native petty bourgeoisie that is compliant with the colonizer.

3. Outside is the “other” in relation to the Self. The Self is the subject that adopted European episteme thereby being ontologically located “inside” International relations.

4. Michel Trouillot recalls that when the French and British Empire received news of the Haitian revolution erupting, their first reaction was to state that the news is false—Western civilizational logic did not believe in groups of non-western people having a natural desire for freedom, yet alone “comprehend” such ethos. See p.90-92.

5. He also says “The modern world-system that began to form with the colonization of America, has in common three central elements that affect the quotidian life of the totality of the global population: the coloniality of power, capitalism, and Eurocentrism.”

6. Dogmatic Marxists would emphasize the importance of armed struggle and the removal of the Bourgeoisie to consolidate power, instead of developing centers of power (civil society) that would (peacefully) counter capitalist hegemonic processes. The example of the Sandinista’s in Nicaragua; the PT Worker’s Party in Brazil; and the PSUV party in Venezuela are examples where the aspirations of these conferences were observed.

7. A point in case would be to remember that the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela—guided by Chavez—did not prioritize eliminating the Bourgeoisie through armed struggle.

8. E. Dussel (2012) highlights that the issue in the LAC region is that of a cultural struggle since power is organized in a colonial structure based on race and not social class thereby overturning the dogmatic Marxist argument stating that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”.

9. On 2 July 2007, Chavez presented a speech concerning the historical bloc entitled ALBA. He reverted to Gramscian concepts to analyse and explain the processes underdeveloping the LAC region and the processes required to keep ALBA intact by coloniality. Armed struggle and the elimination of the Bourgeoisie were not the primary goals. The elaboration of an alternative development theory based on LAC culture and ideas involving a counter-hegemonic civil society and political society took primacy. Chavez reverting to Gramsci and not Marx is an intellectual shift that has been evident in Brazil’s WP (Worker’s Party) and Nicaragua’s Sandinista’s and more so in the LAC region since the late 1970s. This note is the subject of a future paper.

10. Subsequent interchange between the terms Communal and La Patria Grande.

11. Bandung’s final communique opened with economic cooperation rather than disarmament or colonialism. The previously mentioned clauses highlighted the concerted effort by Bandung delegates to stave of imperialist pressure brought on them by economic colonial gestures from Western finance capital institutions and the comparative advantages given to the First World by the legacy of colonialism. Neocolonialism had reduced Third world notions to being providers of raw materials and consumers of manufactured goods produced in Europe and the United States of America (Prashad, 2012, p. 44).

12. Historian Robert Vitalis has urged that we undertake the work that is required to find out what we don’t know about Bandung because the history of the conference has been incorrectly recorded. Dilip Menon insists that historical approaches to the Bandung conference “must engage with entangled local histories that may not be accessible through literature in English alone”, suggesting that traditional (western) historical narratives failed at historicizing the Bandung conference through “different country settings and cast of characters”.

13. Michel Trouillot (1997, pp. 90–92) recalls that when the French and British Empire received news of the Haitian revolution erupting, their first reaction was to state that the news is false—Western civilizational logic did not believe in groups of non-western people having a natural desire for freedom, yet alone “comprehend” such ethos.

14. US congressperson Adam Clayton Powell who attended Bandung stated in protest that the “conference is not anti-white, but it was anti-American foreign policy”. Once Bandung was concluded the US foreign policy establishment began taking a strong position against any country that did not align with the two theory camp of the cold war. Neoliberalism which is what the Bandung meeting deliberated through the Third world project was according to the secretary of state Dean Acheson a “shortcut to suicide.” Similarly, Ambassador Douglas MacArthur was weary that the Bandung Spirit of neutralism [or decoloniality] would find fertile ground amongst U.S. allies such as Japan.

