

# Alternautas

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter



## Alternautas - Vol.3 - Issue 1 - July 2016

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International Investment Law, Development and Sovereignty: No Harm? - *Nicolas Perrone*

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On the Imaginaries of Crisis - *Book Review by Michela Russo*

The Democratic Horizon of Emancipation: Interview with Maristella Scampa on the Crisis of the Progressive Cycle in Latin America - *Gerardo Muñoz*

ALLENDE, EVO, OVER - *A Poem by Andrés Ajens*

Phyrric Victories: The Fall and Rise of the Left Turns - *Jon Beasley-Murray*

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic blog that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development thinking.

It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counter-balancing mainstream understandings of development.

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## Preface

“*Watch out when you go around a corner*” warned young Tropicalia artists in late-1960s Latin American music festivals<sup>1</sup>. In the agitated political and cultural universe of that decade, the slogan repeatedly reminded us to be alert and strong, to pay attention to the high-up windows when we step on the asphalt, to the blood on the ground. Humankind does not walk the same block round and round, but anyone who has been following global political events in recent times may also find themselves asking the Tropicalists’ questions: Are we rounding a corner? What comes next? As with them in the 1960s, it is hard to know and to predict new developments. We can, however, follow their advice and keep our eyes steady, “*for this sun, for this darkness*”.

This fourth Alternautas issue gathers the articles published during the first half of our third year of existence. We are an academic blog focused on discussing development through critical lenses and from a Latin American perspective. During the last three years, we have published original and translated articles from young and prominent scholars from Latin America and the world, contributing not only to academic discussions, but also to create a fertile environment where non-mainstream ideas and perspectives on development can flourish.

This issue collects the articles published by the blog during the first half of 2016. Through their own perspectives and problems, all of them contribute to a collective

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<sup>1</sup> The expression comes from the popular song “Divino Maravilhoso”, composed by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. It was sung for the first time by Gal Costa in a music festival of Record, a Brazilian TV channel, in 1968 and became one of the most representative songs from the *Tropicalia* movement. The movement arose in the late 1960s, combining a fusion of traditional Brazilian culture with foreign influences and offered strong political criticism, in particular of the dictatorship that followed the 1964 Brazilian *Coup d’état*.

effort to map, understand and propose alternative paths to our contemporary scenario. While the first section is dedicated to alternative development thinking in a broader sense, the second section features the first dossier that *Alternautas* has organized. Our guest editor, Gerardo Muñoz, curated an insightful collection of essays and interviews focused on the current crisis of the progressive governments of Latin America.

The first section starts with a theoretical contribution by Aníbal Quijano, translated by Sebastian Garbe. Here, Quijano places the idea of “*buen vivir*” emerging from indigenous populations in Latin America as an “alternative form of existence” that directly tackles the problem of “coloniality of power”, a theory that the author has been engaged with since the early 1990s. In this piece, Quijano sums up the promises and limitations of the development paradigm in Latin America, reaching deep contradictions by the end of the last century with the emergence of neoliberalism, financialisation, globalisation and a growing environmental crisis. According to him, these elements imposed a truly “existential crisis” to the global coloniality of power, in a process that profoundly questions Eurocentrism and the separation between humankind and nature, taking for granted the exploitation of the latter by the former. He proposes a “de/coloniality of power” based on new social practices, such as social equality of heterogeneous and autonomous individuals, reciprocity between social groups, egalitarian distribution of resources and products, and communal association at local, regional and global scales. Quijano argues that the emergence of critical development theories and alternatives particularly from Latin America is not accidental, since the region had a foundational role in the constitution of the coloniality of power through its centuries of colonisation and therefore later also acquired an important role in its subversion.

With similar concerns, but tackling the environmental crisis more directly in a perspective stemming from critical economic thought, Alberto Acosta discusses the need to adopt a “post-growth” and “post-extractivism” development paradigm. In his article, translated by Dana Brablec, he criticises mainstream economic theory for establishing “growth” as the only way to fight the major problems facing humankind today, such as poverty, social inequalities and even the environmental damage caused

by growth itself. Drawing on a number of scholars, particularly Enrique Leff, he proposes a change in the global economic rationality, which would assume the task of seriously discussing “de-growth” in the global North and overcoming the extractivist model in the global South. This alternative framework would pursue a re-encounter between human beings and nature, as Quijano argued, in which capital would be subordinated to the demands of both, now understood as interdependent elements. The idea of “buen vivir” appears again as an important concept stemming from indigenous practices in Latin America, supporting the redistribution of wealth, the democratisation of the economy, and the decentralisation and re-territorialisation of social practices.

The other three articles presented in the first part of the issue present exciting new studies on Latin American economy and society. Nicolás Perrone interrogates power mechanisms behind international arbitration procedures that became increasingly important since the 1990s, when foreign investment started to be the dominant development model for the global South. Studying the dispute between Ecuador and Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) II, Perrone argues that that international arbitrators equated “harm” with “economic loss”, ignoring damages imposed on a country because their sovereignty has been limited. Thus, these mechanisms of arbitration, the author argues, create a “commodification of sovereignty” that seriously undermines local societies’ ability to determine their own strategies of development.

Iokiñe Rodríguez and Mirna Inturias recount in their piece a fascinating experience with participatory videos, a methodology of action research, among the Monkox people of Lomerio, Bolivia. The Monkox people live in an indigenous autonomous territory in the lowlands of Santa Cruz department, with an economy highly dependent on forestry management. The videos served as tools to examine and give public visibility to local notions of environmental justice in community forestry, opening a process of community self-reflection. Through the videos, Monkox people were able to narrate their own history of land struggle across successive generations and to expose problems of unequal distribution of forestry resources, particularly among elders and women.

Finally, the last contribution of this first section is a compelling study by Juliette Roguet that analyses the phenomenon of *bricherismo* in the highly touristic district of Cuzco, Peru. The article discusses the amorous encounters between *bricheros*, “technician[s] of seduction and a romantic expert in conquering travellers”, and female Western travellers that perceive them as authentic and exotic “Inca successors”. Roguet describes the complexity of the power relations that emerge with *bricherismo*, since its intersection of gender, sexuality, class and race constantly shifts dominated and dominant positions.

The second part of this issue comprises a special dossier dedicated to discuss the “end of the progressive cycle in Latin America”. Edited by Gerardo Muñoz and including articles from Bruno Cava, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, Salvador Schavelzon, Michela Russo, Diego Valeriano, Jon Beasley-Murray and Gerardo Muñoz himself, this timely collection of essays critically reviews the contours of contemporary politics in Latin America. Even though the contributions collected by the dossier come from different theoretical and regional perspectives, there is a common thread that unites them: the identification of the limitations of the Latin American “pink tide” and of the need to propose a new political imaginary in the continent. This imaginary, our authors argue, is deeply committed to expanding the democratic horizon of Latin American societies, seriously questions the centripetal forces of populism, directly tackles the problem of the extractivist model, and seeks to overcome the limitations of identity politics. The dossier also presents a special interview with Maristella Svampa, a poem by Andrés Ajens and a review of Ticio Escobar’s book *Imagen e interperie*, by Michela Russo.

Throughout all of the contributions in this new Journal issue, we wish to invite readers and contributors to retrace the path that we have explored in this first half of 2016 in the hope that it will elicit new questions, ideas and perspectives. We are facing an exciting second half of the year, with new members joining the Editorial Board and our new team of English editors, a new dossier on Water and Extractivism (the call for papers is still open!), new initiatives with the Latin American Bureau, and new conference projects in the pipeline. We are enthusiastic about the future and



grateful to all of our contributors, readers and collaborators of every kind for continuing to accompany us in the Alternautas journey off the beaten path!

Happy reading!

The Alternautas Editorial Team,

Adrian E. Beling, Ana Estefanía Carballo, Gibrán Cruz Martínez, Emilie Dupuits, Anne Freeland, María Eugenia Giraudo, Sue Iamamoto, Juan Jaime Loera González, María Mancilla García, Louise de Mello, Diego Silva, Martina Tonet, Julien Vanhulst and Johannes M. Waldmüller.

From a virtual Abya Yala, July 2016.

ANIBAL QUIJANO <sup>1</sup>

## “**Bien Vivir**” – Between “**Development**” and the De/Coloniality of Power<sup>2</sup>

*The whole extensive historical formational process of the Global Coloniality of Power has entered a deep crisis. The “**Bien Vivir**”, an expression of the indigenous populations of Latin America, is shaping an alternative for social life that can only be realized as a De/Coloniality of Power.*

What I am proposing here, opens a crucial question of our crucial moment in history: **Bien Vivir**,<sup>3</sup> in order to be an effective historical realization, cannot be but a complex

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<sup>1</sup> ANIBAL QUIJANO is a Peruvian sociologist and political theorist. He is a Professor at the Department of Sociology at Binghamton University, United States. He is known for having developed the concept of “coloniality of power” and his body of work has been influential in the fields of decolonial studies and critical theory.

<sup>2</sup> This article was translated by Sebastián Garbe and originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/1/20/bien-vivir-between-development-and-the-decoloniality-of-power1> on January 20th, 201.

<sup>3</sup> “**Bien Vivir**” and “**Buen Vivir**” are the most common terms in a debate of and in the new movement of society, most of all of the indigenized populations in Latin America towards a different social existence that has been imposed by the Coloniality of Power. “**Bien Vivir**” is probably the oldest formulation within “indigenous” resistance against the Coloniality of Power. Interestingly, it was adopted in the Viceroyalty of Peru by no one else but Guamán Poma de Ayala approximately in 1615 in his *Nueva Crónicas y buen gobierno*. Carolina Ortiz Fernández is the first who paid attention to this historical fact. See: Ortiz Fernández, Carolina (2009) “Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Clorinda Matto, Trinidad Henríquez y la teoría crítica. Sus legados a la teoría social contemporánea”, in: Yuyaykusun (Lima: Universidad Ricardo Palma), Nr. 2, December. The differences cannot be merely linguistic but rather conceptual. It will be necessary to demarcate the alternatives, as well as in Latin-American Spanish, as in the most common variants of Quechua in South America and in Aymara. In Quechua of northern Peru and in Ecuador, one says Allin Kghaway (Well Living) or Allin Kghawana (Good Way of Living) and in Quechua of southern Peru and in Bolivia one says “Sumac Kawsay”, which is translated into Spanish as “Buen Vivir” (Good Living). But “Sumac” in the north of Peru and in Ecuador means pretty, nice, beautiful. So, for example, “Imma Sumac” (How beautiful!) is the artistic name of a Peruvian singer. “Sumac Kawsay” would be translated as “Living Nicely”. What is more, there are uninformed Eurocentrists, who want to make Sumac the same as Suma and propose to say Suma Kawsay.

of social practices oriented towards the democratic production and reproduction of a democratic society, another mode of social existence with its own and specific historical horizon of meanings, radically alternative to the Global Coloniality of Power and the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity.<sup>4</sup> This model of power is still globally hegemonic today, but also in its deepest and most existential crisis since its constitution for not much more than 500 years. In these conditions, today, *Bien Vivir*, might make sense as an alternative form for social existence, as a De/Coloniality of Power.

### **“Development”, a Eurocentric paradox: modernity without de/coloniality**

Development was, most of all as debated in Latin-America, a key term of a political discourse associated with an elusive project of deconcentration and relative redistribution of the control of industrial capital as part of a new geography within the configuration of global colonial-modern capitalism at the end of the second World War.

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<sup>4</sup> The theory of the Coloniality of Power or Global Coloniality of Power and of Eurocentrism or Eurocentred Modernity/Coloniality as its specific historical horizon of meanings has been originally proposed in my writings since the beginnings of the last decade of the 20th century. For the purpose of the present debate, it might be useful to cite only the most important ones. “Colonialidad y Modernidad/Racionalidad”, originally published in *Peru Indigena*, Vol. 13, Nr. 29, Lima 1991; “Americanity as a Concept or the Americas in the Modern World-System”, published jointly with Immanuel Wallerstein in *International Social Science Journal*, Nr. 134, November 1992, UNESCO/Blackwell, 549-557, Paris, France; “América Latina en la Economía Mundial”, published in *Problemas del Desarrollo*, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM, Vol. XXIV, Nr. 95, October-Dezember 1993, Mexico; „Raza, Etnia y Nación: Cuestiones Abiertas”, in *José Carlos Mariátegui y Europa*. Amauta, 1993, 167-188, Lima, Peru. “Colonialité du Pouvoir et Democratie en Amérique Latine”, in *Future Antérieur: Amérique Latine, Democratie et Exclusion*. L’Har mattan, 1994, Paris, France; “Colonialidad, Poder, Cultura y Conocimiento en América Latina”, in Lima, *Anuario Mariátegui*, 1998, Vol. IX, Nr. 9, 113-122, Peru; “Qué Tal Raza!”, in *Familia Y Cambio Social. Cecosam*, 1998, Lima, Peru; “Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina”, in Edgardo Lander (ed.), *Colonialidad del Saber, Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales, UNESCO-CLACSO, 2000*) 201-246; “Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social”, originally published in Festschrift for Immanuel Wallerstein, in *Journal of World Systems Research*, Vol. VI, Nr. 2, Autumn/Winter 2000, 342-388, Special Issue, Giovanni Arrighi and Walter L. Goldfrank (ed.), Colorado, USA; “Colonialidad del Poder, Globalización y Democracia”, in *San Marcos*, Second Cycle, Nr. 25, July 2006, 51-104, Universidad de San Marcos, Lima, Peru. At the moment, this theory is being debated on a worldwide scale.

At a first moment it was a virtually official discourse. Nevertheless, it gave space to complex and contradictory questions, which derived in a rich and intense debate with worldwide resonance as a clear expression of the magnitude and the deepness of the socio-political conflicts of interest that were part of this whole new geography of power and, particularly, in Latin-America. In this way, a wide range of categories became produced (mainly development, underdevelopment, modernization, marginality, participation on the one hand and on the other imperialism, dependency, marginalization, revolution), which was deployed in close contact with conflictive and violent movements of and in society that lead to dead-end processes or relatively important, but unfinished, changes in the distribution of power.<sup>5</sup>

In short, one could say that in Latin America the main result was the destitution of the “oligarchic state” and of some of its expressions in the social existence of those countries population. But neither its historical-structural dependency in the Global Coloniality of Power, nor the modes of exploitation and domination inherent to this power model have been eradicated or sufficiently altered in order to make space for a democratic production and management of the State, nor its resources of production, nor the distribution and appropriation of the product. Despite its intensity, this debate never managed to liberate itself from the hegemony of Eurocentrism. In other words, these changes did not lead to “development”. Otherwise it would not be possible to understand why the term always manages to reappear, for instance now, as the ghost of an unfinished past.<sup>6</sup>

### The global coloniality of power and the ghost of the nation-state

In this debate, the hegemony of Eurocentrism lead to perceive “development” in Latin America only in relation to the Nation-State. But, in the context of a Global

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<sup>5</sup> The names of Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Anibal Pinto, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto, Andrew Gunder Frank, Rui Mauro Marini, Theotonio Dos Santos, José Nun among those who took part in that debate are probably known to most of the readers. And there is, of course, a huge body of literature available in that regard.

<sup>6</sup> See Aníbal Quijano (2000) “El Fantasma del Desarrollo en América Latina”, in *Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales*, 2/2000, 73-91, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela. Of the same author (2000) “Os Fantasmas da América Latina”, in Adauto Novais (org.), *Oito Visoões da América Latina*. SENAC, 49-87, Sao Paulo, 2006, Brazil.

Coloniality of Power, this perspective was historically misleading. What is more, precisely after the second World War, this power model entered a long period of decisive changes on a global scale. It is pertinent to summarize those:

1. Industrial capital began to be structurally connected with, which was known at that time as the “technological-scientific revolution”. This relationship implied, on the one hand, a reduction of the need for living and individual work force and consequently for paid labor as structurally inherent to capital in that new period. Unemployment ceased to be a temporary or cyclical problem. “Structural unemployment” was the term, which later was employed by more conservative economists to make sense of that process.
2. These transformation tendencies of the relationships between capital and labor implied an amplification of the range of speculative accumulation – not only cyclically but also as a structural tendency –, which was understood as a progressive “structural financialization”. In that way a new industrial-financial capital was formed, which soon experienced a relatively fast global expansion.
3. A process of tecnocratization/instrumentalization of subjectivities, imaginaries and all historical horizons of meanings specific to the Eurocentred Colonial Modernity. Strictly, it is about the growing withdrawal of the original promises of the so-called “modern rationality” and, in that sense, a deep change in the ethical-political perspective of the original Eurocentric version of “Coloniality/Modernity”. Despite its new character, it did not cease to be attractive and persuasive although it turned out to be more and more paradoxical, ambivalent and ultimately historically impossible.
4. Development and the expansion of the new industrial-financial capital, together with the defeat of national-socialist/fascist sectors of the global bourgeoisie, in a struggle over the hegemony of capitalism during the second World War, facilitated the disintegration of European colonialism in Asia and Africa and, at the same time, the prosperity of bourgeois groups, the middle classes and even considerable sectors of the exploited Euro-American working classes.

5. The consolidation of the bureaucratic despotism (renamed “really existing socialism”) and its sudden expansion inside and outside of Europe happened inside the same historical process. This mode of domination became affected more profoundly and irremediably by this technocratic and instrumental flow of colonial/modern “rationality”.

6. In this context, the hegemony of that version of “modernity” had the function of the most powerful domination mechanism of subjectivity, as well as through the global bourgeoisie as through the despotic bureaucracy of the so-called “socialist bloc”. In that way and despite their rivalry, both modes of domination, exploitation and conflict converged in a repressive antagonism of the new movements of and in society, particularly regarding the social ethic of labor, gender, subjectivity and collective authority. Contrarily, it would be much harder to explain the successful alliance of both modes of domination to overthrow most of all juvenile movements (be that in Paris, New York, Berlin, Rome, Jakarta, Tlatelolco or Shanghai and Prague). At the end of the 60s and beginning of the 70s, they fought as a minority, but in the whole world, not only more against labor exploitation, colonialism and imperialism, but also against colonial-imperial wars (for that period Vietnam is the emblematic case), but also against the social ethic of productivism and consumerism; against the pragmatic bourgeois and bureaucratic authoritarianism; against the domination through “race” and “gender”; against the repression of all non-conventional forms of sexuality; against the technocratic reductionism of instrumental rationality and for new aesthetical-ethical political frameworks. Fighting, consequently, for a radically different historical horizon of meanings than that of the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity.

7. At the same time a new model of conflicts came up. First, the delegitimation of the whole domination system assembled through the axis “race”/“gender”/“ethnicity”. This tendency already began since the end of the second world war as a result of the global repudiation regarding the atrocities of national-socialism and Japanese military authoritarianism. The racism/sexism/ethnicism of those despotic regimes was consequently not only

defeated in war, but also and to no lesser extent and as a part of the delegitimizing references of racialization, patriarchy, ethnicism and militarist authoritarianism converted within the power relations. But it was mostly during the decade of the 60s in the 20th century that a great debate on “race” and “gender” could gain a new and definitive prominence, announcing the enormous contemporary global conflict regarding the control over these areas of social behavior and praxis.

8. Despite the defeat of those anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic movements and the following imposition of “globalization” as the new Global Colonial Capitalism, the seed of a new historical horizon was able to survive among the new historical-structural heterogeneity of global imaginaries and momentarily germinates as one of the most visible signs in the proposition for a Bien Vivir.

### **The new historical period: the existential crisis of the global coloniality of power**

The evolvement of these new historical tendencies of industrial-financial capital lead to a prolonged booming and changing period, culminating in an explosion of an existential crisis in the power model as such, the Global Coloniality of Power, its ensemble and its crucial elements, since the second half of 1973.

Together with that crisis, the world entered a new historical period, whose specific processes have a similar deepness, magnitude and implication with the period that we call “industrial-bourgeois revolution”, although with opposing signs. The terms “neoliberalism”, “globalization” and “postmodernity” (which cannot be discussed here at length)<sup>7</sup> present with reasonable efficacy and despite of all their ambivalences

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<sup>7</sup> My contribution to that debate, principally in: *Modernidad, Identidad y Utopía en América Latina. SOCIEDAD Y POLITICA*, Lima 1988; “Colonialidad del Poder, Globalización y Democracia”, originally in *TENDENCIAS BASICAS DE NUESTRA ERA*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales Pedro Gual, 2001. Caracas, Venezuela. An updated version in: SAN MARCOS, Nr. 25, July 2006, Universidad de San Marcos, Lima, Peru; “Entre la Guerra Santa y la Cruzada”, originally in *AMERICA LATINA EN MOVIMIENTO*, Nr. 341, October 2001, Quito, Ecuador; “El Trabajo al Final del Siglo XX”, originally in *PENSÉE SOCIALE CRITIQUE POUR LE XXI SIÈCLE*, Melanges en l’honneur de Samir Amin. Forum du Tiers- Monde, L’Harmattan 2003, 131-149, Paris, France; and “Paradojas de la Colonialidad /Modernidad/Eurocentrada”, in *HUESO HUMERO*, Nr. 53, April 2009, 30-59. Lima, Peru.

and complexities the character and the main tendencies of this new period.

The first consists basically in the ultimate imposition of the new financial capital in the control of the global colonial-modern capitalism. Precisely, it is about the worldwide imposition of a “structural unemployment” woven by the “structural financialization”. The second is about the imposition of that definitive framework on all countries and the whole human population, initially in Latin America through the bloody dictatorship of general Augusto Pinochet in Chile and later through the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in Britain and the U.S. together with the support and/or subjugation of all other countries.

This imposition produced a social dispersion of the exploited workers and the disintegration of their main social and political institutions (mainly trade unions); the defeat and disintegration of the so-called “socialist bloc” and virtually of all regimes, movements and political organizations involved. China and later Vietnam chose to be on the side of the new industrial-financial and globalized “really existing capitalism” under a reconfigured bureaucratic despotism as a partner of the mayor global financial corporations and of the Global Imperial Bloc.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, “postmodernity” denominates in a rather unsatisfactory way, the ultimate imposition of tecnocratization/instrumentalization of what was known as “modern rationality”, that is the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity.

We are then deep within a historical process of a complete reconfiguration of the Global Coloniality of Power, the hegemonic power model of the planet. It is about, in a first stance, the acceleration and deepening of a re-concentration tendency regarding the control of power.

The central tendencies of that process consist, in a brief overview, in:

1. The re-privatization of public spaces, mainly the State;
2. The reconcentration of the control over labor, the resources of production and of production-redistribution;

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<sup>8</sup> On the concept Global Imperial Bloc, see „Colonialidad del poder, globalización y democracia“, op. cit.



