

*Regionality and social transformation in Latin
America and the Caribbean, international challenges
and the role of the University
(Scientific Speech)*

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I want to express my deepest gratitude to the authorities of UNAN-MANAGUA, FAREM-CARAZO with whom I join partnerships from a few years ago and now precisely with the History Ph.D. specializing in regional and local studies and the research project work I was asked last year based on the Grand Canal. Over time I have told some friends that I have becoming Cubanpinolera now a little canalera, today, after hearing the Engineer Talavera, the truth is I was very imbued with all the spirit that I see here in Nicaragua regarding research, teaching, but for social change and the significance of the regionality especially.

The quality of being in the interior regions of our countries and their regional structures that each of our nations have, especially, because this is an issue that not only has a historical basis, but it is also a theme of extraordinary relevance for the meaning on which we are part of globalization. That so far has a predominantly neoliberal trend, but an increasing number of countries that are engaged in profound changes in transformation processes are trying to change to be part of the future and not just recipients of what he has taught us as transnational capital.

Then, the events that times are being imposing and considering that this Congress is taking place in Carazo. It has a meaning in the sense that each of our countries has faced and assumed the issue not only of regional diversity it can be very legitimate but especially the issue of regional imbalances in our countries and how not all regions have equal access, equal opportunity and, What is the role in this that belongs to the University? Nicaragua is a great example of regionalism, like Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, countries that have a very deep regional structure with distinctions that have been accumulating over time of historical experiences that have been very different.

The issue of regionalism is not a thing of the past, it is crucial nowadays because facing globalization today it has it as a priority as in other age with colonialism, the easiest access regions had it, too. Those ones and the countries with better conditions or more resources, therefore, that is where capital wants to go, then for us the issue of regionality and nation is an extremely important issue for the processes that we are living today and in the case of context precisely it refers to the impact of globalization on each of our countries.

Because the only way we can participate in that process without destroying the signs of identity

of our people is legitimizing the nation and defending it in their deepest essences. To achieve that, it is also important that we address the problems of our regions within each of our countries because in most cases are regional imbalances that have lasted for centuries and yet in most of our countries are facing unresolved problems are imbalances that continue benefiting to big capitals that harm regions that are further away from the capital and because in many cases, governments we have had over time, since Independence, have not worried to include projects in national attention to these regional differences; however, today there is a greater awareness of what this means and the relationship with the processes of change this has. That is why I have proposed as initial question, which is the challenge we face and how we take on this today? The first thing that is important to take into account are three dimensions that are inevitable to consider:

First, there is the identity and its scales. If the identity is the result as teacher Wilmer Guevara expressed in his speech, if the identity is the result of the relationship among people and the environment, obviously identities begin to be identities in the towns, in the small homelands, then it goes reaching higher steps. However, those scales have to contemplate in all its dimensions.

Second, regionality. This regional structure has changed over time, but it has very deep roots that do not correspond to our current century but even predate the conquest of Europe.

Third, the relationship between the nation-state and national dimensions are very often confused, even among them as in the case of Latin America, have notable characteristics that also make a more complex debate. So, the interesting thing is to think a little about what is the fundament of each of its three dimensions. In this sense as science has studied it, the way as scientists we have seen it, the teachers in each of our stages and how you see it today, then to see the first element that is the identity and scale. We would have to see all dimensions from smaller spaces to the generality of local and regional identity.

We should talk about national identity and all its complexities to understand our place in the Latin American identity and even know what we are in today's world. Until then, we can understand how we can assume, if we are able or not to participate in building this future on a universal scale, the relationship among regionalism, nation, and nation states. In this sense, we must take into account the pre-Hispanic images, a case after the conquest and colonization process, especially to emphasize that the idea of regionalism that exists in Latin America and the Caribbean corresponds to the aftermath of the conquest and not to the supposed fragmentations because sometimes it is attributed to the policies of national states, regionality in Latin America.

Regionality is even before the conquest by the differentiations of each of the spaces of their cultures, which obviously complicates the process with the conquest, because most of us won a metropolis that was not the nation. She is formed with space it occupies simultaneously, and it is what will happen in our region.