15. To counter the power of economic coloniality sustained by groups at the service of the metropole (i.e: service-class, westernized elite, petty bourgeoisie) in postcolonial countries, twenty-nine
delegates at Bandung demanded cultural cooperation between all national cultures to attain economic development and proximate a communal world. The emphases on culture cooperation at Bandung is evocative since complete nation independence begins with the dominated peoples reclaiming their knowledge systems (eliminate cultural, economic and social coloniality). Delegates contended that imperial racism suppresses cultural cooperation and subdues the national culture of the dominated peoples by ejecting the colonized subjects from their history since coloniality tempts one group of people to adopt the culture of the colonizer thereby disdaining the cultural traditional of the dominated region. The clause of cultural cooperation in Bandung is important to remember because it demands the end of cultural richness annunciated by the imperial center for purposes of domination. Bandung delegates urged the world to learn about each other’s cultural history in a decolonial manner rather than always thinking that modernity begins and ends with appropriating European cultural history. The clause stating that “the acquisition of knowledge of each other’s country, mutual cultural exchange and exchange of information” by all delegates’ showcases their political decolonial performance which is not recalled in western literature informing the conference.

16. In Spanish ALBA means “down”. Commandante Chavez frequently mentioned that the implementation of the Bolivarian project is “the dawn of a new era” in LAC region—an alternative to the long (nightmare) imposed by neoliberalism.

17. Other initiatives include among others: Central American Common Market of 1961, the Latin American Free Trade Association of 1962, The Andean Community of 1969, CARICOM in 1973, and MERCOSUR in 1991.

18. The other three are Regional space, Regional Complex, Region State (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2000, p. 461). J.F Kennedy appointed W.W Rostow as an economic adviser and as one of the main architects of the Alliance of Progress (colonial) regional economic program in the LAC region in the 1960’s.

19. Image of ALBA’s organigram on p.38. Adopted from Muhr (2011, p. 280).

20. There are dozens of other missions, projects and social programmes that were not covered in this paper that are localized under different names in different territories such as: CLAP (Comité Local De Abastecimiento y Producción) a food distribution program in Venezuela; A Disability program called Attention To The Disabled in Cuba while St Vincent and Grenadines call the program Mission Manuela Espejo, or Mission Estmos Con Vos in Nicaragua. The UN special Rapporteur commended ALBA on its food programs and security policies in Nicaragua according to Muhr (2012b, p. 236) which confirmed that extreme poverty was reduced from 17.2% to 9.7% and rural extreme poverty was reduced from 30.5% to 18.2%. The aforementioned projects are also implemented jointly by national and transnational actors.

21. Honduras membership was renounced in January 2010 following a military-entrepreneurial (tragic elite) coup against President Zelaya in 2009.

22. Endogenous Development Policy as “oriented towards the eradication of poverty, improvement in the quality of life and the creation of a new economic and social model of development. This is promoted by the National Executive which promotes the active participation of the entire population in the destiny of the nation, the democratization of oil resources, the creation of a fair society, and the improvement of living standards for historically neglected communities.” (Howard, 2008).

23. According to Mignolo (2014), a decolonial delinking gesture can be identified when an event “in this case ALBA” does “not require funding from generous wealthy donors, and that most likely will not be funded by any generous wealthy donors. He continues by saying that “grants are embedded in the colonial matrix of power. The granting institutions not only have the privilege of setting the rules and appointing the committee that will “judge” the value of the proposals, but they also create a relationship of dependency that on the one hand is humiliating for those who are granted economic support, and at the same time disguises that humiliation by the “honor” being recognized.

24. ALBA explicitly tackles neoliberal development. Bolivia’s (Venezuelan Bank for External Commerce) situated ALBA as an international trade extension of the philosophy and politics of the Bolivarian state “The Bolivarian government of Venezuela is against the processes of liberalization deregulation and privatization that limit the capacity of the state and the government to design and to execute policies in defense of the right of our people to have access to essential services of good quality and at good prices… the public services are for satisfying the needs of people, not for commerce and economic profit” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 202).