3. The extreme and increasing social polarization of the world population;
4. The aggravation of the “exploitation of nature”;
5. The hyperfetishization of the market, even more than of the product;
6. The manipulation and control of technological resources of communication and of transportation in order to impose the tecnocratization/instrumentalization of Coloniality/Modernity;
7. The mercantilization of subjectivity and life experiences of individuals, mainly of women;
8. The universal aggravation of individualist dispersion of people and of egoistic conduct, cross-dressed as individual liberty, which is the equivalent of the universalization of the “American Dream” in social praxis, perverted as the nightmare of brutal individual quest for wealth and power against others;
9. The “fundamentalization” of religious ideologies and their corresponding social ethics, what ultimately re-legitimizes the control over the main areas of social existence;
10. The growing use of the so-called “cultural industries” (most of all images, cinema, TV, video, etc.) in the industrial production of terror and mystification of experiences, leading to a legitimation of the “fundamentalization” of ideologies and repressive violence.

### The “exploitation of nature” and the crisis of the global coloniality of power

Although only in an allusive way, it is pertinent to point out that one of the foundational elements of the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity is the new and radical Cartesian dualism that separates “reason” from “nature”.<sup>9</sup> Hence, one of the most characteristic ideas/images of eurocentrism in any of its expressions is the “exploitation of nature” as something that does not require any further justification,

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<sup>9</sup> A more detailed debate can be found in „Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social“ in Arrighi and Goldfrank (2000), op. cit.

expressed properly in the productivist ethic originated in the “industrial revolution”. It is not difficult at all to perceive the inherent presence of the idea of “race” as part of “nature” – as an explanation and justification for the exploitation of “inferior races”.

Under the protection of this metaphysical mystification of human relations with the rest of the universe, the dominant groups of the homo sapiens, within the Global Coloniality of Power and especially since the “industrial revolution”, lead the species to impose its exploitative hegemony on all other species of animals as well as a predatory conduct over all other existing elements of the planet. Based on that, the Global/Colonial Capitalism performs an increasingly fierce and predatory conduct, that leads to jeopardize not only the survival of the whole species on the planet, but also the continuity and the reproduction of the conditions of life, the whole life on the planet. With its imposition, today we are killing each other and destroying our common home.

From that perspective, the so-called “global warming” of the global climate or the “climate crisis”, far from being a “natural” phenomenon that happens within something we call “nature” and supposedly separated from us as members of that animal species Homo Sapiens, is the result of the aggravation of that global disorientation of our species on earth, which has been imposed by the predatory tendencies of the new industrial-financial capitalism within the Global Coloniality of Power. In other terms, it is one of the most central expressions of this existential crisis of this specific power model.

### **The new resistance: towards the de/coloniality of power**

Since the end of the 20th century, a growing proportion of the victims of that power model began to resist these tendencies in virtually the whole world. The oppressors, the “servants of capital”, whether as owners of big financial corporations or rulers of despotic-bureaucratic regimes, answer with violent repression, not only inside the conventional borders of their own countries, but passing through and by them, developing a tendency of global re-colonization, using the most sophisticated

technological resources, which allow to kill more people, quicker and with less cost.

Based on these conditions, the Crisis of the Global Coloniality of Power and especially of the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity, the aggravation of conflictivity and violence has been set up as a globalized structural tendency.

Such aggravation of conflictivity, fundamentalisms and violence, coupled with the growing and extreme social polarization of the world population, causes the resistance itself to produce a new conflict model.

Resistance tends to evolve as the production of a new sense of social existence, life itself, precisely because the vast concerned population perceives with a growing intensity, that what is at stake here and now is not only their poverty as their never-ending way of existence, but rather and nothing less than their own survival. Such a discovery implies necessarily that one cannot defend human life on earth without defending at the same time and in the same movement the conditions of the very life on earth.

In that way, the defense of human life and its conditions on the planet becomes the new sense for resistance struggles for an enormous majority of the world population. And without subverting and disintegrating the Global Coloniality of Power and its colonial-global capitalism in its most predatory period today, these struggles may not advance towards the production of a historical meaning alternative to the Eurocentred Modernity/Coloniality.

### **De/coloniality of power as a continuous democratic production of social existence**

This new historical horizon of meanings, the defense of the conditions of one's own and other's life on this planet, is already under consideration in the struggles and alternative social practices of the species. Consequently, against all form of domination/exploitation within social existence. That is, a De/Coloniality of Power as a point of departure and the democratic self-production and reproduction of social existence as a continuous orientational axis of social practices.

It is this historical context, where it is necessary to locate the whole debate and elaboration of the proposition of Bien Vivir. Following, it is most of all about admitting this open question, not only in debate, but also in the everyday social praxis of populations who decide to warp and inhabit historically this new possibility of social existence.

In order to evolve and consolidate itself, the De/Coloniality of Power would imply social practices configured by:

- a. The social equality of heterogeneous and diverse individuals, against the *de-equalizing* racial and sexual social classification and identification of the world population;
- b. Consequently, neither the differences nor the identities will be any longer a source or argument for the social inequality of individuals;
- c. The groups, belongings and/or identities might be the product of a free and autonomous decisions of free and autonomous individuals;
- d. The reciprocity between socially equal groups and/or individuals in the organization of labor and in the distribution of products;
- e. The egalitarian redistribution of resources and products, tangible and intangible, of the world between the world population;
- f. The tendency of communal association of the world population on a local, regional or global scale as a way of producing and managing collective authority directly and, with that precise meaning, as the most efficient mechanism to distribute and redistribute rights, obligations, responsibilities, resources, products, between groups and their individuals, in every area of social existence (sex, labor, subjectivity, collective authority) and a co-responsibility regarding the relationship with all other living beings and entities on the planet or the whole universe.

### **The “indigenous” of the “global south” and the proposition of bien vivir: open questions**

It is not an historical accident that the debate about the Coloniality of Power and the Eurocentred Coloniality/Modernity has been produced, foremost, in Latin America.

Neither, that the proposition of Bien Vivir comes from, basically, the new movement of Latin-American “indigenous”.

Latin America is the place constituted through the “Accidental Indies” (ironic reference to the common idea of the “West Indies”).<sup>10</sup> And by that, as the the kick-off time and space of a new historical world and a new power model, the Global Coloniality of Power. At the same time, as the original time/space of the first “indigenization” of the survivors of the colonizing genocide, as the first population of the world suppressed through the “racialization” of their new identity and their subjugated place inside the new power model.

Latin America and the “indigenous” population, then, have an elemental, foundational role in the constitution and history of the Coloniality of Power. From there derives their actual place and role in the political-ethic-aesthetic-historic-theoretic-epistemic subversion of this power model in-crisis, implied in the proposition of a De/Coloniality of Power and Bien Vivir as an alternative social existence.

But still if America and particularly Latin America was the first new historical identity of the Coloniality of Power and their colonized population the first “indigenous” of the world, since the 18th century all the rest of the planet and its populations have been conquered by Western Europe. And those populations, the vast majority of the world, have been colonized, racialized and consequently “indigenized”. Their contemporary emergence does not constitute, then, just another “social movement”. It is about a whole new movement of and in society whose development could lead to a Global De/Coloniality of Power, meaning to another social existence, liberated from domination/exploitation/violence.

The crisis of the Global Coloniality of Power and the debate and struggle for the De/Coloniality, prove at plain sight that the social relation of domination/exploitation grounded upon the idea of “race” is a product of the history of power relations and not of any Cartesian “nature”. But it also shows the extreme

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<sup>10</sup> Finley, Robert 2003. *Las Indias Accidentales*, Barcelona, Barataria.

historical heterogeneity of the “indigenized” population, first in their pre-colonial history and second in their history produced through the experiences under the Coloniality of Power for almost half a millennium. During the latter, a new historical movement of and in society is now producing the De/Coloniality of Power.

It would make no sense, though, to wait for this historically heterogeneous population, which composes the overwhelmingly vast majority of the world, to produce or to take over a universal, homogenous historical imaginary as an alternative to the Global Coloniality of Power. This would not even be conceivable taking only into account the population of Latin America or the Americas as a whole.

In fact, all these populations, without any exception, come from historical experiences of power relationships. Until now, power seems to have been, in all known history, not only a phenomenon of all long-term social forms of existence, but particularly the main motivation of the historical collective conduct of the species. Such experiences of power relations are without any doubt different between each other and regarding the Coloniality of Power, but nevertheless possible common experiences of colonization.

However, the “indigenized” population under colonial rule, first in Iberian “America” and later in the whole world under the rule of “Western Europe” not only shared universally the perverted forms of domination/exploitation imposed by the Global Coloniality of Power. Also, paradoxically but effectively, the resistance against those forms made it possible to share common historical aspirations against domination, exploitation and discrimination: the social equality of heterogeneous individuals, the freedom of thought and expression of all those individuals, the equal redistribution of resources as well as the egalitarian control over all of the central areas of social existence.

It is because of that, that within the historical “indigeneity” of those victimized populations under the Global Coloniality of Power, lies not only the heritage of the past, but also the lessons for a historical resistance on such a long time span. We are, therefore, walking towards the emergence of a new historically-structurally heterogeneous identity whose development might produce a new social existence

liberated from domination/exploitation/violence, which is one central demand of the World Social Forum: Another world is possible!

In other words, the new historical horizon of meanings is emerging in all its historical-structural heterogeneity.

In that perspective, the proposition of Bien Vivir, is necessarily a historically open question,<sup>11</sup> which requires continuous inquiry, debate and praxis.

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<sup>11</sup> In that regard, for example the recent interviews by Aymaran leaders in Bolivia, made and diffused by E-Mail of the CAOI. The journal *América Latina en Movimiento* of the Latin American Information Agency (ALAI) dedicated their issue 452, February 2010, under the general title „Recuperar el sentido de la vida“ entirely to this debate. Regarding the social praxis itself, there is a very important movement of specific research. See: „Vivir Bien frente al desarrollo. Procesos de planeación participativa en Medellín“, in Gómez, Esperanza *et. al.*, Medellín, Universidad de Medellín, 2010.

NICOLÁS M. PERRONE<sup>1</sup>

# International Investment Law, Development and Sovereignty: No Harm?<sup>2</sup>

## Foreign investment-led development and the international investment regime

Since the 1990s, foreign investment has been presented as a strong means for development. Foreign investment serves to climb the value ladder, bridge the investment gap, and maintain a ‘maxim effective utilization of economic resources.’<sup>3</sup> Yet, attracting and enabling foreign investment is not an easy task for governments. In a context of fierce competition for capital, this requires an active state promoting policies that match the needs of foreign investors. As a result, the control and steering of foreign investment of the 1960s and 1970s was quickly replaced with a model in which governments must facilitate foreign investor initiatives and reap the benefits of multinational corporate activity. The basis of this development model is to organise local resources around the expectations of foreign investors, and rely on sovereign powers as a means to reach this objective: e.g. as a means to implement extractivism and maquilas.

The international investment regime, which consists of more than 3,000 treaties for the protection of foreign investment, has been fundamental in promoting this development model and in supervising states that tried to defy its orthodoxy. Like

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<sup>3</sup> United States- Ecuador Bilateral Investment Treaty, preamble, signed 27 August, 1993.



UNCTAD explained in the early World Investment Reports, an initial purpose of investment arbitration was to lock-in a foreign investment-led development project. International arbitrators were in charge of preventing governments from changing their minds, and disappointing foreign investor expectations.<sup>4</sup> Most of the criticisms against the international investment regime, however, are not based on these grounds. The main argument sustains that some investment arbitrators have gone too far, limiting regulation to curb negative externalities and market abuses —involving, for instance, plain-tobacco packaging. The increasing discussion about the right to regulate, in this way, has eclipsed a more profound debate about the role of the international investment regime in limiting alternative forms of development and policy experimentation.

### **The Oxy II awards: a tale on the commodification of sovereignty**

This short essay aims to illustrate this more general debate by looking at the awards in the case Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) II v Ecuador, where the tribunal imposed one of the highest awards against a host state. In 2011, an investment tribunal found that Ecuador had acted disproportionately against Oxy condemning the state to pay 1.77 billion US dollars in compensation.<sup>5</sup> Ecuador requested the annulment of this decision under the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) rules, and a few months ago a committee annulled part of the award reducing the compensation to a little more than 1 billion US dollars.<sup>6</sup> As most high-level investment disputes, this case is so rich in facts and details that the narrative of the award becomes one of the most important justifications for the final decision. In this particular dispute, the striking detail is that Oxy deliberately breached the investment agreement with the Ecuadorian government —the two tribunals

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<sup>4</sup> UNCTAD, 1993 World Investment Report. Transnational Corporations and Integrated International Production (1993), at 214-5.

<sup>5</sup> Occidental Petroleum Corporation v Ecuador (ICSID Case No. ARB/06/11), Award, 5 October 2012 (hereinafter: Oxy II Award).

<sup>6</sup> Occidental Petroleum Corporation v Ecuador (ICSID Case No. ARB/06/11), Decision on Annulment of the Award, 2 November 2015 (hereinafter: Oxy II Annulment).

acknowledge this point— but the oil company is still awarded 1 billion US dollars in compensation.

To state the facts briefly: Oxy had committed not to transfer any rights or interests over its investment in the oil sector without the previous approval of the Ecuadorian government. But that is exactly what Oxy did. It transferred economic interests over the project to a Canadian investor without the approval of the Ecuadorian government. According to the investment agreement between the foreign investor and the state, this kind of breach would result in the termination of the investment. However, here comes the trick in the investment award. For the tribunal and the annulment committee, Ecuador did not suffer any harm at all, or if there was any harm, it was a minor one. Consequently, the arbitrators found that the termination of the investment by Ecuador was a disproportionate measure demanding compensation. This compensation consists of the total harm suffered by Oxy minus a twenty-five per cent discount due to the contractual breach.

The award is perplexing because of the way in which the tribunal reached the conclusion that Ecuador suffered no or little harm. The decision is based on two important premises: the commodification of sovereignty, and the reduction of the national interest on natural resources to a minor concern. These premises confirm that the international investment regime has an impact on the idea of sovereignty and, in particular, on how we think about harm to national sovereignty.

The arbitral tribunal explains the relevance of the harm element in detail. First, the arbitrators reject the Ecuadorian argument that this is a sole contractual case that did not require the application of proportionality. The arbitrators note that there always needs to be a relationship of proportionality between any penalty imposed by a state and the harm created by a private actor. For the tribunal, a severe penalty —like the termination of the investment agreement— would have only been justified in the case of a serious harm and a flagrant breach. The arbitrators highlight that only in

very exceptional circumstances states may impose a severe penalty only for deterrent purposes.<sup>7</sup>

The tribunal then continues with the question of the severity of the harm. The arbitrators point out that the transfer of economic interests over the oil project from Oxy to a Canadian corporation, in fact, was going to be beneficial for Ecuador because it meant more foreign investment.<sup>8</sup> The tribunal recognises that states have the duty to protect their natural resources, but conceives this duty as protecting the stream of public income generated by the oil sector.<sup>9</sup>

Ecuador replies to this argument by highlighting that the harm was imposed on its legal system, on the integrity of its legal order. The arbitrators are not completely unsympathetic to this point. They accept that Oxy ‘arrogated’ some public authority by doing something that was prohibited by the investment agreement.<sup>10</sup> But they note that this did not impose a severe harm on Ecuador and, therefore, the government was not entitled to applying a severe penalty like the termination of the agreement. The tribunal suggests that there were other less serious sanctions that Ecuador could have applied to Oxy. In this respect, the arbitrators highlight that any sanction had to be balanced against the economic interests of Oxy. In essence, the Ecuadorian acts were problematic for the tribunal because the termination implied a big loss for Oxy, while the transfer did not create any economic loss for Ecuador — on the contrary, according to the award, it was going to benefit the country economically. The tribunal, lastly, does not accept that the termination of the contract was necessary for deterrence purposes. Ecuador, as a result, acted disproportionately in violation of the investment treaty.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Oxy II Award, 416-7, 422, 425, 427.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 444-5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 446-7.

<sup>10</sup> Oxy II Award, 448.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 434, 449-50. The dissenting arbitrator Stern has a different opinion about the harm imposed on Ecuador by Oxy. She considers that Ecuador’s measure was disproportionate but also notes that Oxy’s

## The international investment regime, sovereignty and harm: Can states and local populations trust foreign investors?

As noted above, the criticism against investment arbitration has been increasing in recent years. There are two different strands in the literature. One criticises investment arbitrators for their conflict of interests or simply for promoting their and law firms' economic interests.<sup>12</sup> The other strand of the literature is concerned with awards that limit the right to regulate, potentially creating situations of regulatory chill and moral hazard.<sup>13</sup> The Oxy II awards, in my view, give us the opportunity to think beyond these two categories, reflecting on the structural consequences of the international investment regime and investment arbitration. This regime cannot be seen in isolation from the dominant development model, which is based on foreign investment and multinational corporate initiative.

In this particular case, the reasoning of the Oxy II awards commodifies the idea of sovereignty over natural resources. A severe harm to sovereignty is therefore equal to a severe harm to corporate interests: i.e. a loss of economic benefits. It is interesting, in this respect, that while the tribunal refers to the idea of harm, sometimes it also uses the notion of loss.<sup>14</sup> This conception of sovereignty disregards years of debate and struggle at the United Nations, where the Global South demanded a conception of sovereignty—in particular related to natural resources—that allowed their governments to implement their own political, economic and legal institutions.<sup>15</sup> For this view, sovereignty is important to enable communities to decide their own preferences and values. In Ecuador, for instance, this relates to the indigenous notion

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conduct constituted a quite severe breach. For this reason, she suggested a fifty per cent discount on the compensation. Oxy II Award, Dissenting Opinion of Brigitte Stern, 4, 7. The Annulment Committee confirms the reasoning of the tribunal, Oxy II Annulment, 344, 346, 368.

<sup>12</sup> See Gus Van Harten, *Investment Treaty Arbitration and Public Law* (2007); Cecilia Olivet and Pia Eberhardt, 'Profiting from injustice: How law firms, arbitrators and financiers are fuelling an investment arbitration boom,' Transnational Institute, November 27, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> See Stephan Schill (ed.), *International Investment Law And Comparative Public Law* (2010); Santiago Montt, *State Liability In Investment Treaty Arbitration: Global Constitutional And Administrative Law In The Bit Generation* (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Oxy II Award, 445.

<sup>15</sup> See Anthony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (2004), pp. 196-244.

of good life, *buen vivir* or *Sumak Kawsay*. The Oxy II awards subvert this notion of sovereignty: by whom and how a country's natural resources are used becomes a minor question as long as wealth is maximised.

We should not forget, in this regard, that the imposition of strict requirements to transfer interests over strategic natural resources, like oil, is not only the policy of Ecuador. Many nations impose similar restrictions to foreign investors. It is worth pondering, then, what a tribunal would decide if Petroecuador invested in the United States, with a similar prohibition, but this corporation still decided to transfer an interest over the project without governmental approval to, let us say, a Chinese investor. It seems unlikely that a tribunal would not consider this a severe harm — even if the United States were going to receive a large economic benefit. The United States have rejected foreign investment for national security reasons, including Chinese investment, and such a transfer without a government approval could put national security at risk according to US law.<sup>16</sup>

Natural resources are strategic for all countries. In the case of Latin America, natural resources have triggered foreign military interventions, military coups, and a large number of investment disputes since the 19th century. All this suggests that who the foreign investor is becomes of ultimate importance for every state in Latin America. These countries have the same if not more national security reasons than the United States to screen foreign investment. In this context, the Oxy II awards are against fundamental principles of international law, like sovereignty and the right of each state to screen and reject foreign investment. The tribunals support the claim that Ecuador could have imposed a less severe sanction to Oxy. Ultimately, however, this means that foreign investors can disregard fundamental legal requirements —like entry requirements— because they know that they will only suffer a minor sanction at the most.

This leads to the broader question of whether or not states and local populations in the Global South can trust foreign investors with their resources. Foreign investment

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<sup>16</sup> Bergsten, F, et al (eds), 'Toward a US-China Investment Treaty,' Peterson Institute for International Economics, No. PIIEB15-1 (2015), at 34-40.

may be very useful to promote the kind of development that each population desires, but this needs foreign investors who are willing to adapt to local aspirations and make a profit within those boundaries. This requires, first, having a strict control over who those foreign investors are. Under the current international rules, this and other crucial themes have not been analysed in detail. The current discussions about the right to regulate fail to address the structural problems of a foreign investment-led development project, and overlook the contribution of the international investment regime to these problems. It is as if somebody or something is being harmed, but we do not take notice of it.

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IOKIÑE RODRIGUEZ<sup>1</sup> AND MIRNA INTURIAS<sup>2</sup>

# Cameras to the People: Reclaiming local histories and restoring environmental justice in community based forest management through participatory video<sup>3</sup>

Indigenous peoples' histories and memories are almost invisible to the eyes and ears of Western civilization. When we do hear about them, we generally do so through accounts and reconstructions made by naturalists, priests, explorers and more recently historians, geographers, and anthropologists – rarely from indigenous people themselves. The invisibility of local histories is not accidental. It is the result of a historical hegemonic knowledge production system that has privileged particular ways of knowing the world, at the expense of others (dos Santos et al 2007, Quijano 2000). This lack of attention to locally experienced realities is a common feature of environmental narratives that place the blame of environmental change on local resources uses and practices (Leach & Mearns 1996, Martinez-Alier 2003), thus reinforcing the need for external control (western science-based knowledge) over indigenous peoples' lands. Erasing local histories is also convenient for de-rooting people from their lands as part of the imposition of development agendas by the state and the private sector interested in promoting extractive activities and other projects

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<sup>3</sup> This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/4/11/cameras-to-the-people-reclaiming-local-histories-and-restoring-environmental-justice-in-community-based-forest-management-through-participatory-video> on April 11th, 2016.



of “general interest” in indigenous peoples’ territories (Acosta 2015, Swampa 2013, Harvey 2014).

Yet indigenous peoples in Latin America are very much aware that an important part of their struggle for cultural and physical survival involves telling the world their own histories. “We must tell government officials who we are and make them understand the importance of reconstructing our history” (Carlos Morales, Uwottüja Indigenous Leader). “We have to unearth our own history” (Belkis Bueno, Bariva Indigenous Leader). These were some of the urgent actions identified by a group of 50 Venezuelan indigenous leaders that participated in an “Environmental Conflict Transformation and Interculturality Workshop” that took place in Puerto Ayacucho in October 2014 (Mirabal, 2015). Similar comments are heard throughout the region all the time as part of indigenous peoples’ wellbeing agendas (Buen Vivir) (Huanacuni 2010).

Some indigenous people are making important progress reconstructing their past as part of the development of their own “Life Plans” (Planes de Vida) (Cabildo de Guambia 1994; COINPA 2008; Jansasoy & Perez-Vera 2006; Roroimokok Damuk 2010, Espinosa 2014). A Plan de Vida is a plan made by indigenous organizations and communities in an effort to survive and to maintain traditions, customs, and the hope of establishing a society with its own identity based on the traditional knowledge of its people. It is a way to guaranty better conditions and a better quality of life for indigenous communities (Perez 2009). Yet, the construction of Life Plans is not a linear or conflict free process. They can be difficult to develop due to frequent tensions between community fractions that often have different and conflicting value systems and views about what local well being should be (Rodriguez 2016). Something similar happens with the formalization of territorial rights, which often generates new conflicts at community level due to clashing notions of authority (Larson et al 2015), among others. Many of these tensions are often associated with market dynamics, which create social disassociation and weakening of community and intercommunity rules, making it all the more difficult to develop a common or shared view of well being or to consolidate the territorial autonomy agenda.