Many times in European national states produce analysis schemes on how it is, for example, Latin America. But our schemes and our stories do not fit into those models of analysis and of course, we complicated the discussion, especially when we are not looking for processes or models to analyze our problems.

Of course the complexity of today, is that these problems have not been resolved, imbalances remain unresolved, the governments, especially neoliberals were not able to solve, on the contrary, gave many resources of Latin American and Caribbean countries to transnational and undoubtedly, regional imbalances are not resolved in cultures that are very complicated processes that have to be resolved

in projects at least in the medium and long term, as they are unfinished tasks of our region.

There has been a vision for the point of view of regional studies, insisting on extreme particularities of each of the towns and from the study of the nation has been an existence or copy of European models that do not correspond to the reality of our countries or even liberal positions. Central America is a clear example. The Latin American reality is that it was never homogeneous and regardless of the similarity of the contact points that we can find in our history. Currently, there is no such homogeneity and not about the relationship that exists between regions and nations with all the difficulties that may have on our national project and our current regional structures, so what do you want to examine? The only way to participate in globalization without being subordinated is defending the nation, but to defend the nation it must address the problem of regionalism; we think in the abstract and will still have anchored historical problems in a sack without having a proper resolution. What is interesting about the differences? Examination according to democratize, to solve practical and theoretical problems in our countries, from the scientific point of view because can produce theories. There are already theorists in Latin America and we often are looking for the classic European but Latin American reality is another. That reality should be examined and strengthen and transform the nation.

The axis of the position from the scientific field is defending is especially inter- and transdisciplinary. The research gives the main axis. Dr. Pedroza in his speech said that research should be done because is the key to success. But are we going to be theorist from the cabinet? Are we going to accumulate research in drawers or we will engage our societies to solve their problems? The practical material problems we face are also problems of a spiritual nature, in order of our identity, in order of developing solidarity, and especially on how our people participate actively in the processes of change and are not merely recipients of information and projects coming out or that may become involved in certain instances without these projects. The engineer Talavera pointed it out in his speech. This as the population of the regions and localities faces change processes that generate the Interoceanic Canal Grande. That is a task for scientists, researchers, teachers and students of our universities, now and for a long time. So this element of transformation is key to understanding what we are proposing.

How will be implemented the new vision of regional studies and studies of our nations? That is, what we want to establish; how to make a study of the region by the region itself? how has it been predominantly until today?, what is interesting to examine are the levels of social cohesion within the country to different shutdowns that sometimes occur between one region and another, from one region to the national fabric, addressing the problems of border and the border, it is not understood only as the dividing line between our countries but as historical regions such as building solidarity space. In that sense, there is a clear relationship to propose how we will assume globalization in the region. Often it has been talked of globalization as a location because its impact is very different, but they are not the same.

The driving force behind our national projects is globalization and for example, today, we are trying to integrate countries that not even have it internally. So, what is it? What are we looking for? How can we do it? How can we truly globalize from the inside out and with a focus and a proper Latin American perspective? That is why I have argued there are some principles as a starting point we can serve for discussion, to think and reflect. One of them is the strengthening of the state and the nation against globalization, taking into account the impact on our regions within countries facing these phenomena.

There are different formulas that have been proposed about how the national state will be replaced or if that formula is part of the first world because the first world has precepts for their national states. The main controversy of the European Union is the issue of sovereignty but how far the powers of each

of our countries come? People tell us that we have to bring everything to the market when in reality they do not. It means the same situation of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It is the dialogue of subordination that wants to keep the first world to the third world.

Among the proposals that are being considered it is how the national state will be replaced by technology issues, is also the retro state, the macro state, the micro-region. The latter seeks to be in that. Manaus in the north of Argentina, connecting with other regions of other countries and ZOFRI in the case of Chile, show these regions, what are they looking for? To stimulate linkages and official economic relationship and from all points of view between regions of different countries to connect them and without regard to their respective states. Where do you go there? To the dismantling, once again as in the sixteenth century. What they want is our investment they want, not where our countries wish to search for regional balance and what is sought by that is that the most developed regions, connect with each other and others, no matter they will be forced in practice. We are being condemning, to continue having eternally peripheral regions in Latin America, for ever and ever. This is an element that we must not ignore or deny. You can take this opportunity but considering that this is also to present a new problem. This is the case of Chile ZOFRI.