25. According to Teresa Arreaza, the initiation of Compensatory Funds of Structural Convergence as an economic mechanism for ALBA members highlights the recognition that correcting asymmetries between participating countries is at the centre of the development and application of ALBA which seeks to ensure that trade relations “do not become the institutionalization of a hierarchy of nations, but a mechanism for the levelling of that hierarchy, in the interests of the poorest and smallest economies” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 202).

26. The failure of contemporary development to meet popular interests underscores the need to devise a more people-centred approach which stresses empowerment and participation. If neither Keynesianism nor neoliberalism can solve the problems of underdevelopment, inequalities and poverty, then everyone will see the advantages of a development approach based on popular empowerment which should be seen as a process which empowers people to take control of their destinies (Munck, 1999, p. 202).
the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) in 2004 was a direct challenge to the OAS. Led by Chavez and Fidel Castro, ALBA pushed aside the OAS and produced new forma-
tions—without U.S. control—in its place. Chavez
called the OAS ‘a corpse that must be buried’ and
suggested—in 2010—that it was the ‘sign of a
dying empire.’ ALBA would soon have 11 members.
It promised a new view of Latin American sover-
eignty and economic cooperation. One of the lea-
ders of the Lima Group is Canada, whose Foreign
Minister Chrystia Freeland felt no embarrassment
in October 2017 saying, ‘If necessary we must put
added pressure on the Maduro regime by taking
concrete steps to further isolate it from the inter-
national community.’ This is a line-struggle
between the ALBA group and the Lima group,
between those who want to drive a people-cen-
tered policy and those who want to drive a Wall
Street-centered policy."

29. Several “entrepreneurial” bourgeois families in the
MUD have halted production in their privatized
factories. This has further exacerbated civilian
deaths since shortages were rampant. The ges-
tures of the MUD are clear in opposing SSC and
Bandungan principles since the prioritize profit over
social welfare. This is made evident in Abby
Martin’s interviews in 2017 that can be found here
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvW9fW8vYW
and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=
ig6yP8HJvGQ and https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=e920UVTlmhQ.

30. McLaren (2017) states in relation to OAS, the MUD
and other G7 countries undermining the Bolivarian
revolution that “One important path forward that is
often neglected is education. A renewed emphasis
on critical pedagogy and the works of Paulo Freire
and Simon Rodriguez can assist all Venezuelans in
re-valorizing the values of Marti and Bolivar, by
casting off the chains of epistemic colonization.
And this needs to be done, as the great Latin
American philosopher, Enrique Dussel, has argued,
in rejecting the false necessity that tells us that
there exist ironclad laws of change that govern the
history of human societies and limit human free-
dom. For Dussel, such a rejection entails epistemic
decolonization and a renewed study of indigenous
Latin American philosophers and thinkers.”

31. La Via Campesina (LVC) being part of ALBA’s
Council of Social Movements, provides a platform
for regional and national peasant organizations to
combat the global economic matrix of neoliberal-
ism. According to Annette Desmarais, the possi-
ble elimination of neoliberalism and the logic of
coloniality can only be attained “if and when the
organizations [farmers, social movements, union
workers] are strong and consolidate at the local
and national level” (Prashad, 2012, p. 255). LVC is
composed of over 150 million people thanks to
ALBA’s Council of Social Movement resciling local
struggles to the regional and global level (Mühr, 2012a).

32. Peter McLaren (2017) highlights that global Critical
Educators need to renew and mobilize their sup-
port for the Bolivarian Revolution by emphasizing
ALBA’s Bolivarian based “endogenous develop-
ment, an emphasis that is thoroughly de-colonial
and works from an education model that is truly
critical, such as the one developed out of the work
of the great Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. And it
is important to expand such a model through the
contributions of de-colonial philosophers. Every
revolution for social justice needs an epistemic
foundation that is grounded in its own geopolitical
location—that it springs from seeds planted in its
own soil. Paulo Freire did not want his work to be
exported to other countries in order to be ‘trans-
planted’ but emphasized that his work be ‘ re-
invented’ in the context in which particular groups
were struggling for freedom”.

33. This statement is indebted to Davidson’s (1993)
article I mentioned in the introduction.

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