Here we discuss how “participatory video” (PV) can help with indigenous peoples’ needs for cultural reassertion as well as with creating opportunities for restoring environmental justice in their territories when community-based natural resource management and autonomous development themselves have become issues of local contention.

The story we share is the one of the Monkox people of Lomerio, Bolivia, who recently started using video cameras to reconstruct the struggle for land rights in their territory and to document tensions around community forestry management as part of a participatory research project with the Universidad NUR from Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and the School of International Development (DEV) from the University of East Anglia (UEA). As we will see, participatory videos can have great power as part of an activist and practise based approach for environmental justice research.

### **The use of participatory videos in research**

Participatory videos are part of a new global trend in action research (Shaw & Robertson 1997, White 2003). As video production has become increasingly easy to use by the general public, many facilitators and researchers are using it worldwide in different settings as part of research approaches that seeks to promote social change.

According to Tamara Plush (2012), participatory videos share three features with action research:

- Awareness raising and knowledge: participatory video as a medium for raising awareness about knowledge as power.
- Capacity building for action: strengthening social actors in the use of videos at community level with the objective of generating knowledge in a participatory manner within a long term framing.
- People centered: using videos as a strategy to communicate the knowledge generated by communities and to influence policy making at a global, national and local level.

Additionally, on a similar trend to other media based action research methods of Latin American origin like “the Theater of the Oppressed” (Boal 1993), participatory videos are known for their potential for stimulating local reflexivity and building communication as part of a wider research agenda. As suggested by Kolb (1984), action research involves repeated cycles of activity followed by reflection on that action, with the purpose of improving some aspect of the social world. In this sense, participatory video can be conceptualized as an emergent interactive process, involving iterative cycles of learning in this action research tradition, rather than a way of producing research output. Therefore, the research interactions that evolve are better perceived as akin to the ongoing conversation of ethnography, which may contribute to a research report, rather than a way of collecting data such as interviews to be delivered on video (Shaw 2012).

Thus, the process of doing participatory videos and not just the product (the video) is perceived as having a great value both for research, assisting in the understanding of peoples’ views, choices, hidden narratives and power relations during the different phases of the video production, and for social change, due to the learning process and reflexivity that it triggers when local views, knowledge and marginalized voices are made visible and discussed collectively.

Due to its visual nature and ability to capture the voices of peoples and of marginalized groups, participatory video has the potential to educate, persuade and influence decision making in a way that can bring about positive change. In Latin America, there are interesting experiences where participatory videos are used with this aim in some intercultural research and programs in universities (e.g. the International Network of Intercultural Studies of the Universidad Católica from Peru (RIDEI-PUCP) <http://red.pucp.edu.pe/ridei/sobre-ridei/presentacion/>). Participatory videos have proven to be a valuable tool promoting intergenerational dialogue, making social, economic and education inequities visible and helping to revalue and recover local knowledge, practices and identities (see for example Sandoval 2015). This method is also increasingly used in the region as a tool for social mobilization and awareness-raising about environmental injustices associated with

development projects and extractive and industrial activities<sup>4</sup>. Yet, its use in environmental justice research, such as to help to uncover the complexities of social exclusion in community led natural resource management, seems to be in its infancy.

In the following paragraphs, we discuss a case in which participatory video has helped to shed light to different dimensions of environmental (in)justice (procedure, distribution and recognition) in community forest management while helping to revitalize local identities and develop a sense of restorative justice.

### **Introducing the Monkox people of Lomerio, Bolivia**

The communal indigenous territory (TCO) of Lomerio is an area of 256,000 hectares located in the department of Santa Cruz, in the lowlands of Bolivia, legally owned and managed by the Monkox indigenous peoples since 2006.

In 2009, after a process of intense political mobilizations, Bolivia changed its national constitution to become a “Plurinational Nation-State” that acknowledges differentiated rights for indigenous peoples (Article 2). TCOs are legally owned indigenous territories that resulted from this intense period of mobilizations. There are currently 190 TCOs in Bolivia, covering 20.7 million hectares.

The TCO land distribution model has important implications for the management of common property resources such as forests, as it provides the legal framework for local control and property rights on natural resources for the use and management of forests through community forest management plans.

Thus, forestry marks the identity of the conquest for land in Lomerio, as developing a communal forestry model in the area was a strategy used by the Monkox People to gain property rights over the territory and control illegal logging in the area. Lomerio

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<sup>4</sup> Visit [http://www.newsreel.org/guides/Maquilapolis/MAQ\\_DiscussionGuide\\_Espanol.pdf](http://www.newsreel.org/guides/Maquilapolis/MAQ_DiscussionGuide_Espanol.pdf) for an example of the use of participatory video in a transnational campaign against maquila factories in Mexico. Also visit <http://revoluciontrespuntocero.com/cheran-keri-para-nosotros-aqui-en-el-pueblo-los-partidos-politicos-estan-muertos/> for an example of a community television project in Cheran, Mexico, where participatory videos are used as part of a wider communication strategy of strengthening local identity, autonomy and territorial control. For a series of 15 participatory videos developed in Peru against mega mining visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL93OHxUTEQ&index=2&list=PLokUKtHRc9TibkfbjT5b-7Q6Y7ntXg8l>

is the first case of forest certification in Bolivia through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The Lomerianos are also known as one of the first indigenous peoples in Bolivia to fight for territorial indigenous autonomy. Currently, all villages in Lomerio are trying to establish a market-oriented forestry management model under local control. There are a total of 23 communities in Lomerio that have set aside areas for this kind of management.

Despite the success in obtaining territorial property rights and the existence of a communal forestry model, the collective management of this vast territory is complex due to the diversity of actors and public policies pressuring for access and use of its rich natural resources. Public policies to support community resource management models are still weak. There is also an increasing pressure from external informal mining cooperatives to exploit the territory. Additionally, the national government is incentivizing cattle grazing projects in the communities, which could create a large scale land conversion process in the area in the coming years.

CICOL, the Indigenous Organization of the Native Communities of Lomerio, the legal authority over the territory, is experiencing great difficulty to regulate resources management in the area. Some communities enter into very unfavorable negotiations with timber companies without following CICOL recommendations. The government on its side is promoting mining and incentivizing cattle grazing without undergoing free, prior and informed consent procedures or involving CICOL in local territorial planning. What is perhaps more worrying to the Monkox leaders and elders is that despite the success in obtaining legal rights over their territories, the younger Monkox generations are oblivious of how the conquest of the land took place and know very little about their own history. The Monkox elders and leaders feel an urgent need to help remember the past, in order to revitalise their identity, and have a clear view of a desired future among the younger generations.

## Making participatory videos on environmental justice in Lomerio

In 2013, CICOL started a research partnership with Universidad NUR from Santa Cruz and the School of International Development (DEV) at the University of East Anglia (UEA) to carry out the “Conservation, Justice and Markets Project” (CJM).

Participatory videos were used in conjunction with other ethnographic methods, such as interviews, participant observation and secondary data collection, as a tool to examine local notions of environmental (in)justice in community forestry and to help give public visibility to environmental justice concerns. CICOL chose four of its members (three young women and a member of the council of elders) to work as community researchers in the project for a year, hand-in-hand with two external researchers/facilitators (the authors of this paper).

Participatory videos were made entirely by village members through a process that involved:

- Learning by practicing: overcoming the fear of cameras through games.
- Participatory analysis (through the use of a variety of participatory assessment tools used to help creating the story (e.g. time lines, community mapping, problem trees, Venn diagrams, thematic pictures).
- Creating a story line.
- Filming, screening and editing.

The realization of each video took approximately 10 days, excluding the time to fine-tune the editing. This final editing process generally takes longer, depending on the type of support images community members wish to include in the video, and normally requires external support due to the equipment and software needed.

Three participatory videos were made. The first one, titled “On the road to freedom: the History of the Monkox People”, focuses on reconstructing the long struggle of the Monkox people of Lomerio to obtain territorial rights over their lands. It was carried out by a team of 10 people from CICOL. The remaining two videos, titled “The forest is our life, our home” and “Our forest, our development”, were carried

out by community members from two small villages (Todos Santos and Santo Rosario respectively) and focus on experiences of (in)justice in community forest management.

The final versions of the video have been shown and discussed in general and with community assemblies, and are being used by CICOL as a dissemination tool in meetings with other Bolivian indigenous peoples related to claims for territorial autonomy. They have also been posted in YouTube for their wider dissemination.

### **What environmental injustices did the videos reveal?**

The making of the videos as well as their stories revealed significant feelings of injustice in community forest management at different levels and over different issues.

As mentioned before one of the biggest concerns of many Monkox leaders and elders is that current young generations do not value the heritage they have received from those who fought for a very long time to obtain legal rights over their territories and natural resources. They perceive that younger generations are responsible for a generalized lack of local governance in community forest management and worse of all that they are being left out from benefit sharing from community forestry. These concerns were captured in the initial exploratory interviews, which as we shall see bellow, were brought out to the open in the forestry videos:

“Now that we have a joint title, people don’t want to respect the other communities. Before, people didn’t use to go through or carry out activities in the territory of other communities without seeking permission from the community authorities. Now, they don’t respect, they go through as if they were the owners, there is none of that common respect. What will it be like later? You will have to think about what you are going to do with your children [talking to the community researchers]. You have to educate them so that they don’t lose their culture”. (Interview with Domingo Tubari Soquere)

“We gave a good fight, we won our battle with the State, but with time, this has created problems. The younger generations now manage our heritage. We ended

up working for them, but it should not be like that. Those who fought for what we have should be the first to benefit, then the others. It's important that the young ones know how much it cost us to have what we have. But as they have no idea, they don't care. And we, who struggled to obtain what we have, suffer when only some people benefit. The community, those of us who are the absolute owners, have not benefited. We are still in battle..." (Group interview with José Chávez García, Juan Chuvé Soqueré, Santiago Peña)

It is with this concern in mind that the research team, in conjunction with CICOL's Board of Directors, decided to devote the first participatory video to reconstructing the long struggle for liberation and territorial rights in Lomerio. The first half of this video captures, through the living testimonies of the elders, the long history of oppression experienced by the Monkox ancestors since the establishment of Jesuit Missions in the Bolivian lowlands (17th century), followed by the rubber boom of the late 19th and 20th century, when the Monkox were brutally exploited as forced laborers on plantations. Elders describe their own parents as having been slaves and subject to exploitation by large landowners, which continued into the late 20th century, even after they had escaped the mission towns and (re)established in their territory. The second half of the video recounts the process of liberation experienced by the Monkox people in this last century, as initiated first through the agrarian and education reforms in the late 1950s and more recently since the 1990s through new legislation and structural political reforms that acknowledge indigenous peoples' differentiated rights, including among others, property rights to their collective territories through new figures like the TCOs. In this latter part of the video, attention is paid to explaining the contribution that the lowland indigenous movements, including CICOL, had in making these political reforms possible. The video production team also devoted considerable time to reconstructing the different processes that CICOL had to undergo to obtain the territorial rights for the Lomerio TCO.

The forest videos focus on exposing injustices related to community forest management and use. In both cases, the story lines emphasize situations of injustice as perpetuated by actors outside of the TCO. The two main concerns relate to



inequitable negotiations with the external timber companies or intermediaries when selling their timber, and regulations from the central government in forestry management. The latter weakens local control on the activity and subjects villagers to significant fines when forestry procedures are not correctly followed. In one of the communities where the research project was based (Santo Rosario), the village was charged a 10.000 US\$ fine by the Bolivian Forestry Agency (ABT) for not complying with forestry regulations when carrying out its forest management plan. The feeling of injustice behind this huge fine is expressed very strongly in the Santa Rosario Forest Video.

Yet, interestingly, the making of the PVs also helped to air internal frictions in forestry management, giving a voice to marginalized community groups to express their justice claims, in particular elders and to a lesser extent, women. Elders vocalized a strong resentment for being excluded from local forestry management. A major source of tension concerns the monetization of forests, leading to some opposing forestry activities altogether. Many of them claim that the TCO was created for protecting the forests and not for finishing them off. Others however, base their claim on the fact that they do not receive any monetary benefit out of the exploitation of forests, as observed in the following extracts from the participatory videos:

Video 1 (Todo Santos) Mr. Anacleto, what benefits have you perceived as representative of the village elders from participatory forest management plan?

Well, in the last plan, I was promised 5,000 Bolivianos, but until now I have received nothing, I don't know why. In this new plan, I hope they can think as brothers, that they don't act so selfishly among brothers and neighbors ... Hopefully in this new plan we will be able to see this money, or whatever there is to share, because I need to buy things to improve my house. It is only fair that everybody benefits from that money. So that our children and those that are to come can also benefit, because the wood might run out, and then there will be no more to share.

Video 2 (Abuelo Jacinto, Santa Rosario) In the first management plan I didn't understand anything because I was not taken into account. That's what happened. But I always attended the meetings. In the second plan I have attended 4 meetings. It was clearer. The engineer came and explained everything. He said that everybody was going to benefit. Then, the young ones received motorcycles, but nobody told me anything else. Everybody has kept very quiet. The people from Santa Rita asked

me, have you received anything? And I said, nothing. I don't know anything, I said. In Santa Rita and San Simon, they have all benefited, but in Santa Rosario, nothing!

These and other similar claims were made during the PV training activities and also as off-camera comments during the filming of the videos, and in the case of Todo Santos, as part of the video story line. Women on their part, although less vocal than elders, had their own preferences for benefit distribution from forestry activities that have not been taken into account so far. These included buying mills to grind corn for making chicha and peeling rice, buying a communal truck to transport agriculture crops and setting up a plant nursery to grow tree seedlings to replace those that are felled for commercial purposes. These views were expressed during the exploration of environmental justice issues in the video training activities and were included as part of the story line in the two videos.

All these claims touch upon different justice dimensions. They clearly address the issue of distribution, as elders' and women's needs are not being represented in the way income distribution is taking place. So far, in both communities, young men and some families seem to be getting the bigger share out of commercial forestry. The inequitable distribution of benefits being experienced by elders and women also touches upon procedural justice. Although decisions about income distribution are taken in community assemblies, elders seem to have little opportunity to meaningfully participate as they are no longer active participants in the forestry sector and therefore viewed by the wider community as 'unproductive.' Instead, it is assumed that benefits will trickle down to them through benefits perceived by their children and grandchildren. Both claims are in contradiction with the principle of equitable distribution of common resources, which should guide community life in Lomerio and which commonly plays an important part in indigenous peoples' value systems:

With regards to benefit distribution, we respect the **community's** decisions, because we believe that communities have communal principles, which gives them sovereignty over their decisions. In their assemblies they must decide how to invest their income. We know communities invest in the needs that they prioritize. Some for instance have decided to invest in house furniture, transport units and others in home infrastructure improvements. Communities do this as part of the principles

of equitable distribution, where by all should benefit on equal terms. Thus, we always appeal to this principle, of collective benefit, of social communal benefit, and also to the principle consensual decision making through our customary decision making institutions, which are the assemblies. (General Chief of CICOL, Anacleto Peña, Santo Rosario video).

Despite elders' distributive concerns, the core of their complaint stems from an issue of recognition. Not only are they claiming rights to a common resource by appealing to equitable distribution communal values, but they are also demanding public acknowledgement of the key historical role they have played in the consolidation of existing communities and current forest management and territorial rights.

Although the justice claims expressed in the Lomerio videos largely placed the blame of the injustices in disrespect to community procedures and values, such injustices must be understood as part of a wider and complex process triggered by forestry becoming a market based economy. Similar processes of communal values erosion around equitable distribution of benefits from common resources have been reported in other parts of Bolivia where forestry activities have been strongly influenced by the market:

Our data shows that when indigenous communities are not pressured by timber companies or forestry concessions, they manage to carry out a satisfactory wood sawing activity without breaking basic rules of allocation of family benefits through the use and exploitation of communal forests. But when indigenous communities are pressured by timber companies or forestry concessions, wood sawing and distribution becomes a mechanism for social disassociation and weakening of community and intercommunity rules for forest use (Betancourt 2013).

### **The outcome of the process**

From what we have discussed above, it is clear that the Monkox People from Lomerio face big challenges in the management of their common property resources and their territory. The shift to a plurinational nation-state has with no doubt represented an improvement of their rights in society and general well being, but it has not solved all their problems. If anything, new challenges have emerged with the new structure

of territorial ownership, plus the pressures from the market remain more or less the same as with the mono-cultural nation-state model. This is coupled by the facts that public policies still provide little support to common property natural resource management and that younger generations are subject to strong cultural changes which create tensions with traditional value systems and governance rules.

Reflecting collectively about this context and the challenges involved in achieving a just and sustainable management of their territory has been an important contribution of the research process to the Monkox people. Participatory videos have helped make this process of self-reflection possible, with important concrete outcomes.

First, participatory videos have had a great value bringing about a sense of restorative justice among the Monkox through creating their own (public) narrative of their history and of “wrongs” in community forestry.

The history video in particular has been valuable strengthening the self-esteem and dignity of the Lomerianos, particularly of the CICOL members, who found a way of making their story of struggle for liberation and indigenous rights known to the younger generations and the general public. Recounting and making public the long and arduous process behind gaining territorial rights has been important for CICOL’s legitimacy as territorial authority of the TCO. Most importantly, as said by the General Chief of CICOL, Anacleto Peña, “for the first time we are the protagonist of our own history, and we have been able to tell the story ourselves, not someone from the outside. That is why ‘we’ are the narrators and not some external person talking about ‘them’”.

The videos also helped giving visibility and public recognition to community fractions (elders, women) that are being excluded from forestry benefit distribution, with the elders being particularly successful in making their views heard and taken into account. For instance, in the Santa Rosario video, the elders’ claims for more benefit sharing from forestry were included as part of the story line. In contrast, in the Todos Santos video, the group decided to emphasize in the story line the

important role that the elders have played historically in developing the first community forest management plans and consolidating the TCO territory.

Most significantly, as a result of the PV process, the Chief General of CICOL who participated in the production of the three videos, decided to make a public pronouncement in support of the elders, which was included in the Santa Rosario Video. The pronouncement reads as follows:

We request all communities that benefit from commercial forestry to take into account the need to support the elderly, because it is this sector of the adult community who struggled and gave their lives for the consolidation of our communal lands. They are the ones that made it possible for us to have legal rights over our lands and that this is now a TCO. Thus, this pronouncement is requesting that all those community members that are currently fit for work and form part of the active population, consider giving a just percentage of the economic resources generated by forestry activities to the elderly, so that they feel satisfied and are compensated for all the effort that they invested in the foundation of our villages. This is a request from CICOL and the technical team that has been reconstructing this history.

The videos also triggered a process of critical reflexion about how to overcome asymmetries in their relationship with the timber market and the Bolivian Forestry Agency (ABT) in community forestry. Some of the suggestions made in the public screenings of the forest videos to ensure better prices when doing business with timber companies was agreeing on common prices among all villages to sell the timber, paying more attention to having a proper contract and finding more about the business ethics and trajectories of buyers before selling timber.

On a different level, the experience of participatory video and their mobilizing potential within the community has prompted CICOL to start using participatory videos as an education tool in schools to revitalize and document knowledge and skills of the communities in their everyday life as present in their oral history, language, practices and relationship with nature. As the Monkox people are predominantly an oral culture, they require tools like the videos to document their knowledge and cultural heritage. The new Bolivian education model integrates the communities into the schooling system, which opens opportunities for the whole

community to be involved in the systematization of their knowledge and skills in order to strengthen local culture and identity. Videos can be a very useful resource in this process. Due to its accessibility, it is a tool that can be used by any community member regardless of his/her level of education, allowing to rescue the voices and different histories of elders, women and youth, thus decolonizing knowledge (Quijano 2000). These local experiences can be shared with other communities, indigenous peoples, public policy makers and officials, and the "scientific community" at different levels: local, national and global, potentially playing a role in the construction of intercultural dialogues.

Additional to the value that participatory videos have had to the Monkox people from Lomerio, it stands out from this experience that they are also a powerful tool for the co-production of knowledge in research. Participatory videos:

- Help build trust and collaboration very quickly
- Cede control of research to community (they are a way of democratising science)
- Are a fun and dynamic way to co-produce knowledge
- Create a final product that is accessible to oral cultures
- Make the co-construction of knowledge of great local relevance and significance
- Allow external researchers to learn and examine aspects of the social reality that are often hidden or invisible to outsiders.

Thus, not only indigenous people and local communities but also the academic community can benefit greatly from its use. In environmental justice research, in particular, they proved to be very useful for unpacking different justice claims in territorial and forest management and for understanding the different dimensions of justice that these claims allude to.

Links to the Lomerio participatory videos can be found here:

On the Road to Freedom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdeWZXFqcWQ>

“Our forest, our development” (Santo Rosario Community)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTB1gbx3wkQ>

“The forest is our life, our home” (Todos Santos Community)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuUzTfFH6fM>

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ALBERTO ACOSTA<sup>1</sup>

## Post-Growth and Post-Extractivism: Two Sides of the Same Cultural Transformation<sup>2</sup>

Marx said that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps things are very different. It may be that revolutions are the act by which the human race travelling in the train applies the emergency brake.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

Mainstream thinking – embedded within capitalist globalisation – leads us to accept the impossibility to imagine an economy that does not promote growth, as much as a world without oil, mining and agribusiness is impossible. Within this mainstream thinking, we can find people from every political stance, from neoliberals to socialists.

Reality, however, is that we must overcome such views, that is the great task of this moment. On the one hand, we must rethink the question of economic growth, and free ourselves from its shackles before we enter into a global socio-environmental debacle with unforeseeable consequences. On the other, it is increasingly urgent to move from an extractivist perspective focused on the demands of capital, towards a

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view that prioritises a dignified life to its fullest extent and enables the construction of structurally democratic societies. This task puts the capacity of critical thinking to test, as well as the capacities of our societies, states, and that of social and political organisations to engage in innovative and creative thinking.

Closing the door to this debate would entail closing the door on democracy itself.

### **Economic growth, a dead end**

For much of the planet's human inhabitants it is very difficult to imagine an economy without growth. They are even unable to imagine a society without economic growth. Therefore, without going into further analysis of what really happens in each case, countries with high rates of growth are touted as successes, such as China or Peru. In these cases, they are successful only because they have had significant rates of economic growth for a substantial period of time. The Chinese case is particularly significant to the extent that China has already become the world's largest economy, measured in GDP terms. But it is important to question whether these countries have actually achieved development. This question can be extended to major industrialised countries, where we also find "mal-development" (Tortosa 2011).

Even some Marxist perspectives assert – without hesitation – that growth cannot be stopped. That would lead, they say, to stopping the evolution of productive forces which – from their point of view – are the basis for the development of civilisation. It is these same forces which, eventually, through adequate control and distribution schemes, will solve all our problems.

It is wearily repeated that we should grow – a concept that is often confused with accumulating money – to be able to address the issue of poverty, to technologically develop, and even to solve environmental problems caused by growth itself.

A true conceptual gibberish dominates the debate.