There are other elements that invite us to think about this principles. One, the rest of the nation, the national state and the defense of our national project; another, to promote the integration from the inside out, not from the outside in, that is the proposal of neoliberalism, today global imperialism; cultivate social sciences for the emancipation of Latin America and for social transformation, direct to new regional and local studies that stablish controversial situations to our countries with solution proposals. Also in the case of the new studies of nationalism that would arise in the same terms through shafts and through problems that our countries are facing and transdisciplinary as a guiding principle, as a horizon which as difficult as sometimes it looks with different interpretations, where we work in our universities, cultivate science to project alternatives and changes in our countries; and finally, this element for insertion science but not subordinated as it was until today, unsubordinated Latin America.

The so-called new world order must be part of the future, it is being built and that if we do not participate proactively simply we continue being as in previous historical centuries, always subordinate to a first world, according to its interests. In this context, the role we have in our universities and in particular to public universities, because when we talk about what has happened with globalization, the impact of such a predominantly neoliberal globalization, the trend is making changes because they were victims of scenarios of all the pressures that have come to them from the capital, the insurance market, neoliberal packages IMF demands to reduce the social costs to prioritize business sectors, the proliferation of private universities, for this priority approach that was given to business management and market demands; but also our universities resisted because from an ideological point of view those have been active, participatory, critics of the processes and phenomena that occur in our countries and have not communed with Latin American universities.

This is the time when the image of our universities is being damaged. Obviously, the own economic difficulties have influenced its deterioration. The university especially during these years, has made great efforts as the teaching load. This is something that countries that are engaged in this process of change as in the case of Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, ALBA countries, it means, countries that have given particular priority to universities should consider, because we are conscious of the role that not only has it as a state university but as a college that concerns and interests all citizens: a university of the common good. It is the university where the collective is the interest. So, the university has a key role and that is to try to overcome all these pressures such slags that it has

received under globalization with features that we talked about. But, the university claimed. In this congress and particularly with all that has been treated, it has been shown that there is a greater awareness that applies to all in our areas and actions and from our own research lines.

It is the time of perfection curriculum and curriculum redesign to also adapt the educational offerings in correspondence with the needs that arise in our countries, also, the issue of science policy redesigns that reflects and articulates needs, both regional and own international relations of the country concerned.

Post graduate programs are aimed either at diploma, master's, doctoral, to focus precisely social needs in our countries, although obviously they are processes with limitations, are processes that are still unfinished, with imperfections, but the fact that it is assumed is a very important signal, because we are aware of the role we as a public University have, other favorable elements are added, it means, that the challenges considered are not abstract, they are challenges that our universities can face.

The advances that have occurred in studies of the regional and the national set an example, because they are studies focus on transdisciplinarity. Increasingly they are incorporated studies to analyze the problems both national and regional, and this favors, the vision that our universities upon national projects.

The context itself is another element that counts, that is, the context of Latin America is extremely troubled. Latin America along with Asia are regions worldwide have grown in recent years. They are also regions that have huge potential, with absolutely innovative integration schemes, countries participating in processes and patterns of global integration such as tourism in Brazil and it also has internal processes that have matured over the years. They also are related to the processes of transformation not only of the ALBA countries, processes are clearly deeper changes that favor social transformation which we cannot be excluded.

It is important that our universities have a greater exchange. The fact internships for students are stimulated, and to encouraged interchange of subjects related to curriculum design of evaluation processes, the creations of internal commissions for assuring projects either research or teaching in each of the major universities in our countries are also elements or situations, acts, facts that support all we are establishing from the scope of the University.

To conclude, first of all, I must point out that it is necessary be more aware, it is needed to work for a better understanding of regional and local issues of our countries; second, this element is vital to re-legitimize our nations, strengthen our national states and participate in a design scale integration of our authentic Latin American region, but also globally, that is, we have to jump-start alternative processes that require it, that anyone tell us what to do and where we go; third, the role of our universities. This is fundamental. The role of our public universities is a reality, but universities are considered superior centers of learning, as the largest cultural heritage of the nation and as an essential part of the project in the country that is built with the participation of all, without it we cannot afford the challenges of the twenty-first century.