### The environmental limits of economic growth

In environmental terms, the global emission limit of 400 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> has already been surpassed. The fact that we will never return to a lower figure, and its already detrimental effects are a clear warning of the dangers of continuing down the same path. Endless material growth could culminate in a collective suicide.

The environmental effects of economic growth, driven by the demands of capital, are obvious: it is sufficient to consider the impacts of increased atmosphere warming, the deterioration of the ozone layer, the loss of fresh water sources and wild biodiversity, agricultural erosion, the high level of nitrogen in the atmosphere, the soil degradation or the accelerated disappearance of the living spaces of local communities. Therefore, Eduardo Gudynas (2009) is right when he concludes that there is no future in the mechanistic and endless accumulation of material goods, ensconced in the indiscriminate and growing exploitation of Nature. Furthermore, this process has not led or will lead to development – quite the opposite.

Consequently, what do the economy and the society of growth represent should be urgently examined. There is a kind of obsession regarding economic growth, as Herman Daly (1989) stated in 1971. Earlier, this same economist, in line with the thinking of Nicholas Georgescu Roegen, of Romanian origin and the great pioneer of ecological economics, anticipated threats in the making. He therefore concluded on the need to contemplate an economic slowdown or de-growth, as growth constitutes a kind of *harakiri* for humanity. He said, "the most desirable state is not an unchanging state but a state in de-growth. Undoubtedly, this growth must cease or, indeed, change sign" (Daly 1971). Kenneth Boulding (1966), an economist who saw the Earth as a spaceship – also in line with Georgescu-Roegen – is credited for claiming that "anyone who believes that exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."

However, at certain times, to assume these biophysical limits, as warned by the Club of Rome Report in 1972 (Meadows 1972), was seen as part of an imperialist proposal. Its real intention, according to some critics, was to limit the possibility of

development for countries in the global South. Even the particular thesis of the right to development emerged then, which today is used, for example, by China.

The key point to question the continued growth of the economy focuses on the fact that Nature has limits economies must not exceed. Climate change, especially due to the overconsumption of energy and the transformation of land use, provides undeniable evidence. Meanwhile, mainstream thinking, functional to capital accumulation, limits itself to reflect and propose the transformation of "environmental goods and services" into tradable commodities, through the endowment of property rights over these functions. Others rely with blind faith on technological progress. This situation can be understood as the generalisation of a selfish and short-sighted behaviour, unable to recognise that a resource has a limit or threshold before collapsing, while also ignoring the inherent constraints of technologies.

The critical position expressed here does not reflect a conservative view on the idea of progress, but questions its meaning. Modern technology is subsumed to the process of valuation, which makes it harmful in many ways. But perhaps the problem is deeper and involves questioning the meaning of what is human at a time when barbarism appears to be approaching, as Rosa Luxemburg warned. From that perspective, in order to have a different kind of technique, it is necessary to transform the conditions of social production. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the so-called "rebound effect", which is reflected in the increase in consumption as a result of efficiency gains.

Now, when the limits of the world's sustainability are literally being surpassed, it is essential to build environmental solutions seen as a universal task. A reference framework could be established, in conjunction with the proposal for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature, to give depth to this task that falls to all humankind.

## The economic and social limits of economic growth

It is imperative to rescue the classic reflections of development thinkers such as Albert Hirschman, who in the late fifties stated that development economics must avoid borrowing from growth economics. As we have seen, this recommendation has not been adequately followed. People have continued to believe for decades that growth was synonymous with development. Somehow, that vision still prevails in broad sectors of society and in almost every government.[i]

However, the fact that economic growth is only a means, not an end, has been gradually making its way. Amartya Sen (1985), the only Nobel prize in economics that comes from an "underdeveloped" country, was very clear on this matter:

I believe the real limitations of traditional development economics arose not from the choice of means to the end of economic growth, but in the insufficient recognition that economic growth was no more than a means to some other objectives. (...) Not merely is it the case that economic growth is a means rather than an end, it is also the case that for some important ends it is not a very efficient means either. (Sen 1985).

We could go a bit further down this path and remember an economist and professor at Columbia University, Jagdish Bhagwati, who already in 1958 argued that growth could even be impoverishing growth (Bhagwati 1958). This has occurred in several occasions. When the rate of natural resource extraction and their export increases, looking to maximise income, the economy might grow, but the country can receive less income added to the loss in reserve of such resources.

This indicates that it is possible to grow and not achieve development, and that it is even possible to grow and to under-develop – a common experience in the impoverished world. How many countries have managed to sustain significant economic growth rates for relatively long periods? – only a few. And of those few, how many have actually developed? – even fewer. Moreover, to complicate things, it is well known that actually “mal-development” prevails even among those considered developed countries.

However, some argue that growth may be necessary in certain circumstances, especially to overcome critical gaps, for example in education and health. But that does not justify any type of growth. Manfred Max Neef was very clear on this. In an open letter to the Chilean Minister of Economy, in December 4, 2001, he wrote:

If for example, I dedicate myself to fully plunder a natural resource, my economy may grow, but at the expense of ending up poorer. In reality people do not realise the aberration of mainstream macroeconomics, which counts the loss of heritage as an increase in income. Behind all growth figures there is a human history and a natural history. If these stories are positive, growth is welcome, because it is preferable to grow poorly but to grow well, rather than to grow a lot but in bad conditions. [ii]

In rich countries, for example, having more and more material goods does not mean that there is greater happiness. Studies show how the growth of GDP per capita in the United States, for example, has been sustained in the past six decades, but happiness levels have not, rather, they have remained stable. The contributions of Jürgen Shuldt (2004), especially his book *Bonanza macroeconómica, malestar microeconómico*, explain well this line of thought.

Thus, we can state that economic growth, caused by the greed of capital, which engages in accumulation by production and speculation, occurs on the basis of growing structural inequality. Perhaps this also explains the high levels of frustration and unhappiness that exist in affluent societies. Widening the horizon, we observe the social inequality of the planet, so characteristic of capitalism. In this regard, the civilisation of inequality is a matter that occurs globally and even in economies considered to be successful.

It suffices to look at some of the figures on the unequal distribution of wealth in the world: the 85 richest people in the world have as much as the poorest half of the world population – 1.7 billion people according to a report by Oxfam (2014). This report also shows that 1% of the richest population owns almost half of the global wealth. Reviewing inequality figures in Germany, the country of the "inventors" of the much-touted social market economy, is equally sobering: in 2008, the richest

10% of the German population owned 53% of assets, while half of the population owned 1% (Der Spiegel 2014).

It follows then that the very organisation of the economy must change in profound ways. This is perhaps one of the biggest challenges. Economic growth, transformed into a fetish to which the world powers and large segments of the population pay homage, must be unmasked and disarmed. Something easy to say but hard to do without consensus and popular participation.

From that perspective, we must take into consideration all that is derived from these readings to realise the geophysical and socioeconomic boundaries of today's economy, and its engine, growth. It is alarming that, rather than seeking radical and profound solutions to the runaway train in which humanity travels, the deepening of essentially predatory practices continues. We will have to see if the redoubled effort to deepen the mercantilist logic of the so-called green economy – which continues to expand the frontier of colonisation on the planet, for example, with the carbon market – is the commercial response to environmental problems.

### **The post-growth debates**

Many renowned economists like Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, Kenneth Boulding, Herman Daly, Roefie Hueting, Enrique Leff, José Manuel Naredo and Joan Martínez Alier have demonstrated the limits of economic growth. Even Amartya Sen, who does not question the market or capitalism, speaks against economic growth when it is understood as synonymous to development.

Currently, there are increasing calls, especially in industrialised countries, for an economy that promotes not only a steady growth, but also *de-growth*.<sup>[iii]</sup>

It is appropriate to bring up again the ideas of Herman Daly, an economist who worked at the World Bank, and was categorically clear: the economy must be understood as a subset of the ecosystem. As things stand now, he argues that the economy works as an “idiotic machine”; that is, a machine that metabolises natural resources, processes them to exhaustion, and discards them by polluting. It must do this in order to operate. That is the logic of capitalist accumulation.



Therefore, Daly argues there are two clearly identified limits: the ecological catastrophe and the absolute saturation point. The first has already been discussed earlier in this paper. We should reflect on the second point and ask, why should we continue growing? There is no doubt that there are already many people, especially in the global North, which have saturated their ability to meet their needs with ever more material goods. Is there a future for this nonsense? These are fundamental questions.

Another notable economist, John Maynard Keynes (1930) addressed this issue. He posited that the absolute limit of saturation in terms of consumption would be reached by 2030.[iv] These and other considerations have raised, particularly in the global North, the urge to make way for a steady economic growth and, as soon as possible, a de-growth.

All these considerations about *de-growth* somehow find a precedent in the work of John Stuart Mill. The English economist anticipated in 1848, the year in which the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was published, some foundational thoughts of what is now known as a stationary economy. Mill said:

While minds are coarse they require coarse stimuli, and let them have them. In the meantime, those who do not accept the present very early stage of human improvement as its ultimate type, may be excused for being comparatively indifferent to the kind of economical progress which excites the congratulations of ordinary politicians; the mere increase of production and accumulation. (...) I know not why it should be matter of congratulation that persons who are already richer than any one needs to be, should have doubled their means of consuming things which give little or no pleasure except as representative of wealth (...) It is only in the backward countries of the world that increased production is still an important object: in those most advanced, what is economically needed is a better distribution, of which one indispensable means is a stricter restraint on population. (...)

I cannot, therefore, regard the stationary state of capital and wealth with the unaffected aversion so generally manifested towards it by political economists of the old school. I am inclined to believe that it would be, on the whole, a very considerable

improvement on our present condition. I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress. (...) the best state for human nature is that in which, while no one is poor, no one desires to be richer, nor has any reason to fear being thrust back by the efforts of others to push themselves forward. (Mill 1848).

Today, one of the most renowned Latin American thinkers, Enrique Leff, recommends transitioning to another form of organisation for production and society. Assuming these challenges, he questions and proposes:

How to deactivate the growth of a process that has embedded in its original structure and in its genetic code an engine that drives it to grow or die? How to carry out this purpose without generating an economic recession with social and environmental impacts of a global and planetary scope? [...]. This leads to a strategy of deconstruction and reconstruction, not to blow up the system, but to re-organise production, to disengage the gears of market mechanisms, to restore the threshed material for recycling and rearrange new ecological cycles. In this sense, the construction of an environmental rationality capable to deconstruct the economic rationality implies processes of re-appropriation of Nature and re-territorialisation of cultures (Leff 2008).

Rising to this challenge is an increasingly pressing issue in industrialised countries, the main parties responsible for the global environmental debacle. It is not that poor countries should maintain their poverty and misery for the rich countries to keep their unsustainable living standards. Absolutely not. Instead, what should be noted in the South is to not attempt to replicate lifestyles that are socially and ecologically unsustainable.

It is, therefore, equally urgent to responsibly address the issue of economic growth in "underdeveloped" countries; thus, initially, it is at least appropriate to distinguish "good" growth from the "bad" one. Growth that, as previously referred to in the

letter from Max Neef, is defined by the corresponding natural and social histories left behind, as well as for the future that this growth can anticipate.

On the one hand, structurally impoverished and excluded countries should seek options for a dignified and sustainable life, one that does not constitute a caricatured reproduction of the Western lifestyle. While on the other hand, "developed" countries will have to resolve the growing problems of international inequality they have caused and, in particular, will have to incorporate criteria of sufficiency in their societies rather than trying to argue at the expense of the rest of Humanity the logic of efficiency understood as a process of permanent material accumulation.

Rich countries must, in sum, change their lifestyle, which threatens the world's ecological balance, because, from this perspective they also are, somehow, underdeveloped or "mal-developed" (Tortosa 2011). To achieve this change, they will have to retrace much of the journey, backtracking on a growth that cannot be replicated at a global level. At the same time, they must assume their responsibility to make way for a global restoration of the social and environmental damage caused; in other words, they must pay their ecological and historical debts.

To revisit the essence of economic growth appears, then, as an indispensable task. What should be asked is whether there are ways of developing productive forces that can move in another direction. For now, what is clear is that the destruction that produces economic growth in the form of capitalist accumulation is effectively leading to a dead end. An alternative development should involve, undoubtedly, a different economic logic. This new economy must be rethought by designing and implementing alternatives with a holistic and systemic vision, in line with Human Rights and the Rights of Nature.

The conclusion reached is that growth cannot be the engine of the economy, much less its ultimate goal. It is urgent to discuss de-growth in a serious and responsible manner in the global North (stationary growth is not enough), while simultaneously pursuing post-extractivism in the global South.

## Overcoming the colonial boundaries of extractivism

Extractivism is a form of accumulation that began to emerge five hundred years ago. It is a category that allows us to explain the colonial and post-colonial looting, accumulation, concentration, destruction and devastation, as well as the evolution of capitalism to its current form. Development and underdevelopment are items to be understood within this context.

With the conquest and colonisation of America, Africa and Asia, the world's economy began to gain a capitalist structure. As one of the foundational elements of capitalist civilisation, extractive accumulation was developed and consolidated, driven by the demands of the metropolitan centres of this nascent capitalism. Some regions specialised in the extraction and production of raw materials (i.e. primary goods) while others assumed the role of producers of manufactured goods, generally using the natural resources of poor or impoverished countries. The first export Nature; the latter, mostly, transform it to export finished goods.

Extractivism[v], since then, has been a constant in many countries of the global South. With varying degrees of intensity, extractivist practices pervade all Latin American countries. Talking about extractivism has become common in everyday discussions in these countries, following an increasingly brutal intervention by businesses driven by transnational interests. Extractivism is at the heart of the political discourse of various political tendencies, not only among those who ascribe to neo-liberalism, but also including those that distance themselves from it. A critical reading of these discourses and of their arguments is necessary to develop any alternative proposal.

It is, therefore, essential to know the meaning and scope of extractivism, its basis, foundations, and history. It is a complex endeavour because it is a practice that, in Latin America, has been the basis of the economy for hundreds of years and it has percolated its societies, which seem trapped within an extractive DNA.[vi]

The extractive visions of neoliberal governments should thus be debated, as well as those of progressive governments, which in practice deepen this mode of accumulation even if in their rhetoric they recognise the need for a transition. The

neo-extractivism of progressive governments puts forwards some valid points, such as a better state control over extractive activities and an increased participation in the mining or oil revenues. Yet it remains too close to a logic of accumulation deepening the dependent and underdeveloping dynamics of its colonial roots.

Overcoming extractivism and its colonial shackles is a fundamental condition to overcome underdevelopment. However, on the way out of an extractive economy, it will be necessary to continue such activities for some time. A well thought-out transition, firmly adopted by society, will be needed. It should become very clear that a solution to this complex dilemma of societies that are rich in natural resources yet remain cursed to an almost inevitable impoverishment will not be reached by maintaining or, worse, deepening extractivism.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider a key point: the immediate planned de-growth of extractivism (Acosta 2011):[vii] and in the same line, overcoming the very concept of development, giving way to alternatives to development as those proposed by the good living (“buen vivir”) or *sumak kawsay* (Gudynas and Acosta 2011; Acosta 2013; Unceta 2014).

This option would not deteriorate Nature any further and would undermine deeply unequal social structures. The success of such strategies in creating a social, economic, cultural, ecological transition depends on their consistency and on the degree of social support and the weight they have.

### **Post growth and post extractivism, a shared discussion**

It follows from the discussion above that humanity is urged to debate in a serious and responsible manner the urgent economic slowdown in the global North. This, as noted above, must necessarily come in hand with post-extractivism in the global South, where we will also have to question the growth strategies implemented so far.

This demand does not imply in any way to deny the issue of inequalities and social inequities. Quite the opposite. It demands – following the reflections of Enrique Leff (2008) – a strategy of deconstruction and reconstruction, in order not to turn unliveable the life of human beings on the planet. It is necessary to reorganise

production, disengage the gears of market mechanisms (especially the world market), restore the matter used to recycle and rearrange it into new ecological cycles. It is also of urgency to dismantle the irrationality of speculation in all its forms. The world needs a socio-environmental rationality capable of deconstructing the present dominant economic rationality, to build processes of re-appropriation of nature and re-territorialisation of cultures.

Enrique Leff (2008) says that speaking of de-growth or stationary economy is not the core issue:

De-growth not only implies to downshifting or to de-linking from the economy. It is not equivalent to the de-materialisation of production, because that would not prevent the growing economy from continuing consuming and transforming nature to the point that it will exceed the planet's sustainability boundaries. Abstinence and frugality of some responsible consumers does not deactivate the growth-obsession installed at the root and soul of economic rationality, which carries inscribed the impulse to accumulation of capital, economies of scale, urban agglomeration, market globalisation and concentration of wealth. Jumping off the moving train does not directly lead to retrace the path. To de-growth it is not enough to get off the economy's wheel of fortune; it is not enough to want to shrink it and stop it. Beyond the rejection of the commodification of nature, it is necessary to deconstruct the economy.

It is not, according to Leff, a matter of only 'ecologising' the economy, the solution to growth is not only de-growth but also deconstruction and transition to a new economic rationality. The task is to question the modernizing thinking, science, technology and the institutions that have established modernity's "cage of rationality". This irreparably leads to raise post-growth ideas from a much broader perspective, not only economic but also social and political, without losing sight of the broader cultural dimension. We must leave the society of growth; that is the first point.

Given these challenges, it strongly surfaces the need to rethink sustainability in function of Nature's capacity of load and resilience. In other words, the task lies in

knowing the true dimensions of sustainability and assuming the capacity of Nature to tolerate disturbances that could not be subordinated to anthropocentric demands. This demand requires a new ethic to organise life itself. It is necessary to recognise that conventional development, sustained in economic growth, leads Humanity to a dead end. The limits of Nature, rapidly overflowed by anthropocentric life-styles, particularly exacerbated by the demands of capital accumulation, are increasingly noticeable and unsustainable.

The task seems simple, but it is extremely complex. Instead of maintaining a separation between Nature and human beings, we must facilitate their reencounter; something like trying to tie the Gordian knot of life, broken by the strength of an idea of social organisation that is predatory and, indeed, intolerable. Nature establishes the limits and scope of sustainability, and the ability of systems for their self-renewal, of which productive activities depend. That is, if Nature is destroyed, the base of the economy itself is destroyed.

To sum up, the economy must bring down the whole theoretical framework which, according to José Manuel Naredo (2009), emptied of any materiality the notion of production and completely separated economic reasoning from the physical world. That process meant the epistemological rupture that displaced the idea of economic system, with its carousel of production and growth, to the simple field of value.

This urges us to avoid actions that eliminate diversity, replacing them with uniformity. And it is exactly this that provokes mega-mining or monocultures, given that these uniformed activities, as recognised by Godofredo Stutzin (1984), "break equilibriums, producing even larger imbalances". And now, when the limits of sustainability in the world are being literally surpassed, it is essential to build universal environmental solutions.

On the other hand, if the economy has to subordinate itself to the mandates of the Earth, capital should be subdued to the demands of human society, which is part of Nature itself: human beings are Nature! This demands giving way to schemes of profound redistribution of wealth and power, as well as construction of societies founded in plural equities. Not only is the issue of class struggle at stake here,

meaning the capital-labour confrontation. It is the question of overcoming the concept of "race" as a structuring element of dependent societies where racism is one of the crudest manifestations of this dependency. It is an essential and urgent task to overcome patriarchy and sexism.

### **As a corollary**

Having more does not make people happier. From that perspective, it does not matter how many things a person produces in their life, but how the things they own help them have a better standard of living. This means we need to get over this dominant religion of economic growth, of endless accumulation of material goods and the logic of progress itself which has been around for long – maybe more than 500 years – nurturing the foundations of the capitalist economy.

This dilemma will not be resolved overnight. We must build – as Eduardo Gudynas recommends over and over – plural, clear and precise transitions from utopian horizons, such as good living or *sumak kawsay*, although it would be better to talk about *good coexistence*, as Xavier Albó suggests (2009).

Good living, as a proposal free of prejudices and under construction, opens the door to develop alternative visions of life with its assumptions of harmony with Nature, of reciprocity, relationality, complementarity and solidarity between individuals and communities, with its opposition to the concept of perpetual accumulation, and its return to use values. Without forgetting or even less so manipulating its ancestral origins, it can provide a platform to discuss, set up and implement responses to the devastating effects of climate change on a global level and the increasing marginalisation and social violence in the world. It can even contribute to proposing a paradigm shift in the middle of the crisis that is hitting many of once core countries. In that sense, the construction of good living, as part of deeply democratic processes, may be useful in finding even global answers to the challenges that humanity faces.

As it is easy to understand, questionings of that kind are beyond any instrumental correction of a development strategy and of continued economic growth. Development discourses that justify visions of domination and exclusion, of colonial



roots, can no longer be sustained. It is required a counter-discourse that subverts the dominant and its related practices of domination, while generating new rules and logics of action. Its success will depend on the capacity to think, propose, unfold, and even to show indignation – if that is the case – globally.

Consequently, good living or *sumak kawsay*, by opening the door to a transition towards a new civilisation, demands another economy. This will not emerge overnight and even less through the guidance of enlightened leaders. It is a construction that is patient and determined to dismantle several fetishisms and to foster radical changes, restoring the values, experiences and above all the existing practices in the Andean and Amazonian world, nurturing from those visions and experiences synchronised with the praxis of life in harmony and fulfilled life that are developed worldwide.

From the above, as a way to sum up, we can conclude on the need to consider the following:

It is evident that economic growth cannot be the goal of an economy proper of a civilisation other than a capitalist one. Moreover, for some chores it may even be counterproductive. We must accept that permanent economic growth in a finite world is crazy. We must dismantle, then, both the economy and the society of growth. Moreover, if we already accept that economic growth is not equivalent to development, even more so that should be valid for a determined construction of good living or *sumak kawsay*, which represents an alternative to development.

De-commodification of Nature, as part of a conscious reencounter with *Pachamama*, is a crucial issue. Plainly, the economy must subordinate to ecology. De-commodification of Nature will come hand in hand with the dematerialisation of production processes, oriented to a more efficient production, capable of using fewer resources. Economic objectives should be subject to the operational laws of natural systems, without losing sight of respect for human dignity and ensuring the quality of life for all people.

If we talk about de-commodification of Nature, this action should also be implemented with common goods, understood as those goods that belong, are of

usufruct or are consumed by a more or less extensive group of individuals or by society as a whole. These goods can be natural or social systems, tangible or intangible (Wikipedia, for example), different from each other, but common to be inherited or built collectively.

Decentralisation is another core aspect of another economy. In many areas, such as in food and energy sovereignty for example, answers-actions that are closer to people are required. This means that, from communities themselves, from their own territories (rural and urban) more accurate responses will have to be found; responses that often have already been present for a long time and that have not succumbed to the capitalist mandate. This action, as part of an exercise in cultural re-territorialisation, is guided towards recovering the protagonist role and control that the people, meaning, of communities, have in decision-making, to strengthen participation and local processes.

The equitable distribution of income and redistribution of wealth (including labour, which shall also be subject to a process of de-commodification) is a fundamental step towards the construction of another economy that will lean towards good living. If the economy must be subordinated to the mandates of the Earth, the economy (not just capital) has to be subdued to the demands of human society, which is not only part of Nature but is Nature itself. This requires a profound redistribution of wealth and power, as well as building societies founded on equality and in plural equities. As we have already said, the question of class struggle, meaning the capital-labour conflict, is not the only one at stake. At stake is also the effective overcoming of ethnic, social, economic, political, gender and intergenerational inequalities.

The democratisation of the economy, of an alternative economy, complements what was noted above. It is essential that decision-making in the economic field, at all levels, is increasingly participatory and deliberative. This implies ensuring the rights of both producers and consumers. The principles of communal social organisation should govern and go beyond of the economic, financial and conventional utilitarianism.

In sum, as part of a great transformation, which will have to be eminently cultural, we need a vision that overcomes the fetish of economic growth, that is conducive to the de-commodification of Nature and of common goods, the decentralisation and the change in production and consumption structures, the redistribution of wealth and power, as the basis for a strategy of collective and constant construction of another economy, essential for a different civilisation.

We aim therefore to an economy that will tend to the reproduction of life and not that of capital. This task implies local, national and international actions that require a future utopian horizon, but that equally demands short and medium term answers.

A central issue that should be considered will be that the vast majority of the population, systemically doomed to exclusion and even poverty, does not reflect on these problems. On the contrary, they aspire to permanently live with the same levels of consumption that the wealthier groups at global and national level, without asking whether it is possible or even convenient. We should remember that society, in the North and the South, is bombarded with messages that predispose it to mass consumption. It would even seem that marginalised individuals have had a consumer chip of high aspirations incorporated into their heads, but that they cannot achieve this consumption due to a lack of resources to finance them or because, if this were to occur, the global environmental problems would deepen.

In hand with consumerism comes wasteful spending of all kinds. For example, according to FAO, every year more than 1.3 billion tons of perfectly edible food is wasted: 670 million in the global North and 630 in the global South. These situations, aberrant from any point of view, are worsened as increasingly more agricultural land and vast resources of all kinds are destined to produce supplies for cars: biofuels, and not to meet human's food demand. That explains why, despite the undisputed technological advances, not even hunger has been eradicated from the planet, and this is not because of lack of food. That exists.

Humanity's great challenge is synthesised in how to democratically process a new way of organising the economy, recognizing the limits of Nature and ensuring a dignified life for all the inhabitants of the planet. In this endeavour we will also have to leave

behind the "civilisation of waste" as the economist Jürgen Schuldt (2013) appropriately defined the current situation.

We must achieve a great historical transformation and make the step from an anthropocentric conception to a (socio) bio-centric one, overcoming an economy inspired in growing tied to the accumulation of capital to one at the service of life. That is Humanity's great challenge, if we do not want to jeopardise the very existence of human beings on Earth.

From this perspective, we must consolidate and extend the validity of Human Rights and the Rights of Nature, seen as a starting point for the democratic construction of democratic societies, that is, to ensure greater and more effective citizen and community participation.

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JULIETTE ROGUET<sup>1</sup>

## Bricherismo in Peruvian touristic areas: the configuration of gender in asymmetrical and intercultural encounters<sup>2</sup>

San Blas, a major tourist district of Cusco, is a cosmopolitan area that gives visitors the opportunity to enact their own culture through the staging of an “authentic” Andean world. Cultural hybridity gives travellers the possibility of various interpretations and readings of local society. In these areas, we observe the convergence of manifold imaginaries, a dynamic shaking the following classical dichotomies: local/global, modernity/tradition or specific/universal. This district is also one of the most famous “hunting areas” of *Bricher@s*. In Cusco, a casual encounter between a traveller, who is looking for exoticism, and a young “Inca successor”, is not a mere coincidence. A *bricher@*, within the context of tourism, is a technician of seduction and a romantic expert in conquering travellers. While visiting Cusco or any touristic Peruvian city, foreigners often make amorous encounters with Andean lovers prepared to be their intimate travel guide. These “*gring@*hunters”, as they can be called, develop a folkloric “self”, constructed according to the representations of Peruvian exoticism. These encounters of seduction form a social interface in which cultural, socio-economic and sexual fantasies allow for a reading of complex power logics. In a context of tourism, western visitors’ relationships with

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<sup>2</sup> This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/7/15/bricherismo-in-peruvian-touristic-areas-the-configuration-of-gender-in-asymmetrical-and-intercultural-encounters> on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



local people synthesise social markers of difference and also discrimination process at the intersection between gender, sexuality, race and class.

*Bricherismo* is a phenomenon that appeared in Cusco during the 1970s, describing how Peruvian men and women seduce Western tourists so as to gain economic or symbolic benefits from them. The term “*brichero*” could be supposedly derived from the English word “bridge”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, these persons succeed in entering Northern countries throughout migrations, or/and obtain benefits from the cultural and economic capital of their partners while living in Peru. Members of this specific group use foreigners as a mean of transportation, a social elevator or a way to improve their symbolic capital. *Bricherismo* is a social phenomenon that covers a wide range of practices. Firstly, this phenomenon relates to an important period of migration during the Peruvian military conflict. In this period, touristic development was perceived as a way to escape the national crisis. Today, this practice has been diversified, and is present in the Peruvian collective imaginary, the term *brichero* forming part of the common language. Besides this term, most Quechua translations are characterised by sexual connotations like “*Q’uchiwato*”, “pig’s tail” or « *Saq’ra chisquete* », “evil water gun”. Obviously, those terms highlight the malicious intention of those individuals who take advantage of the traveller’s appetite for total-escape from his/her daily reality. Furthermore, these relationships also make sense for tourists, as an experience with a local people gives them access to the “Peruvian way of life” during their trip. *Bricheros* create a dynamic of exotic imaginaries at the interstice between their social and economic ambitions and the tourists’ desires in a narcissistic perception of the Other.

Ironically considered as an “erotic adventure tourism official guide”<sup>4</sup>, the *brichero* is an anti-hero, adulated and hated at the same time. A postmodern “*pendejo*”<sup>5</sup> in the vein of Don Juan. This social role is carried out by a complex and hierarchized group

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<sup>3</sup> Different speculations about the origin of the « *brichero* » term exist, one of the most widespread opinion is that *brichero* comes from the Spanish word « *hembra* » which means « woman ». Another interpretation of this term is that could be a derivation of the English word « *breeches* ».

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.blaconcho.net/>

<sup>5</sup> The « *pendejo* » term refers itself to the malicious and tricky anti-hero character, admired for his free lifestyle. Typical of the Latin-American world it takes his origins from the Mediterranean Europe.

of urban young individuals. In this article, the focus will be oriented toward a specific male subgroup of *bricheros* named “*waykis*”. This Quechua term stands for « brother of a man », which is used in a performative way with the purpose of manifesting their proximity with the renovated Andean culture and the Inca heritage. These individuals characterize themselves by forging an Indian identity, which can be real or reinvented, to seduce foreigners. The Inca fantasy is translated into some strategic behaviours in both the body and the speech. The Andean culture is mixed with a vast patchwork of new age elements. *Waykis* are part of the Neo-Indian nebula, concept developed by Molinié and Galinier<sup>6</sup> as a reconfiguration process of “tradition” in the light of a current system of representations; a hybrid combination of practices, symbols and beliefs that is emerging due to the impacts of globalization on Peruvian society. Cultural components identified as “native” or “exotic” are reinvented by a global and modern society to produce new structures, new objects and new practices<sup>7</sup>. The hybridity process generates an urban indigeneity adapted to the necessities of tourism. The *waykis* exemplify this phenomenon as they develop a “savage poetic”<sup>8</sup> made to satisfy travellers’ imagination.

The *brichero*’s “authentic” identity, carved upon the anxiety for exotic consumption, becomes a real job for those individuals, a way to subsist in their everyday lives. Identity constitutes for the *waykis* the main resource in the sentimental and mercantile conquest of foreigners. These individuals form their cultural and social being according to the coveted world’s fantasy. They produce, in a professional way, an exotic “self” that fits with traveller’s fantasies. In a mutual game of reflection, the representations of tourist behaviour influence this practice and reproduce a fancy of the Western world. *Bricherismo* transforms the radical otherness of the indigenous

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<sup>6</sup> Galinier, Jacques, Molinié, Antoinette, *Les néo-Indiens. Une religion du IIIe millénaire*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> García Canclini, Nestor, *Cultures hybrides. Stratégies pour entrer et sortir de la modernité*, Collection Americana, Presses de l’Université Laval, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Muller, Elise, « La poétique du « sauvage ». Une pratique du tatouage dans le monde contemporain. » Thèse de Doctorat en sociologie dirigée par David le Breton, Université de Strasbourg, 2012.

into a universalization of Andean particularisms, which represents the exaltation of the Inca utopia. Flores Galindo<sup>9</sup> developed a theory on the Andean utopia: the glorification of the Inca Empire and History serve each period of time through their manifestations of thought, which are suitable at the present time and adapted to the imaginaries. The “re invention of tradition”<sup>10</sup> developed in the *waykis* seduction strategies gives insight on issues related to touristic development.

The analysis of these encounters of alterity, within the context of seduction and in a touristic environment, gives us the possibility to reflect upon powerful relations between gender, race and class. How can femininities and masculinities be analysed in an intercultural context and asymmetrical socio-economic situations? The focus on seduction strategies gives the possibility to investigate gender staging in this specific context of cultural-mixing. The commercial exploitation of romance interrogates the lack of transcendence in post-modern societies. The encounter of fantasies allows us to study the complex identity process marked by domination logics.

### Voyage as a transition of identity: Thoughts on intersectionality in *Bricherismo*

In order to understand how *bricherismo* sheds light on the intersectional dynamic of social relationships, we have to focus on the specific context of tourism. Voyage transforms identities, and the relations of “transactional sexuality”<sup>11</sup> between local people and travellers reveal a broad spectrum of domination systems. Interactions occurring in this practice form part of “romance tourism”: a stereotypical sexualisation of the exotic Other. Consistent with the mutual representations, all aspects of tourist and *bricheròs* identities are consubstantial. Economic and cultural-

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<sup>9</sup> Flores Galindo, Alberto, *Buscando un Inca: identidad y utopía en los Andes*, Lima: Horizonte, 436 p, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983 (traduction française : *L'invention de la tradition*, trad. par Christine Vivier, Éditions Amsterdam, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Despres, Altair, « Au-delà du sexe et de l'argent. Transactions culturelles intimes en situation touristique à Zanzibar », Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Sciences Politiques, *Working Papers* n°4, 2015.

sexual exchanges within asymmetrical relationships translate a lived experience of domination. Power relations influence and reproduce themselves within the couple and through fantasies. Racial, cultural and social issues cannot be reflected upon separately, apart from sexuality and gender, within the particular context of identity transition that this kind of travel engages. According to Elsa Dorlin: “North/South antagonisms, national/nationalist mythologies, unresolved nodes of colonial history” need to be added to the analysis of the typical “sex, race, class”<sup>12</sup>.

Victor Vich<sup>13</sup> analyses the *brichero* as a metaphor for the globalisation of Peruvian society. In the author’s opinion, this social practice embodies consumption society throughout hegemonic powers in symbolic, mercantile and sentimental aspects. The assumed subversive appearance of the phenomenon is absorbed and submitted to this prevailing system. Sexual interactions and seduction typify relationships between people, especially in an intercultural context. Sexual behaviour and the imaginary of fantasies in a touristic context become indicators of inequalities. The foreigners’ outlook on local culture is part of a more global problematic related to their own way of life. The transgressive experimentation of an “authentic” culture might be a way for them to reassure their own status within Western developed societies. According to tourist statements<sup>14</sup>, visiting Peru reveals to them how lucky they are in their own country. Their Peruvian trip is considered as a way “to find themselves”.

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<sup>12</sup> Dorlin, Elsa, « Vers une épistémologie des résistances », p 11, in, Elsa Dorlin (Dir.), *Sexe, race, class, pour une épistémologie de la domination*, Actuel Marx Confrontation, PUF, Paris, 2009, pp. 5- 18.

<sup>13</sup> Vich, Victor, «La nación en venta: bricheros, turismo y mercado en el Perú contemporáneo», Cultura y Neoliberalismo. Grimson, Alejandro. CLACSO, *Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales*, Buenos Aires. 2007.[http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/grupos/grim\\_cult/Vich.pdf](http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/grupos/grim_cult/Vich.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Statements recorded during three long field-works in Cusco, Arequipa, Mancora and Lima, from 2012. I developed a qualitative methodology, specifically the “ground theory” of Glaser and Strauss. I collected data from structured and semi-structured interviews. I realised 32 interviews with 3 different groups of informants: *bricheros* assumed (14), Peruvian men and women directly and indirectly linked to *bricherismo* (8) and foreigner men and women who had an experience with a *brichero* (10). I also made a large number of participant and non-participant observations in strategical touristic places and in non-touristic *Waykis’ places*. In the last field-work (November 2015-May 2016), I employed a quantitative approach. I passed out questionnaires, the first previous test was realized on a sample of 200 tourists. The second sample was

Tourism supplies therapeutic benefits to the individuals who are looking for a break from their everyday life. It is a way to respond to frustrations like an overflow valve, offering a perspective of a new “universe of meanings”<sup>15</sup>. *Bricherismo* is closely linked to eco-friendly and ethno-tourism. Travelling means also penetrating the culture of the Other through a romantic crystallization of exotic societies. Individuals aspire to reconnect with archaic forms, as they are searching for intensity. This research for authenticity can be analysed as a cultural revalorization or a biased participation to “the prostitution of culture”. The “authenticity” of a touristic destination indicates a friendly alterity with a smooth change of scenery, which cannot be anxiety-provoking<sup>16</sup>. The encounter of the Other shows a reflection which refers itself to the identity of the external observer. Tourists cannot experiment a stressful experience of difference. *Waykis* reflect the reversed image of the tourist and the touristic Peru travellers seek to avoid. The experience of otherness allows them to consider the existence of “another possible world”. This traveller’s quest is analysed by local people; therefore, they propose an “alternative perspective” built in resonance with the Peruvian foreign imaginary. According to Rachid Amirou’s studies<sup>17</sup>, a voyage could be compared as a “rite of passage”, where people look for a self-emancipation and intimate revelations. Héloïse Lherété<sup>18</sup> says about travellers that they “swap dreams in exchange for souvenirs”. *Bricheros* are storytellers and dream catchers, they produce a mystical gallantry to fascinate foreigners. Stories related to Andean cosmivision, like Pachamama<sup>19</sup> or complementarity between masculinity and femininity, are often used as seduction strategies. Shamanism and spirituality using

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realized on 240 tourists. These surveys were accomplished in Lima and Cusco, February-May 2016, through random sampling in touristic places.

<sup>15</sup> Amirou, Rachid, *Imaginaire touristique et sociabilités du voyage*, Le sociologue, PUF, Paris, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>18</sup> Lherete, Héloïse, « L’imaginaire du voyage », p 50, *Sciences Humaines*, n°240, 2012-8, Paris, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> *Pachamama* could be translated as « mother earth ». It constitutes one of the most important deities of the Andean belief system. *Pachamama’s discourses or rituals are an important element of Neo-Indianism*.

sacred plants form part of the *wayk'*'s attractiveness. Traditional knowledge is not the point; their ability is to create fascination and to perform folklore.

The moment of the voyage and the specific dispositions of the lovers redefine power relations within the couple. Traveling is a transiting heterotopy; an ephemeral nonstandard space-time. This is a “non-lieu”<sup>20</sup> where tourists and *bricheros* experiment alterity to become an “Other” in a transition “from self to self”. This self-transition reframes the configuration of gender and cultural stereotypes.

### Reconfigured gender in an intercultural “non-lieu”<sup>21</sup>: What about power relations?

Travellers and *bricheros* can redefine their gender behaviour in a social space far from the dominant system of codes and standards. However, as Pruitt and Lafont’s<sup>22</sup> question in their study about romantic tourism in Jamaica, is it possible to talk about a women’s empowerment within the “*gringa*”<sup>23</sup> and *wayk'* couple because of their economic capital? How can we analyse inequalities and dominant relations that occur in these economic and cultural-sexual exchanges?

*Bricherismo* suggests that racialisation and gender relations are interdependent and that they can vary according to the social context. Within the practice of *bricherismo*, power relations are extremely ambiguous. Complying with different postures and variations of economic, cultural and symbolic capitals of the individuals, relations of domination are likely to reproduce or reverse themselves. Besides economic purposes, *bricheros* seduce Western white women because of a fancy based on a racial and

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<sup>20</sup> Augé, Marc, *Non-lieux, Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> The “non-lieu” “is “a space that cannot be defined either as an identity, a relational or a historical space”. They are “solitary individuality”, “passage, provisional and ephemeral” spaces. They are unprecedented dimensions’ places of « over-modernity » hard to apprehend. Areas of “the practice of everyday life”, tinkered spaces where we tinker. These places are characterized themselves by non-standard temporality, relationships, relation to the space and norms.

<sup>22</sup> Pruitt, Deborah, Lafont, Suzanne, « For love and money, romance tourism in Jamaica », *Annals of tourism research* 22, no 4:267-282, 1999.

<sup>23</sup> The term « *gringa/gringo* » forms part of the common Peruvian parlance. It mostly refers to every foreigner characterized by a “Caucasian physical”. This word is also use to describe Peruvian people with bright skin, eyes and hair.

cultural hierarchical system. The conquest of a tourist brings variations in the symbolic power game. The body of the “superior” Other is conquered by a strategical manipulation that indicates a submission of *wayki*'s body to the dominant aesthetical patterns in an idealisation of the Western world. In a *bricherismo* relationship, the occidental woman shifts continually between dominated and dominant position. She is at the same time object of fascination and object of mistrust. At the specific moment of travelling, the non-standard gender behaviours of women participate to build a stereotype of wanton women and easy girls. This representation develops a possibility: the accessible fantasy of white woman for a “native”.

The amorous conquest of the tourist allows a symbolic participation to the idealised “first world,” and, at the same time, contributes to a revalorization of particularisms using an alternative discourse. The romantic commodification of *Bricherismo* illustrates a hegemonic system of thoughts and also the creative capacity of individuals to overturn stigmas. The voyage implies an identity transition that is disrupting the normal course of events. The excitement of passions transforms female tourists as “*gringas*” looking for transgression. This experimentation of identity produces a fantasy of the white woman that changes itself into the hyper-sexualized *gringa* stereotype. The research of individual emancipation boosts foreigners’ “sexoticism”<sup>24</sup>: the experimentation of exoticism through sexual behaviour generating, as a result, the *brichero*'s strategy of folklorization and Neo-Indianism. The woman's body is not an end, it is a mean: once “captured”, the relationship brings benefits. Tactics do not oust feelings and the relationship does not prevent selfish calculations.

The masculinity of the *wayki* depends on the ambiguity of the foreign white woman's representations. On one hand, in terms of racial dimension, the conquest of a white woman by a “native” man could be interpreted as a demonstration of virility. On the other hand, the stereotypical representation of the foreign women sexuality involves a social sanction of the man's erotic capital. The “*gringa*” stereotype emerges related

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<sup>24</sup> Furt, Jean-Marie, Michel, Frank (dir), *L'identité au cœur du tourisme, tourisme et identités 2* ; Éditions L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003.

to the *brichero's* discourse on transgressive behaviour in the travel's "non-lieu". We observe a circulation of representations which determine power relations in the couple and according to the social situation. Becoming a *wayki* constitutes a way to escape from the dominant model of masculinity in a Peruvian society where beauty and social success is embodied by the "white". In this regard, the sexual or romantic conquest of a Peruvian white woman seems unattainable for subaltern male individuals. By penetrating the milieu of tourism, "*cholos*"<sup>25</sup> can seduce white women. Therefore they strategically reaffirm their hybrid "indianness" to fascinate and take advantage of the relationship. This voluntary economic dependence reframes the classical social division of sexes in the Peruvian society. A "*cholo*" seducing a tourist for money or other advantages constitutes a transgression towards the standards of gender and racialized domination. In the collective imaginary, *bricherismo* can symbolise the impediment to the development of Peruvian society. This phenomenon represents a form of passivity and dependence vis-à-vis Western civilisation. The social sanctions of *waykis'* reinventing indianness are tangible. Indeed, they live and reinforce discrimination of the popular class and the native people.

The economic, social and symbolic benefits drawn from the tourist are a demonstration of virility and expertise within the *bricheros'* group and related to their system of values. The transformation of *waykis'* erotic capital into a way of living brings another dimension to the redefinition process of masculinity. The gender domination is reaffirmed out of hegemonic requirements. The *wayki* does not exchange sexuality for money, his social and cultural capital is used in a strategic way to shut down the economic domination of his partner. Masculinity is reaffirmed outside the economic dimension because of the *brichero's* knowledge which ensures him a dominant position during the travel with the tourist. The strategic "anti-capitalistic" discourse transforms the economic power of the tourist into a dissonant

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<sup>25</sup> The « *Cholo* » term is extremely ambiguous in the Peruvian parlance. It indicates initially an individual from the "métissage" between a "native" and a Spanish descendant. Nowadays, the meanings and connotations diversified themselves. This word is usually used in a pejorative and racist way but it depends on the situation and the power relations shared by the individuals. We can also observe a stigma reversal with the "*cholo power*" move who translates a sense of belonging through the revalorization of a shared ethnical identity. The *waykis* are really close to the "*cholo power*" movement.



situation. This uncomfortable asymmetrical situation prompts women to symbolically transfer her economic power to the man. In the voyage and specific intercultural context and in the mutual projections of fantasies, the *wayki*- “*gringa*” couple constitutes a space of gender domination reproduction.

The fantasy of the Inca, the « savage » or the rebel meets the white libertine, the emancipated Western woman or the hit girl. The transitive bodies are elaborated by the reciprocal influences of collective representations. The experience of alterity allows reflection upon our own identity. *Bricherismo* is the encounter of two roads looking for an exotic change, two selves staging into the world of the Other. The traveller becomes “*gringa*” through the Peruvian man, who becomes in turn a *wayki* in the representation of her Western world. The relationship is a “*passage*” in which each partner uses the other one to leak from his world and emancipate themselves.

## Conclusion

The change of scenery in a romantic way allows living the *voyage*'s utopia throughout the body. The Inca fantasy forms part of the imaginary of cultural tourism as “an existential, initiatory and transformative experience”<sup>26</sup>. The *wayki* recaptures the *foreigner*'s romanticism projected on his world and employs it to seduce her. He shapes a mystified native as an embodiment of this sacred self, highly coveted by travellers. The fantasy of a passionate, rebel and savagely virile man becomes a way for each of the partners to ensure a place in the hegemonic system. This mutual enchantment rephrases the dialectic of domination. *Waykis* produce a tactical reading of the occidental world in their relations with “non-modern” societies. But, simultaneously, powers mechanisms tend to reproduce themselves at all levels of the practice. The contemporary ethnicity may be a manifestation of integration of the subaltern individuals' postures.

*Bricherismo* is an evasion occurrence, where the leaks from one world to another, or from self to self, intersect and meet themselves. These movements – the voyage, the

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<sup>26</sup> Amirou, Rachid, Bachimon, Philippe (dir), *Le tourisme local, une culture de l'exotisme*, Éditions l'Harmattan, Paris, 2000, p 68

social climbing, the individual emancipation, the distortion of identity or migration – are at the same time real and imagined. The *tourist's* trip is a movement produced in order to feed an individual achievement. The *wayki* is a nomad and an emerging migrant. Fleeing from his reality is related to the *individuals'* conditions and goals. The tourist and her sexual conquest embody alterity within a social and cultural hierarchy, a dominant exoticism. The *brichero* thinks his ascent in the development scale through a staging of an alternative way and thanks to the calculated seduction of the “upper body”. The occidental woman lives the impulse of experimentation within the voyage and with the *brichero*. The *gringa's* representation transforms itself and influences the *bricherismo* practice, specifically masculinity. In a permanent and complex North/South power game, we observe how racialization process confronts cultural stereotypes and influences the social construction of sexuality. The production of the *Wayki* and *Gringa* figures emerges from a multiply-determined dynamic where all the representations of identity's categories are consubstantial.

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DOSSIER

# The End of the Progressive Cycle

GUEST EDITOR: Gerardo Muñoz

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GERARDO MUÑOZ<sup>1</sup>

INTRODUCTION

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# Beyond Identity and the State: The Crisis of the Latin American Progressive Cycle<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the results of the referendum were counted in most of large urban centers of Bolivia, Vice-President Álvaro García Linera delivered a press conference from Palacio Quemado in which he called the results an “empate técnico”, or a technical draw between those in favor and those against the plebiscite to lengthen Evo Morales’ MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo) presidential candidacy for a fourth term until 2025. Although the official results posted by TSE (Tribunal Supremo Electoral de Bolivia) are favoring the “NO” by a slight margin of 51% over 48%, it is perhaps too soon to predict the ways in which the MAS will reconstitute its political forces both within and beyond the institutions of the State. Regardless of changes in the wake of these results, what is crucial is that MAS lost two of its most important political bastions (Potosí and El Alto), which symbolically introduces evident fissures into the internal democratic process of the Bolivian State’s political hegemony<sup>3</sup>. Bolivia is central to the thesis of the ‘exhaustion of the Latin American progressive political cycle’ because it is the last standing State with broad base legitimacy and

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<sup>2</sup> This article was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/5/12/introduction-to-dossier-crisis-of-the-latin-american-progressive-cycle> on May 12th, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Pablo Stefanoni. “Un referendum por penales”. *Le Monde diplomatique*, Febrero 2016.

democratic institutionalization.

Perhaps more importantly, under the name of ‘Bolivia’, a new political grammar was installed in pursuit of a strong democratic horizon beyond the conventional antinomies of social movements and State; charismatic leadership and motley social composition. Álvaro García Linera’s writings, in particular those published and available on the ‘Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia’ website, have systematically contributed to the linking of democracy and movements perhaps unlike any other politico-theoretical reflection in its transformation of the State form at the center of the post-neoliberal epochality<sup>4</sup>. García Linera’s persistent theoretical reflection is symptomatic of the region’s democratic passion, but also, within the current predicament, of its shortcoming<sup>5</sup>.

As a recent and brief exchange between Álvaro García Linera and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui demonstrated, the specter of identity continues to override the possibility of a *democratic breakthrough*. If, on the one hand, Rivera Cusicanqui blamed García Linera for “not understanding the Indian”, García Linera’s response, being no less personal, accused Rivera of betraying her “political roots” for social struggle<sup>6</sup>. Whereas Rivera spoke from a semi-epistemic privilege of knowing the Indian; García Linera spoke from the “triumphant” ideologically hegemonic position of doing what seems “right”. In both instances, the debate was diluted to the grounds of identity and hegemony, and not on the basis of disagreement or political contestation. This third position — which I am calling *posthegemonic*— is the one that this dossier

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<sup>4</sup> To access the publications of the ‘Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia’, see <http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.bo>

<sup>5</sup> For a theoretical and historical reconstruction of Álvaro García Linera’s intellectual itinerary, see Peter Baker’s “The Phantom, The Plebeian and the State: Grupo Comuna and the Intellectual Career of Álvaro García Linera”. *Viewpoint Mag*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2015/02/25/the-phantom-the-plebeian-and-the-state-grupo-comuna-and-the-intellectual-career-of-alvaro-garcia-linera/>. Also, on the relations Linera and Zavaleta, see Anne Freeland’s “Notes on René Zavaleta: ‘abigarramiento’ as condition of constitutive power”. *Alternautas* 1:1, December 2014. <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2014/8/31/k1gjjqwwi5c2eqc5h13ckgm314fdyp>

<sup>6</sup> Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. “El oscuro y tenebroso Qhananchiri”. <http://colectivachixi.blogspot.com>

seeks to put forward, against the coming winds of political voluntarism and reaffirmations of counterhegemonic or new identitarian formulations. I agree with Alberto Moreiras' affirmation that "any kind of hegemony premised on identity, albeit subaltern identity, runs the infinite risk of turning democratic recognition into compulsion, no matter how counter-intentionally. Indeed the last thing democratic politics would want is the kind of organization of the social whereby people must assume enforced identities or reflect unwelcomed ones...The positing of identity as the horizon of subaltern politics is far from moving towards the end of subalternity — it only co-opts its notion at the service of a given ideology of power"<sup>7</sup>.

This basic but fundamental premise allows us to think the valence of a radical democratic horizon in the region at a moment where communitarian, decolonial de-linking, and State hegemonic articulation seem to exhaust the conditions of political reflection. This is not to say that Álvaro García Linera's essays, such as *Identidad Boliviana* (2014) or *Socialismo comunitario: un horizonte de época* (2015), are the cause of the recent political defeats or shortcomings of the Bolivian process. Moving against identitarianism, opens the potentiality of a post-hegemonic politicity for a coming democratic horizon. This democratic horizon remains far from the *criollo* liberal ideology (intensified through neoliberal dismantling of the State since the 1990s), which has also traditionally fomented diverse techniques of governmentality that have haunted cultural locations and their subjects<sup>8</sup>. In a fundamental way, raising the question about the 'end of the Latin American Progressive governments' should not be understood as a condemnation or celebration of the political processes in the region within the last fifteen years or so. What is at stake here is precisely the offering of a democratic post-hegemonic possibility, in order to move beyond that which already undermines the deepening of what some of the contributors here — as well

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<sup>7</sup> Alberto Moreiras. "Democracy in Latin America: Álvaro García Linera, an introduction". *Culture, Theory, and Critique*, Vol.56, No.3, 2015. P.274-75

<sup>8</sup> See Gareth Williams, *The Other Side of the Popular: Neoliberalism and Subalternity in Latin America*. Duke University Press, 2002.

as many other thinkers, observers, and scholars — take as the ‘best’ of the transformation of the Marea Rosada. In the end, the Bolivian process matters, but it does not exhaust what should be of interest here, that is, the question of democracy understood as *republicanist institutionalization* and radical freedom in the face of a post-neoliberal pushback prompted in different cities of the region<sup>9</sup>.

The rise of the *nuevas derechas* is in fact a direct consequence of the hegemonic closure of populism that turned political dissent into consensus and permanent machination (post-political ethos). What is more, the so called ‘post-subalternist option’, offered by John Beverley, seems at the current moment to be equally limited or ironically on the side of the ‘Right’, if we understand the new developments between subaltern subjects and the State as mediated by consumption<sup>10</sup>. In fact, we are at the moment witnessing a *fissure* between consensual politics (whether from the Right or from the leftist communitarianism) and hegemonic State grammars that solely guarantee democratic passion vis-à-vis a reduction of politics to the political as enmity<sup>11</sup>. These two positions do not merely make enmity the dominant factor of the political. They make the political the dominant structuration of existence and common life. A collective and long lasting engagement can only produce a new *posthegemonic reflection* as a consistent option for Latinamericanist thought. It is in this light that this dossier proposes a preparatory and modest effort in this direction.

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<sup>9</sup> What has been lacking since the independences in the early nineteenth century in Latin America has been *democratic republicanism*. At the historiographical level this argument has been made by Rafael Rojas in *Las Repùblicas de aire* (Taurus, 2012), and *Los derechos del alma* (Taurus, 2014). For a recent defense of republicanism as a radical form of democracy, see José Luis Villacañas essay *Populismo* (La Huerta Grande, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> John Beverley develops the ‘post-subalternist’ option in his *Latinamericanism after 9/11*. Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> The understanding of the political as the division of enmity is of course that of Carl Schmitt. For a contemporary reading of Schmitt’s architectonics of the political and its exhaustion, see Carlo Galli’s *Janus’ Gaze: Essays on Carl Schmitt*. Duke University Press, 2015. The crisis of the principal politics alluded here is also in reference of the ongoing work of the Infrapolitical Deconstruction Collective ([www.infrapolitica.wordpress.com](http://www.infrapolitica.wordpress.com)).

The contributions collected in this dossier are varied in style and argumentation, as well as in the case studies discussed. Yet, they are not meant to be read as comprehensive reflections on the region throughout these years. Instead, each of the contributions essentially takes up a paradigm that allows us to rethink a problem or a series of problems that traverse different key sites<sup>12</sup>. These are also conjectural texts, but to the extent that they seek to think through central issues of Latin America politics, they also exceed the established temporal parameters fixed by the ‘untimely present’ or the ‘actual movement’ of contemporaneity. Another important observation should be made about the very phrase ‘end of the progressive cycle’. I should also admit that there have been other conceptions of it that have circulated in the contributions of important political observers and scholars such as Maristella Svampa, Pablo Stefanoni, Salvador Schavelzon, or Raul Zibechi, some of them contributors in this issue. My own inflection on the “end” or “crisis” of Latin American progressive governments seeks to complement the historical determination with that of the analytical, so as to open up other categorial possibilities beyond hegemonic structuration and grand-historical narratives. There is a tension throughout across the articles that point to different ways of understanding the ‘crisis’ (which is fundamentally the crisis or *krenein* of thought, that is, of judgment)<sup>13</sup>.

Salvador Schavelzon’s “The end of the progressive narrative in Latin America” offers a broad map that points to the generic conditions of the debate on the ‘end of the progressive narrative’ in the region. Looking at recent developments in Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia, Schavelzon argues that the progressive movement towards democratization has come to a halt through a centripetal redirection generated by a populist logic. According to Schavelzon, “...instead of an anti- or post-extractive outlook as an alternative to a new political cycle, what we are witnessing today is the emergence of a new Right with a revamped, ‘post-ideological’ and ‘for the people’ discourse”. Schavelzon points to the increasing influence of conservative religious

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<sup>12</sup> According to Giorgio Agamben, a paradigm is a relation between a singular and a singular, thus no generalizable master theory or *arche* is derived from this notion. See his essay “What is a paradigm?” (9-32) in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, Zone Books 2009.

<sup>13</sup> On different valances of “crisis”, see Willy Thayer’s *Tecnologías de la crítica. Entre Walter Benjamin y Gilles Deleuze*. Santiago de Chile: Metales Pesados, 2010.



values in the political arena, and takes note of the substitution of an old imperialism (U.S, Washington Consensus) with another (Chinese investments). The decay of the progressive political parties in both Brazil and Argentina is just a feature that Schavelzon thematizes in order to move beyond the impasse of right-wing cooptation and post-political fascination.

Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott's "The Chilean Case and the Latin American Pink Tide: Between Democracy and Developmentalism" focuses on the Chilean case not because Chile has to be included in the *Marea Rosada*, but rather because this case is the excess or specter that haunts the matrix of accumulation and developmentalism as a principal form of the *Marea Rosada* State form. Instead of producing a unilateral reading of economic forces (State location and forms of accumulation) Villalobos looks at the way in which "the State form indicates an opening for struggles of social transformation demonstrates the extent to which those initiatives of social transformation taken upon by the governments of the Pink Tide have viability or remain palliative to what John Kraniauskas has called "the cunning of capital" (2014). Through the notion of 'State form', Villalobos introduces a double register of the political force in the region, and leaves the question open regarding the kind of 'people', beyond the double calculative configuration of constituent and constituted power, that could reappear against the parameters of political and State representation. In the end, Villalobos' infrapolitics of thought is no longer bounded by the preset calculations between history and imagination as a struggle for recognition.

Diego Valeriano's "Liberation through consumption: six hypotheses on the passage from exclusive neoliberalism to the new *runfla* capitalism" is a brief, although important piece. Through a series of programmatic notes that invite further elaboration and investigation, Valeriano forcefully argues against the category of 'exclusionary neoliberalism' in favor of the category of 'runfla capitalism'. As a persistent political observer in Buenos Aires, Valeriano has contributed systematically (in a series of articles, of which this is just one condensation) to understanding what he sees as a process of liberation through a new democratizing force of consumption in the years of Kirchnerismo. In linking the principle of liberation and consumerism,

Valeriano challenges many central beliefs that govern traditional narratives of the “*década ganada*”. Mainly, the passage from neoliberalism to a post-neoliberal redistributive State, liberation as a technique of market force, and a post-ideological (post-hegemonic) understanding of social action through inoperative figures such as ‘*runflas*’ (*runfla* which could be translated as lumpen or marginal lives). Valeriano’s hypotheses challenge the claim for the subaltern subject position, while affirming a *form of life* beyond domination and resistance.

Bruno Cava’s “Can the Latin American Progressive governments outlive their success?” challenges the monumental narrative of the Latin American Pink Tide, and offers instead a viewpoint from the social movements that allowed for the emergence of the institutionalization of the progressive governments in the first place. Cava recasts the question of the ‘end’ of the progressive cycle by admitting its success and by doing so, pushes for a further deepening of the constituent process that opened well before the cycle itself. This task, according to Cava, is also one of reflection, as he argues: “The task is to liberate the analysis from black and white, epic, or dialectical narratives, as to reopen political imagination to a new social and economic composition in the region, in a similar vein as Zapatismo did in the 90s. We can leave the process of mourning to a global left still haunted by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism.” Bruno Cava, far from soliciting a new communist horizon that mourns and restitutes a revolutionary will, posits a problem of imagination in politics that still depends on fissuring constituted power from below against contemporary forms of accumulation, corporate interests, and uneven patterns of exploitation.

“For a Democratic Horizon of Emancipation: Maristella Svampa on the exhaustion of the Latin American Progressive Political Cycle”, consists of a set of questions on the central core of the dossier in light of her own work on the Latin American progressive actors and its ties with extractivism and contemporary designs of post-neoliberalism. Svampa, author of books such as *Maldesarrollo* (2014) and *Debates Latinoamericanos* (2016), does not limit her thought on the region within the parameters of self-affection (defeat or triumphalism, unconditional support or militant criticism). Rather, her thought hinges in multiple registers that map out the

complexity of actors and dilemmas facing most, if not all, of the progressive governments. At the core of her intervention, Svampa's commitment is in line with the deepening of democracy, without losing sight of the dynamic of neoliberalism as a force that could reinstate itself further in light of the Macri / PRO victory in the Argentine National Election. Svampa endorses a political reason that exceeds locationality as well as the paradigm of sovereignty in favor of a democratic horizon that could bear witness to the "opening of a wound at the very heart of Latin-American thought".

Michela Russo's review of Ticio Escobar's recent collection of essays *Imagen e intemperie: las tribulaciones del arte en los tiempos del mercado total* (Capital Intelectual, 2015) raises pertinent questions in thinking the aesthetic register parallel with the return of the 'popular' embedded the Latin American progressive cycle imaginaries. Russo's commentary on Escobar's art criticism is deployed not only in light of the complex ways in which modern and indigenous art has been theorized in the Paraguayan art institutions (most notably, under the mission of Centro de Artes Visuales/ Museo del Barro), but also makes an effort to deploy aesthetic political dimension that dislocate the logic of hegemony. As Russo argues: "...Escobar works at the edge of that liminal zone where the political and the aesthetic enter a threshold of indecidability. I am convinced that his reflections on the question of art and image are absolutely crucial in order to think what I believe is one of the central features of the "progressive cycle" in Latin America, a newborn, although already tremendously ailing, geopolitical conjuncture, that is to say, the "return of the popular" and, thus, the question of representation". Escobar's recent writings on Latin American popular art, always in permanent dialogue with critical aesthetic theory (Walter Benjamin), becomes a threshold that allow for a particular mode of reassessing limits that separate aesthetics and politics, the national popular horizon and the temporality of archives and its heterogeneous traditions.

My own essay "The exhaustion of the progressive political cycle in Latin America and posthegemonic reflection", weighs the crisis of the Marea Rosada by analyzing the specificity of the Argentine Kirchnerista State and its demise leading to the electoral victory of Mauricio Macri, and the rise of other political forces to the national scene

such as Sergio Massa. The essay considers the limitations of populist culturalism and its adverse translation during periods of transitions. However, my analysis is not solely centered around Peronism during Kirchnerismo; since it also moves on to contest the ‘communitarian’ or ‘turn to the commons’ political contestation as deficient within the generic democratic horizon of the Latinamericanist reflection. The essay leaves an open space — a space that I call *posthegemonic reflection* within the temporal inhabitation of the interregnum — that necessarily abandons the cathexis of the master concept that continuously solicit identity and location. This has fundamental political consequences for the very notion of the political in terms of its categorial organization (civil society, movement, subject, or State) and principial formation of legitimacy (such as constitution or rights. In a certain way, these essays seek to produce a reassessment of the political in the region. There is still a need to further develop an aprincipial political democracy of the singular. If we refrain from recoiling back to subject mediations, a space opens that invites disagreement about thinking not only the ruins of the Latin American Pink Tide, but also the ruin and inefficiency of the political categories and concepts that organize the reflexive practice of contemporary Latinamericanism.

Finally, the last two pieces in the dossier bring to the present, albeit in dissimilar ways, past temporalities latent in the political map of the region. Andres Ajens’ poem “Allende, Evo, Over”, translated by Michelle Gil Montero, juxtaposes the proper name of two leaders of national-popular experiences in a constellation of references that signal the possible returns of other temporalities through a modality of writing that is no longer governed by the logos of transparence or communication. In the last verse we read: “*kunumi letteredly illiterate a graphophagus, pure at times, already mottled*”. The poem, already a translation, where more than one language are disjointed, transfers an aporetic and impossible attempt at crossing a destination, since as a philosopher has recently reminded us, poetic language always arrives at an illiterate encounter<sup>14</sup>. This is, indeed, the subalternist limit that carries forth Ajens’ poematological experiments beyond the grammar of sense. Jon Beasley-Murray’s

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<sup>14</sup> Giorgio Agamben. “¿A quien se dirige la poesía?” (Trans. Gerardo Muñoz & Pablo Dominguez Galbraith). <http://horizontal.mx/a-quien-se-dirige-la-poesia/>

"Pyrrhic Victories: The Fall and Rise of the Left Turns" is a generous critical response to the different texts of the dossier, while simultaneously recoiling back to the memory of the Caracazo uprising as an 'ur-origin' of a political cycle, in which the multitude guides the potential for insurrectional vitality and social mobilization. Rehearsing some of his important theoretical premises developed in *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (University of Minnesota, 2010), Beasley-Murray invites us to take a distance from both disenchantment and enthusiasm by abandoning hegemony as the principle of political closure: "the more that these regimes sought hegemony, the more frustrated they were bound to become. But the fact that they ultimately (or even initially) failed to become hegemonic is not in itself the marker or symptom, let alone the cause, of their downfall. Rather, defeat was already inscribed in the moment of their triumph: in the ways in which they were more or less forced, upon assuming state power, to turn against the movements that established them in that power, and to find that (reciprocally) those movements then sooner or later abandoned them and escaped the scene". Whereas Ajens' poetic resonances rendered inoperative the apparatus of identity and the ideal of transculturation *in* language; Beasley-Murray's cautionary response about the epochal ruin of the progressive cycle emphasizes the always-fissured nature of hegemony, thus opening a debate on how to come to terms with the notion of the 'end' in the 'end of the political cycle'. Far from being endorsing political optimism as a compensatory strategy for the current categorial and grammar of crisis, Beasley-Murray's response to the dossier pushes the limits of critical reflection, recasting the original stimmung of the 'pyrrhic victories', whose echoes and rhythms perhaps are perhaps still very much at work in the least expected zones of our present.

This dossier would not have been possible with the generous interlocution and efforts of a series of friends, to whom I would like to, extend my gratitude: Alberto Moreiras, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, Pablo Dominguez-Galbraith, and Lindsey Reuben. My gratitude and many thanks to Anne Freeland and Ana Carballo for the superb work at *Alternautas*.

GERARDO MUÑOZ<sup>1</sup>

## The Exhaustion of the Progressive Political Cycle in Latin America and Posthegemonic Reflection<sup>2</sup>

### *Marea Rosada and Latinamericanist reflection*

More than a decade since the eruption of the “progressive cycle” of Latin American governments — which could be said to commence with the electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in 1999, the political crisis of 2001 that led to the crumbling of several governments in Argentina, or Lula’s PT victory in 2002, depending on how one periodizes this epoch — a question has become inevitable after the recent presidential elections in Argentina: what is left of the Latin American Left? Is it still possible to isolate divergent tendencies in the Latin American progressive wave at the current moment of generalized international financial domination? Does the question of the ‘exhaustion’ of the progressive cycle not open a gap that invites us to think beyond the popular distinction of the “two Lefts”, proposed by Jorge Castañeda (2006), that strategically separated a “good democratic left” committed to liberalism and the market from an “authoritarian” one, heir to populist and caudillo legacies of the Latin American political tradition?

This set of questions is not only relevant for thinking the current geopolitical map of the region, but more importantly, the limits of the politicity of Latinamericanist

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<sup>2</sup> This article was originally published in: <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/5/12/yldqikwbsvfrkj6lfbsojofl4fdual> on May 12th, 2016.

reflection, both within and beyond the United States university circuit. If we are witnessing uncontested symptoms of the end of the Marea Rosada, we must ask to what extent John Beverley's tripartite typology of "neo-arielist", "ultra-leftists", and "post-subalternists" that organize his *Latinamericanism after 9/11* (Duke Press, 2011) is still useful in understanding a heterogeneous Latin American map, whose opacity exceeds clear-cut political units.<sup>3</sup> To think the exhaustion of the progressive cycle would necessarily entail taking a distance from a post-subalternist position, which remains relevant only insofar as it marks the alliance between the subaltern and the state in a hegemonic social pact. But if by exhaustion of the progressive cycle we understand the withering of the *state form* through the permanent processes of neoliberal decontainment, then hegemony is no longer on the side of the subaltern, but rather becomes the governmental machine that reproduces, polices, and domesticates the potential for a "politics of the people". Hegemony then becomes the "barring of other political possibilities" (Williams 2015).

On the same token, if clear, distinctive political units are subsumed by a new form of political opacity, what type of intellectual commitment and political horizon open up for Latinamericanist reflection? What is stated above does not entail that Latin American criollo positions have disappeared or decreased their influence in the reordering of Latinamericanist knowledge. Rather, what must be thought through is the ways in which an assumed post-political contemporary position — understood as the simplification and erasure of conflict from the idea of politics — of the progressive governments obliges one to account for an uncertainty of the conditions that make intellectual reflection possible. The displacements of the Leftist governments towards a center-right position reenact the argument about the spectral continuation of the neoliberalism of the 90s today that haunts the present ..., albeit with major differences. The emergence of the "New Right" (*nuevas derechas*) across the different governments of the region have learned to modify its political styles and symbols in a transversal safety-valve relation with the state that allows for an even

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<sup>3</sup> John Beverley. *Latinamericanism after 9/11*. Duke University Press, 2011.

more complex architectonics that interweave neoliberal administration with state form.

It has become difficult, if not impossible, to affirm who is at the “vanguard” of the Latin American progressive governments today. This question is more perplexing, since most if not all of these governments have entered into conflicts with the very social movements that were central for their electoral ascension leading to constituent reforms. Having to recur to heterogeneous forms of coercion or low-intensity disciplining, what begins to wither away is the very ground of legitimacy as the key for establishing long-lasting democratic institutionalization distinct from the liberal criollo political organization of the past (García Linera 2011). If this opportunity is lost due to the overdetermination of factors, populism emerging from a crisis and grounded in the logic of hegemony will always work on the side of subalternization on the one hand and charismatic presidentialism on the other (Zaffaroni 2008).

The crisis also exceeds political institutionalization, spilling over in the active neo-extractive model that upholds a new logic of neo-dependence, balanced with redistributive social policies, although always conditioned by the international prices of commodities (Svampa 2013). In the last years alone, the mass mobilizations in Brazil, the “Vulture funds” in Argentina, and the economic crisis of Venezuela have made explicit the extent to which the contemporary state form of the Marea Rosada is structurally dependent on international financing and its juridical-legal grounds.

### *The fracture of Kirchnerist political culture*

The Argentinean case bears witness to some of the outlined contradictions disclosed by contemporary Leftist governments. I am not interested in arguing that Kirchnerismo is hyperbolic or symptomatic of *all* of the Marea Rosada, but rather that it does illustrate the limits of hegemony (in the case of the Peronist tradition) within latinamericanist reflection. In this precise sense it is a strong case that deserves attention. Besides the presidentialism that labors on the side of juridical-economical exceptionalism, as argued by Eugenio Zaffaroni, the crisis of Kirchnerismo is also perceived at the level of candidate building for political continuity. The fact that the Kirchnerist candidate Daniel Scioli was able to aggregate almost 50% of the vote



under his name speaks not of the power of Kirchnerismo, but of his appeal *in spite* of Cristina Kirchner and most of the Frente para la Victoria's strand of peronist ideologues. Like traditional Peronism (1945–55), political culture was central to the Kirchnerist imagination, and in the last year alone it was easily perceived even by the outside observer how cultural apparatuses — such as the intellectual collective “Carta Abierta”, the juvenile grassroots organization “Campora”, or the ultra-militant TV show “678” — stood in irreconcilable positions that only allowed real discussion in terms of consensus or for clear-cut electoral ends.<sup>4</sup>

The severe depreciation of conflict and antagonism within Kirchnerismo led to futile disputes that only mattered when thinking the “continuation” of the political process as solely based on a proper name (Kirchner) at best, and at worst of an initial (the culture “K”). Similarly, since the primaries (also known as PASO), the three national political forces — Mauricio Macri's Cambiemos, Sergio Massa's Frente Renovador, and Kirchner's Frente para la Victoria (FpV) — only distinguished themselves through external political factors, since each of the political positions was validated through a consensual logic through appropriation of the legacy of the 2001 destituent moment, promising different degrees of security, anti-corruption measures, and political stability as to avoid a second “2001”.

Sergio Massa, ex-mayor of Tigre and founder of Frente Renovador, Macri's anti-party “Cambiemos” (he prefers the technical name of “equipo” or “team” to refer to his post-political block designed by Ecuadorian advisor Jaime Durán Barba), and Scioli's particular strand of FpV shared a common language of consensus and political hybridity that did not dismiss the Peronist apparatus. As Durán Barba repeated in his books and interviews, it was not that Peronism did not matter, but that people no longer identified themselves with such a traditional political identity (Durán

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<sup>4</sup> The internal crisis of the Frente para la Victoria (FpV) generated, according to Beatriz Sarlo, a “dilemma of succession”. We could say that right after the sudden death of Nestor Kirchner and the victory of Cristina in the first round, an impasse signaled the precarious conditions of a long-term political continuation of kirchnerismo that rendered impossible the building of a solid political candidate for the presidency. See, “La toma del poder”: (<http://www.perfil.com/columnistas/La-toma-del-poder-20150619-0057.html>).

Barba 2011). Besides the fact that all three of them share similar political trajectories dating back to Menemism, the three candidates installed a corporate interpellation of government as efficiency in the political scene. In the specific case of Massa, he retorted to a securitarian rhetoric that took the Mexican State's war on drugs as an exemplary model to implement the emergency powers in light of the perennial presence of drug trafficking and organized crime in Argentina.<sup>5</sup> What is clear, leaving nuances aside, is that whatever Cambiemos turns out to be in the following months or years, what came to a radical halt was the expansion of the radical democratic horizon that opened up with both the insurrection of 2001 and the initial moment of Nestor Kirchner's presidency.

At this threshold, Kirchnerismo should be read as a paradox between the production of a strong cultural popular imaginary and the fragility of political institutionalization (which had borrowed and re-structured from the Peronist *justicialista* apparatus). According to the most in-depth analyses of Kirchnerist political culture, such as Horacio Gonzalez' *Kirchnerismo, una controversia cultural* (Ediciones Colihue, 2011) and Beatriz Sarlo's *La audacia y el cálculo* (Sudamericana, 2011), FpV produced a renovation in social languages and cultural symbols transversal to civil society and across multiple institutions. Tecnópolis, a science and technology mega exhibition in Villa Martelli inaugurated during the Bicentennial celebrations; Secretaría de Coordinación Estratégica para el Pensamiento Nacional, appendix of the Ministry of Culture and directed by philosopher Ricardo Forster; Centro Cultural Néstor Kirchner that opened in 2015; and 6,7,8, a political commentary TV broadcast which ran from 2009 until the end of 2015, orchestrated a contemporary cultural rhythm that hinged on habits and rituals long established in the Peronist sentimental fabric (Plotkin 2003). What changed from classical Peronism (1945–55) to the Kirchnerist reenactment was the impossibility of translation from culture to politics, at both the level of state policy and that of the base constituencies.

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<sup>5</sup> On the discourse of security during the last years of kirchnerismo, see the radio *Clinámen* "Scioli llegó hace rato" (<http://ciudadclinamen.blogspot.com/2014/09/scioli-llego-hace-rato.html>). For in depth sociological analysis of security forms in Argentina, see *Temor y control: la gestión de la inseguridad como forma de gobierno* (Futuro Anterior Ediciones, 2014) by Esteban Rodríguez Alzueta.

Whether the cultural realm is no longer the main driving form of populist politics is something to be disputed and further analyzed; but what seems to have become clear is that a “New Right” like Cambiemos has also been keen in exploiting popular cultures of identification and subjective desires that are no longer the monopoly of the populist affective machine (Bellotti 2015). The kirchnerist political defeat at the national polls confirmed that the processes of translatability between political culture and political identities are swayed by an irreducible gap to this antinomy. Without a doubt the most explicit symptom of this conflict was the public witticism voiced by the Kirchnerist Minister of Interior, Florencio Randazzo, who in his appearances in one of the “Carta Abierta” meetings at the National Library said of Scioli: “El Proyecto se ha quedado manco” or “the project has become amputated”. The punchline being, of course, that Daniel Scioli lost an arm in a water-racing event in 1989.

Randazzo’s pun touched a sensitive nerve in the Kirchnerist Project, and its relation to the historical Peronist tradition. If Peronism is also the history of the bodies of its leaders — the missing and recovered body of Eva or the dismembered hands of Peron, as *objet petit a* of hegemony — Scioli’s missing arm can no longer account for the secret object of Peronist popular desire. In fact, the “missing piece” of the sovereign affect seems insufficient in times of the total sovereignty of financial markets and the arousal of visual culture. What is at stake here is what I am willing to call the “debasement” of the katechontic myth of the return of the state (“State Eva-Peronism”, as coined by John Kraniauskas), traversed by a new affective capitalism (“capitalismo runfla”) or low-intensity consumer form of neoliberal subsumption at the everyday experience.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On the capacities for “imagination” in kirchnerismo, see Pablo Hupert’s *El estado posnacional: más allá del kirchnerismo y el antikirchnerismo* (2011). On Valeriano’s notion of ‘capitalismo runfla’, see “El consumo libera: seis hipótesis sobre el pasaje del viejo neoliberalismo excluyente al nuevo capitalismo runfla (que lo incluye y supera)” (*Lobo Suelto*).

The crisis of “Kirchnerist culturalism” does not only bear witness to the impossibility of grounding legitimacy in traditional symbols and myths, but also reveals the ways in which the triumph of a national-popular fervor is always-already inseminated by influxes of consumer market’s affective sovereignty and effective processes of subjectivation. As noted by political theorist Joseph Vogl, the national space of containment can no longer compete on the same playing field with heterogeneous sovereign effects of market production and accumulation.<sup>7</sup> The myth of globalization and international agreements based on economic interests rests on the strong case that national states are still autonomous in terms of decision-making and political legitimacy, when exactly the opposite is the case.

Along with trumpeting the “end of the progressive cycle” in the region by analysts such as Salvador Schavelzon, Bruno Cava, or Raul Zibechi, on the reverse side one must also study the rise of the “New Right” through electoral democratic means within the *Marea Rosada*.<sup>8</sup> What is ‘new’ in these ‘New Rights’ is the extent to which they have gone through a long process of learning from their mistakes after the plundering 1990s dominated by the “Washington consensus” and the dictatorial neoliberal economic model. Their relevance hinges on how they occupy certain flexible zones of the state apparatus, supplemented with a rhetoric of “security” (modeled after the designs of the “War on Terror” in the United States and elsewhere), and the foreclosure of politics to consensus and appeasement, rather than disagreement and democratic expansion. It is not a coincidence that the neutralization of political conflict, as observed at the beginning of the twentieth century by Carl Schmitt, goes hand in hand with a nomic distribution of economic investments, which in the particular case of the region takes the form of the extractive

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Vogl. “The sovereignty effect: markets and power in the economic”. *Qui Parle*, Vol. 23, Fall/Winter 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the best analyses on the crisis of the progressive cycle are, in no particular order: “Anatomía política de la coyuntura sudamericana. Imágenes del desarrollo, ciclo político y nuevo conflicto social (*Lobo Suelto*, 2 de Noviembre 2015), by Diego Sztulwark; “El ciclo progresista en América Latina ha terminado” (*L’Ombelico del Mondo*, 4 de Noviembre 2014) by Salvador Schavelzon; “El fin del relato progresista en América Latina” (*La Razón*, 21 de Junio 2015) by Raúl Zibechi; “Socióloga argentina dice que esta llegando el fin de ciclo de los gobiernos populistas” (*erbol digital*, 2 de Octubre 2015) by Maristella Svampa.

model that guarantee the compulsive modernization constitutive of the philosophy of history (Villalobos-Ruminott 2016).

In the Argentine political landscape the figure that best represents the emergence of this new right is the ex-mayor of Tigre Sergio Massa, whose political discourse in the last year productively articulated institutional Peronism in a national-popular register with a technocratic post-political security rhetoric. As studied by Diego Genoud in his political biography *Massa* (Sudamericana, 2015), Massa's political *paideia* combines multiple registers that circulate in contemporary Argentina that helped raise the Frente Renovador as a major national party. I would argue, in fact, that the locus of the late Argentine political culture finds the best expression in *massismo*, understood as a set of articulations that suture political dissensus into one of consensus, albeit full-fledged police presence in the territories. In contrast to the political inefficacy of Scioli's arm, *massismo* could well be understood as *kirchnerismo*'s neoliberal stain as part of the recomposition of state political culture. In a way, Massa is the most visible figure of the neoliberal continuation from above that has redrawn the limits between state and neoliberal economy, Peronist political culture and flexible forms of consumer democratization.

### *The turn to the commons*

Confronted with this new reality that signals the end of the progressive cycle, it seems that the age-old Leninist question “what is to be done?” returns once again to the agenda, requiring us to rethink the traditional antimonies — state and market, the new right and left wing populisms, social movements and political verticalization — that have dominated Latinamericanist reflection during the last decade. An emerging positing in recent years has been that of the “communitarian” or “communal” option that argues, against the grain of state politization, for the work of “social movements” as the transcendental mole capable laying the groundwork for an autonomous politics of the “people”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Emir Sader. *El nuevo topo: los caminos de la izquierda latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2006.

The “communal (communitarian) option” situates the primacy of the social movement on a horizontal plane, and like populism, it seeks to render political representation irrelevant through direct democratic participation and personal involvement in the decision making process. In a recent interview, Raquel Gutierrez Aguilar, who is also the author of one of the most significant books on social movements, *Los ritmos de Pachakuti: Movilización y levantamiento indígena-popular en Bolivia* (Textos Rebeldes, 2008), argued that before the inevitable leaning to the right of the region, a necessary battle for the “commons” is waged on behalf of the “communal” as an essential task of political action and thought. For Gutierrez Aguilar, the commons is understood as breaking away from the civil society / state divide, drifting towards the autonomy of heterogeneous social movements or multitudes that constantly contest the common sense and the sensible experiences that order the social space and feed the traditional arrangement of the status quo.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, the “commons” for Gutierrez Aguilar is intimately tied to the logic of re-appropriation as the most significant determination of praxis. In a more recently articulated version of her notion of ‘commons’ she argues:

during the years of struggle a possibility emerged for the reconfiguration of such a body into something that, by contrast and for the sake of distinction, we can call the recommon—*res communis*. The main features of this recommon, created, yearned for, and suggested by every successive assault against the state order of capital, consist in establishing what must be collectively reappropriated and, at the same time, in inhibiting the order of the centralizing rule that allows for *the monopoly of decisions* and the institution of nondeliberated procedures.<sup>11</sup>

The conceptual tension within the “communal (or communitarian)” horizon resides in its instantiation with what is “proper”. Although Gutierrez Aguilar is critical of the forms of decision making in progressive governments of the region, citing Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, in terms of their capacity to “veto” the common expansion,

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<sup>10</sup> Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar discusses the rise of the “new right” in the region and El Primer Congreso de Comunalidad en Mexico, in a recent radio interview: <https://archive.org/details/151026RAQUELGUTIERREZCOMUNALIDAD>.

<sup>11</sup> Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar. “Beyond the “Capacity to Veto”: Reflections from Latin America on the production and reproduction of the common”. SAQ 113:2, Spring 2014.

her own position remains grafted to an understanding of the commons through an amphibological logic of appropriation, re-appropriation of what is proper and must remain property. Thus, if by the “commons” we understand a mere re-appropriation of that which has been initially expropriated, then the common is yet another version of a *primitive reason of social centralized organization* (state), which, instrumentalized from below (in a micropolitical register), maintains the Hegelian schematics of principial unfolding of what is “proper” to “us” rendered governable by historical movement of a unified direction.

More problematic still is the fact that, for Gutierrez Aguilar, the appropriation of the commons must be accomplished by reaching consensus, which coincides all the more with the post-political position of occluding conflict as constitutive of the political (Gutierrez-Aguilar 2014). The logic of consensus, moreover, will be consistent with the nexus between appropriation and governability as the space of identity formation and policing. Similar to Gutierrez-Aguilar, Raul Zibechi in *Dispersar el poder* (Tinta Limón, 2006) has articulated the decision power of the commons as “authoritarianism based on consensus” that expiates political domination with a vague economical burden of “duty”.<sup>12</sup> At this point it is not clear how the turn to the “commons” could distance itself from the overlaying principle of ‘order’ that also structures neoliberal administration. However, this is not the only way to deal with or think through the problem of the commons. Against the formulation of the commons as instated by the proper, another notion of the commons could be understood as the dispersal of forms of life in retreat of hegemonic politicity, turned towards “use” and “singularity” (finitude) rather than appropriation, by which

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<sup>12</sup> A critique of the “horizontal” model of direct participation on the basis of consensus has been advanced by political theorist Maddalena Cerrato in her paper “¿Consenso activo y directo? Consideraciones sobre consenso y democracia” (unpublished). Read at the Seminario Crítico Transnacional, Universidad Complutense, July 2015. In her *Rhythms of the Pachakuti* (Duke University Press, 2015), Gutierrez Aguilar also situates the deliberate process of direct democracy in terms of consensus. She writes: “I firmly believe that this list of demands expresses an interesting, varied, and complex proposal for political transformation in Bolivia... The list of demands essentially seeks to take what is hidden, contained, and below – community methods for planning, reaching a consensus, and self-regulating coexistence – and place it “above and out in the open” on top of the traditional political order” (Gutierrez Aguilar 2015).

another space offers a post-identitarian model of commonality beyond distributive ontologies and effective consensus on what unveils as “proper to us”.<sup>13</sup>

Another possible form of the commons is not only imaginable, but also historically rooted. In her brief gloss on the Paris Commune, Arendt notes how, at odds with the revolutionary hypothesis of Marx and Lenin, the communal form does not thrive at seizing power or consensus, but rather at the *survival of radical freedom* (Arendt 1990). This communal form is irreducible to the way in which Latin American commons have been articulated around another identitarian ground of consensus and property and propriety. Hence, one of the tasks at the end of the progressive cycle is to render thinkable the question of the commons in a democratic horizon that would not be reducible to the creole traditions of liberalism, nor to the charismatic anti-institutionalism of populism.

Between the crisis of the articulation of the national popular projects and the contradictory conditions of the commons, a much-needed possibility for affirming a *post-hegemonic form* of latinamericanist reflection is in order. *Post-hegemonic reflection* is complementary to Jon Beasley-Murray’s well known formulation in *Posthegemony: political theory and Latin America* (Minnesota Press, 2010), although not entirely reducible to habits, multitude, and affect. The conditions for post-hegemonic reflection are two-fold: a principial affirmation of politicity in the times of interregnum; and second, a politicity grounded in democratic disagreement instead

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<sup>13</sup> What remains to be discussed is to what extent an identitarian affirmation of the commons reaffirms, albeit in other terms, the Hegelian philosophy of history vis-à-vis a distributive ontology as the foundational ground for Latin American sovereigntist validation. An identitarian matrix of understanding indigenous communalism recently revived could also be said to be informed by the writings of Oaxaca’s indigenous leader Floriberto Díaz’s in *Escrito: comunalidad, energía viva del pensamiento mixe* (UNAM, 2007). In their recent *To our friends* (Semiotexte, 2015), the collective The Invisible Committee makes a distinction between a concept of the commons based on the improper and use, and another grounded in a chain of equivalence that legislates an operation of expropriation on the basis of consensual property and propriety. Obviously what interests us here is the second option of communalism against the anthropological reductionism of communitarianism and politics of the subject. An important critique of community and its opening to singularity could also be found in Walter Brogan, “The Community of those who are going to die”, in Heidegger and Practical Philosophy (State University of New York Press, 2002).



of consensus. More incisive than posing the question of an effective political praxis, post-hegemonic reflection dwells on the fissure of hegemony opened within the epochal fracture of the principal form of politics and the architectonics of thought.<sup>14</sup>

Far from being an “ultra-leftist position” or an “apolitical position”, post-hegemonic wants to account for the limits of reflection on state form, the forces of financial capital, and the impossibility of establishing an *epoché* outside the regulatory frame of globalized machination. Instead of affirming yet another geopolitical nomic configuration (BRICS) in line with decoloniality, or a new culturalism based on “properness” and identity, *post-hegemonic reflection* amounts to the abandonment of principal politics of location and identity in line with democracy to come. It is an inescapable double-bind that desires no principle of legitimacy: on the one hand, it is a modest proposal for the non-interference of the freedom of thought, and on the other, the challenge of the impossibility of naming precisely that which for the moment lacks a proper name.

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<sup>14</sup> Political philosopher Reiner Schürmann develops the hypothesis of the epochal closure of principal thought in Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy. (Indiana University Press, 1987).

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BRUNO CAVA<sup>1</sup>

## Can the Latin American Progressive Governments Outlive Their Success?<sup>2</sup>

Oliver Stone's *South of the border* (2009) portrays the quintessential narrative of the Latin American progressive cycle.<sup>3</sup> The documentary tells the story of the coming to power of Chavez in Venezuela, the first in a new harvest of pink leaders that distanced themselves from the monochromatic post-communist neoliberal order. Surrounded by an overwhelming support from the popular classes and the nationalist left, Chavez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, Correa in Ecuador, the Kirchners in Argentina, and Lula in Brazil confronted openly the elites, the press monopolies, the right-wing destituent force, and in doing so, detached themselves from the governmentality that intensified inequality and poverty in the neoliberal 1990s.

In a sense this film is constructed as an inverse road movie: that is, instead of filming the popular protests throughout its different territories, Stone strolls through presidential palaces adhering to the epic discourse of the chiefs of State. *South of the border* even goes as far as citing the fall of the Berlin Wall, stating that the new Latin American political cycle erupted against the triumphalist post-historical ideology of the Washington consensus. In this narrative made for exportation, the progressive

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<sup>2</sup> This article was translated by Gerardo Muñoz. It was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/5/12/can-the-latin-american-progressive-governments-outlive-their-success> on May 12th, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> *South of the border*. Dir. Oliver Stone. Good Apple Productions 2006.

cycle coincides with the Left's nostalgia for the Cold War, anxious in finding an "exteriority" to the global hegemony of capital.

The year 2015 was the *annus horribilis* of the Latin American progressive cycle. This was the year in which governments were defeated on their own terms, that is, through massive electoral participation that included the poor popular sectors. For instance, kirchnerismo could only offer as presidential nominee a candidate whose political career was shaped during Menemismo.<sup>4</sup> In Venezuela, the opposition allocated 16% of the votes in the National Assembly elections.<sup>5</sup> Evo Morales' young contender Soledad Chapetón became the mayor of El Alto, the second major city in Bolivia and the well-known plebeian heart and soul of the Gas Wars of 2003.<sup>6</sup> Right after the multifaceted uprisings last June that led to the intensification of the political crisis, Rafael Correa admitted that he will not be running for the upcoming presidential elections of 2017.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Dilma Rousseff, Lula's successor, faced massive protests in 2011 of almost a million discontented citizens. Cross-electoral polls have rated her popularity below the 10% support line.<sup>8</sup> Although Dilma won the presidential election in October of 2014, it was by a very thin margin (3%) in which two things were proved, although the second was later proven false: 1. That Brazil was at the border of a deep systemic crisis, and 2. That she would not adopt neoliberal policies of fiscal adjustment, which were integrally inscribed in the 2015 political agenda.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Salvador Schavelzon. "El agotamiento kirchnerista", [http://www.la-razon.com/.../agotamiento-kirchnerista\\_o\\_238956...](http://www.la-razon.com/.../agotamiento-kirchnerista_o_238956...)

<sup>5</sup> Pablo Stefanoni. "Venezuela: el ocaso de los ídolos", <http://lalineadefuego.info/.../venezuela-el-ocaso-de-los-ido.../>

<sup>6</sup> Pablo Stefanoni. "La nueva derecha andina", <http://www.revistaanfibia.com/cron.../la-nueva-derecha-andina/>

<sup>7</sup> Bruno N. Dias. "Junho no Equador e o correísmo", <http://uninomade.net/tenda/junho-no-equador-e-o-correismo/>

<sup>8</sup> On the 2015 protest in Brazil, see Giuseppe Cocco's interview at IHU: <http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/.../541110-as-manifestacoes-de-mar...>

<sup>9</sup> Bruno Cava. "The coup in Brazil has already happened", <https://www.opendemocracy.net/.../coup-in-brazil-has-already-...>

It is in this context that the discourse on the exhaustion of the progressive cycle begins to take shape.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, understanding it as a narrative of “closure” is insufficient and full of traps, since it seems to point to a defeat of what previously was a golden age of progressive usurpation of power. According to this faulty narrative, the downfall of these governments was instigated by financial markets deregulation, right wing *golpismo*, and elite alliance with U.S imperialism. In all the cases the explanation is externalized and mystified to an “other” that determines the defeat that we have the duty to mourn.

This self-critique is best expressed by the view that the majority of those who benefitted from the social beliefs did so to then turn in favor of the ideology of consumerism, voting the political opposition (in terms of a populism logic, this is translated as the people are always right except when they do not vote us), and lamenting for not being “socialist enough”. But in reality before the omen of the end of the progressive cycle became a bitter reality in the Argentine case and is beginning to be bitter without end in the Brazilian scene, it is necessary to take distance from any epic narrative structured around the opposition between imperialism and anti-imperialism, progressives and neoliberalists, left and right; all categories that only had some theoretical validity in the 1970s, or perhaps with more analytical justifications in the 1990s. There should not be more mystification by adopting the grand narratives of the state. Instead we should confront the problems as they open a path towards action and thought. As I argued with Alexandre Mendes, the progressive governments *have won*.<sup>11</sup> This entails that they have secured legitimacy by systematically repressing emergent constituent possibilities against new political

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, see Raúl Zibechi: <http://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/a220180.html>; Gerardo Muñoz: <https://infrapolitica.wordpress.com/.../notas-sobre-el-agota.../>; Salvador Schavelzon: <https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/.../27148-fin-del-relato-pr...>

<sup>11</sup> Bruno Cava & Alexandre F. Mendes. “A esquerda vence”, *Revista Lugar Comum* n.º 45, <http://uninomade.net/lugarcomum/45/>

imaginations that did not fit the prefigured ideological governmental mode of development and social organization of urban centers.

In the last ten to fifteen years, the politico-economic project of the region was grounded in a theoretical matrix of production in the context of underdevelopment that dates back to the age-old CEPAL model (Prebisch, Furtado), in spite of new syncretic adjustments.<sup>12</sup> In broad terms, this means an application of Keynesianism in *longue durée*: on the one hand, accepting that investment determines effective demands (one does not produce to distribute, but the other way around); and on the other, that in peripheral conditions it is imperative to govern over industrial and technological developments. From these premises one fundamental consequence is derived: accumulation leads to a general process of industrialization.

The logic of investments in the industrial sector will expand productive capacities, altering the specific composition of imports, and thus leading to a diversification of the economy. However, since the relation between center and periphery is structural, the only viable option for Latin American governments is to use their fiscal surplus of its initial position. It is here that the well-known “Commodities Consensus” springs up (Svampa 2013). In other words, the export index becomes the strategic element of capitalist accumulation as the point of departure for the productive model. In theory, the developmentalist project should enhance the national market relative to the external demand, promoting a deep transformation of the national economy, thus possibly breaking away with the vicious circle of structural dependency. In other words, industrialization and State planning is the path for overcoming levels of poverty.

Before the end of the progressive cycle, in fact, most of the criticisms against these governments stemmed from two main positions. First, those that point out that these governments were not sufficiently developmentalist, making it impossible to break away from neoliberalism, and an external alliance with financial forces hindering any real potential for emancipation. This line of argumentation is followed by the

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<sup>12</sup> Antonio Negri & Giuseppe Cocco. “Globo(AL), biopoder e lutas em uma América Latina globalizada”, Record, 2005.

criticism, exemplified in the Venezuelan case, of not diversifying the national economy beyond the nonproductive matrix of petro-industry. In the Brazilian case, the criticism is organized against what is taken to be a “primary form of economy”, even if agro-business is also a large scale industry, intertwined to bio-engineering, financial, brand and commercial sectors. The second type of critique limits itself to the denunciation of extractivist excesses, as if the developmentalist project was grounded in an efficient direction, but only lacking an ethical dimension to impacted communities and more care for environmental policies. Both the industrialist critiques (1st position) and the social-liberal (2nd position) lose sight of a central internal limit to the progressive developmentalist model, to which I will return in the latter part of the essay.<sup>13</sup>

Across the board, the progressive governments emerged from democratic mobilizations from below. Chavez’ Bolivarian Revolution emerged out of the Caracazo (1989); Ecuador’s Citizen Revolution from the urban riots (1997-2001) and the “forajidos” rebellion(2005); Bolivia’s democratic and cultural revolution was a result of the insurgent cycle of 2000-2005 along with the Water and Gas wars in 2000 and 2003.<sup>14</sup> In the cases of Brazil and Argentina, the 1997 Asian crisis catalyzed the crumbling of neoliberal stability leading to the 2001 crisis in Argentina, whose social protagonists were *piqueteros* and *cacerolazos* before Kirchnerismo – while the ascension of Lula to power came from three different electoral defeats (1989, 1994,

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<sup>13</sup> The liberal critique based on rights is a “weak” first level critique against developmentalism. A second-degree critique is also “weak”, since it substitutes the juridical limit by a qualitative one that meshes the anthropic principle of Malthusian thought with mathematic determinations. Some contemporary thinkers of capitalism, such as geographer David Harvey, regularly argue that capital is limitless and of infinite expansion. According to Marx, however, the limit of capital is class, and class power. The fragments on the machines in the *Grundrisse*, Marx’s most eschatological text, have the merit of placing a limit of the extensive to the intensive via-a-vis the machination of the social. This would a strong third degree critique related to the production of subjectivity. The idea of catastrophe can be disputed as capitalism’s own catastrophe at the moment of its maximum antagonism. From the South, this immanent analysis of developmentalism becomes contaminated with materials from the alter-developmental matrix, as developed by Alberto Acosta and Salvador Schavelzon. In this sense, instead of being determined by the outside by capital’s transcendental will, one could also think of resistance as the transformation of subjectivity in its becoming. In this sense, one could turn the logic of developmentalism by becoming-Indian of developmentalism as I argue in “Devir-indio, devir-pobre”, <http://www.quadradosloucos.com.br/.../devir-pobre-deva-in.../>). Deleuze and Guattari in the *Anti-Oedipus* deploy the concept Body-without-organs (BwO) as the figure of the catastrophe.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandre Mendes & Bruno Cava. “O Podemos e os enigmas que vêm do sul”, <http://www.diplomatique.org.br/artigo.php?id=1870>

and 1998). It is important to emphasize, however, that the convergence of these revolts with alter-globalization movements in Seattle and Genova (articulated in the horizon of Chiapas) allowed for a mestizaje of the autonomist generation of the 1990s with the more traditional Latin-American left of the seventies. An example of this encounter was the organization of the Global Social Forums (FSM) that took place in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul governed by Lula's PT.

The democratic mobilizations conveyed a much-needed drift in governmental policies at a moment when the developmentalist model began to directly invest in the social sphere. The reallocation of public budget determined an unseen liberation of manual labor which reinvented the economy from below, promoted a period of economic growth that reduced social and regional inequalities. All of the socio-economic indexes show the success of these social policies that, without the State and market mediations, transferred rent thus increasing the salary ceiling and expanding popular credit (WB Group, 2014). The impact of this transformation was felt at multiple levels, but there is no doubt that it sparked a profound change in most of Latin-American societies. There is a generalized interpretation of the success of the progressive cycle that points to the export indexes in connection to the expansion of the Chinese economy and the international commodities (like oil, which rose to a peak \$100 a barrel) as the central key to the economic contention during the economic crisis of 2008-2009 without giving up the operation of redistribution. What seems to be left out from this analysis is the possibility of considering that the strengthening of the internal market was conditioned to the relative transformation of the social productive forces and the formation of virtuous economic circuits (regardless of the industrial success or limitations), as well as to the overall tendency towards autonomous exports.

The developmentalist principles adopted by the progressive governments were formulated before the decline of the Keynesian Fordist model of the seventies and the arrival of financial globalization. In this way, industrialization is understood as the path opening towards emancipation, whether it is through proletarianization with class consciousness, or through the "base reforms" (Furtado 1976) in a more diachronic analysis. Also, the developmentalist success of the Brazilian dictatorship



(1964-85), through the 2nd National Plan of Development (PND), drove to a conclusion the “iron cycle” coinciding with the moment of the silicon revolution that began in California. After three decades, the productive sector no longer coincided with the industrial sector, since the developmentalist projects continue being measured through indexes that no longer account for the overdetermination of the “capital of communism” that drives financialized forms.<sup>15</sup> The attempt to isolate the working sector through investment indexes became a mirrored image, leading to a parallel accumulation of capital in the hands of the traditional oligarchic elites that should have been the target of their antagonism in the first place.

In any case, it is important to emphasize the singularity of both Bolivian and Ecuadorian constituent political processes that forced mobilizations at the margins of developmentalist agendas, such as the plurinational construction based on “Buen Vivir”,<sup>16</sup> or Correa’s techno-populism based on the economy of knowledge that copied not so much the Cuban model as it did the South Korean.<sup>17</sup> In spite of these designs, the respective cases of TIPNIS and Yasuni-ITT signaled the resolution of tensions and contradictions within the rich Andean political experiences, impacting the developmentalist project as well as the dynamic between governments and the social movements. The complex biopolitical practices of autonomy and the common became reduced to a social-progressive horizon, as Alberto Acosta and Salvador Schavelzon have argued.<sup>18</sup> No two other statesmen express the primacy of this necessity better than Rafael Correa and Vice-president Álvaro García Linera, who

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<sup>15</sup> Andrea Fumagalli & Sandro Mezzadra. “A crise da economia global”, Record, 2011. See also *KorpoBraz* (2013) by Giuseppe Cocco.

<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive study of the notion of “Buen Vivir” in Bolivia and Ecuador, see *Plurinacionalidad y Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir: dos conceptos leídos desde Bolivia y Ecuador post-constituyentes* (CLACSO, 2015) by Salvador Schavelzon.

<sup>17</sup> Pablo Stefanoni. “La utopía coreana en los Andes”, <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=171279> and Carlos de la Torre’s “El tecnopopulismo de Rafael Correa: ¿Es compatible el carisma con la tecnocracia?”, <https://muse.jhu.edu/login...>

<sup>18</sup> Alberto Acosta. “O Buen Vivir, uma Oportunidade de Imaginar Outro Mundo”, [br.boell.org/sit.../default/files/downloads/alberto\\_acosta.pdf](http://br.boell.org/sit.../default/files/downloads/alberto_acosta.pdf)

have repeatedly affirmed the necessity of the developmentalist project as the condition for the State's struggle to eradicate poverty.<sup>19</sup> In the rhetoric of García Linera's, the quintessential intellectual of the progressive cycle, one could read the internal limit of developmentalism from the left.<sup>20</sup>

There is a lot of discussion on inequality, but not much about exploitation.<sup>21</sup> Capital is understood not as social relation that organizes the very relations between society and state. Rather, the question of capital appears, inversely, as an organizing principle from both outside and above, a master trope that the state will oppose in a molar tension in the social division of wealth. It is no coincidence that the recent mobilizations are classified as wanting to destabilize the state in the name of restoring neoliberalism. This happened in the uprisings of 2013 in Brazil – in some respects, a far echo of the Argentine *¡Que se vayan todos!*<sup>22</sup>– coinciding with the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011,<sup>23</sup> and Venezuela in 2014 and those in Ecuador in 2015.<sup>24</sup> All of these uprisings were delegitimized by the progressive governments, and re-coded as “vandalism” in Brazil, as “coup” in Venezuela, or as “terrorism” in Ecuador. The state's discourse, moreover, contributed to institutional atrophy pointing to the radical democratization in a “national-state” matrix,<sup>25</sup> undermining its potential for political renovation. This was a common pattern across the region in terms of dealing with social movements in each occurrence of protest.

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<sup>19</sup> Álvaro García Linera. “Empate catastrófico y punto de bifurcación”, <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/.../se.../CyE/cye2Sta.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Álvaro García Linera. “O socialismo é a radicalização da democracia”, interview with, <http://www.cartamaior.com.br/...> (2015)

<sup>21</sup> I follow here the insight developed Giuseppe Cocco in the above-cited interview.

<sup>22</sup> Ariel Pennisi. “Imagens e anacronismos; a questão do demos entre o 2001 argentino e o 2013 brasileiro”, *Revista Lugar Comum* n.º 45, <http://uninomade.net/lugarcomum/45/>.

<sup>23</sup> Alexandre Mendes. A good summary could read in “Ocupações estudantis: novas assembleias constituintes diante da crise?”, <http://uninomade.net/.../ocupacoes-estudantis-novas-assemble.../>

<sup>24</sup> Pablo Ospinta Peralta. “¿Por qué protestan en Ecuador?” <http://nuso.org/articulo/por-que-protestan-en-ecuador/>

<sup>25</sup> Pablo Stefanoni. “Chavismo, Guerra Fría y visiones ‘campistas’”. <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=165376>

We are dealing with a Leftist mixture of Hegelianism and Marxism, where the state appears as the privileged dialectical synthesis that justifies every phenomena through “correlations of forces”. But this is yet another name for the Hegelian equation, “the Real equals the Rational”. This could be transferred to the international scene, where a new dialectic between economy and the world becomes the BRICs synthesis as the international counter-power to North American imperialism. A version of this dichotomy was already in place in Montesquieu’s thought in the account of *checks and balances*.<sup>26</sup> The sympathy for the Chinese model is not only nostalgia for the Cold War division, but more importantly a new developmentalist economic matrix. The restoration of the Washington consensus gets rewritten as the Beijing consensus.<sup>27</sup> An explicit contradiction hides the all too familiar fluxes through a unifying principle as the one proposed by Deng in 1976: “planning and market forces are two forms that control economic activity”.<sup>28</sup> Since dialectics accepts anything, even waving red flags and aligning with the socialist party (as in the Brazilian case), it could govern along with national oligarchies and the corporate class. One cannot govern with Kátia Abreu, the agribusiness queen, and at the same time defend developmentalism as you were Rosa Luxemburg. Only Hegelians can accomplish this impossible task.

The difference between speaking about inequality and thinking exploitation is that, in the case of the latter, what is emphasized is the social constitution embedded in exploitation, and consequently its antagonistic character. To speak of inequality instead of exploitation allows thinking to occur in terms of social stratifications in a sociological frame instead of through the antagonism constitutive of social relations

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<sup>26</sup> We could cite as example that the fundamental contradictions are central to the model of accumulation and the capitalist continuity. This process of deterritorialization of capitals is at the center of Giovanni Arrighi’s *Il lungo XX secolo: denaro, potere e le origini del nostro tempo* (1996).

<sup>27</sup> I am following here Giuseppe Cocco’s analysis of China and the BRICs. The economic matrix designed by Nelson Barbosa follows principles of the post-1976 Chinese model.

<sup>28</sup> Deng Xiaoping cited in John Gittings’ *The changing face of China: from Mao to Market*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

in capital. That is, the transformation of the social composition corresponds to the dissension of the social composition to a molecular form. There is little to lament, however, with the ideal of building a working class that will fit the European modalities of Fordist industrialism. The conditions for proletarianization in Latin America already entail an intrinsic post-Fordist form of proletarianization. As argued by Giuseppe Cocco, in this *sui generis* proletarianization the poor are excluded as poor.<sup>29</sup> Combating poverty has an ambiguous dimension in the official rhetoric that leans towards the domestication of the problem, instead of affirming its antagonistic potential. If the progressive cycle ideal of inclusion is the inclusion of the poor in terms of exploitation (and not only in quantitative terms of reducing inequality), then there exists a resistance dimension of the poor, a creative and productive dimension that exceeds the narrative of “State vs. Capital” duopoly.

The critics of the proletarianization of the South, focusing on the moral pattern fixed by consumer democratization,<sup>30</sup> or that of an anamorphic and disorganized sub-proletarian tend to exclude the transformations at the level of class.<sup>31</sup> This has been expressed not only in the new cycle of struggles beyond the progressive horizon, to the extent of even voting slightly to the right-wing political forces. In order to capture this polarization from below internal to the crisis, Giuseppe Cocco and I proposed a *savage Lulism*,<sup>32</sup> a potential block of singularities of the new mobilization phase of the poor that was repressed by the Left itself.<sup>33</sup> On the other side of mobilizations and constituent struggles, the conquests of the progressive cycle have systematically

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<sup>29</sup> This is the axis of the *operaismo* conceptual analysis used by Cocco to understand the mobilization of the poor in the last fifteen years in Brazil. See his books *MundoBraz* (2009) y *KorpoBraz* (2013).

<sup>30</sup> For Emir Sader is the central struggle is the “battle of ideas” against neoliberal ideology. See his “Vencer a batalha das ideias”, <http://cartamaior.com.br/...>

<sup>31</sup> André Singer, voicing the Leftist sector of the PT, has advanced the concept of the “sub-proletarian”, emerged during the Lula years. See “Os sentidos do lulismo: reforma gradual e pacto conservador” (2012).

<sup>32</sup> Giuseppe Cocco & Bruno Cava. “Vogliamo tutto! Le giornate di giugno in Brasile: la costituzione selvaggia della moltitudine del lavoro metropolitano”, <http://www.euronomade.info/?p=173>

<sup>33</sup> Amarildo was the visible face of the 2013 Brazilian uprising, where the expression for organization of the poor, against the grain of biopolitical organization, was affirmed around those of color and indigenous submitted to the dominance of megaprojects of urban development. See “A luta pela paz”, by Giuseppe Cocco, Eduardo Baker and Bruno Cava, <http://www.diplomatique.org.br/artigo.php?id=1569>

worked miraculously, since it becomes a paranoid symbolic patrimony that must persist uncontested.

It is not enough to lament or contest the end of the progressive cycle, or even overemphasize the return of the “New Right” in a conjunction like ours that is traversed by multiple fluctuations, new social actors, and intensities.

A critique sustained on how the progressive cycle was not being socialist, developmentalist, or voluntarist *enough*, paving the way from the rise of liberal opponents (Mauricio Macri in Argentina, Henrique Capriles in Venezuela, or Mauricio Rodas in Ecuador) is insufficient. It is important to acknowledge that the progressive governments succeeded and because of this victory, ambiguous results are now emerging. The dynamics of mass mobilizations will reshape the developmentalist projects and explain what national criollo intellectuals cannot longer clarify. The task is to liberate the analysis from black and white epics or dialectical narratives, as to reopen political imagination to a new social and economic composition in the region. We can leave the process of mourning to a global left still haunted by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism. First, one must liberate oneself from an “impotent pseudo-heroism”.<sup>34</sup> All walls must fall in order to generate new experiences of action and thought.

*\*In writing this article, I want to highlight the important interlocutors outside of Brazil, such as Diego Sztulwark, Veronica Gago, Salvador Schavelzon, Santiago Arcos, Pablo Stefanoni, Ariel Pennisi, Bruno Napoli, Mauricio Villacrez, Pablo Hupert, Nicolás F. Muriano, Melisa Gorondy Novak, Bernardo Gutiérrez, Cesar Altamira, Gerardo Muñoz, Alberto Acosta, Oscar Camacho, and Nemo Niente.*

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<sup>34</sup> *Lobo Suelto!* Editorial. “El país banal”, <http://anarquiacoronada.blogspot.com.br/.../11/o-pais-banal.h...>

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SERGIO VILLALOBOS-RUMINOTT<sup>1</sup>

## The Chilean Case and the Latin American Pink Tide: Between Democracy and Developmentalism<sup>2</sup>

The so called *Marea Rosada* (Pink Tide) specifically refers to the turn that several Latin American governments took by the end of the 90s, in favor of public and social agendas that opposed the neoliberal order that characterized the region in the previous decades. These new agendas also broke away from the age-old ideal of revolutionary partisanship, pursuing a critique of neoliberalism that was not reducible to a radical (impossible) delinking still embedded in the logic of accumulation. The new political agenda brought to the fore by the governments of the Marea Rosada without opposing neoliberalism tried to radically modify its logic and produce a more humane economy. In spite of the anti-imperialist and nationalist rhetoric that have flourished in the regional Left, it is also true that for cases such as the Chilean and the Brazilian ones the scene is dominated by a type of government that seeks to correct unjust income distribution while maintaining a disciplined fiscal budget as to facilitate its entry into international markets.

Even so, the nationalizations that have recently taken place in Venezuela, Argentina, and Bolivia seem to contradict the balanced rhetoric and practice of the Marea Rosada. This series of heterogeneous initiatives seems to respond to an age old agenda

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<sup>2</sup> This article was translated by Gerardo Muñoz. It was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/5/24/the-chilean-case-and-the-latin-american-pink-tide-between-democracy-and-developmentalism> on May 24th, 2016.

inscribed in the logic of the imperial geopolitical order toppled by contemporary globalization. In any case, it comes as no surprise that the Chilean case is still used today as the paradigm to distort the potential for more radical options.

One must recall that Chile underwent its formal transition to democracy in the early nineties immediately after experiencing one of the longest and most brutal military dictatorships in the region. However, what gave the Chilean case its notoriety was not just its constricted democratization, but its position as an ideal model for implementing neoliberal policies in authoritarian conditions. While neoliberal policies were being applied in the rest of Latin America during transitional or democratic periods, Chile already opted for a distinct neoliberal path since the 70s (Harvey 2007), appeasing social unrest through forms of anti-communist security rhetoric. At the same time, the transition to democracy in Chile, formally inaugurated in 1990, was oriented to the administration of macroeconomic policies supplemented with neoliberal engineering born out of the dictatorship. Attenuating its social impact through light redistributive policies, such as fixed bonds and selective assignments, class composition or the overall pattern of wealth or ownership distribution were not altered in a significant way.

To this one should also add that the high price of copper, the main national product, together with the arrival of China to the international market, produced an exceptional financial situation that favors the political strategies of a government uninterested in serious political or economic reforms. In other words, this increase in the price of copper on the international market produced a surplus in the fiscal budget that allowed for multiple redistributive initiatives without really altering the monetary policies, the interest rates on property and profit, or the condition of international exchange. During the years that followed the Pinochet dictatorship, the administrations of *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia* devoted themselves to politically managing this model, balancing its own deficiency vis-à-vis a permanent strategy of social deferral and forced social mourning, while incapable of advancing judicial accountability for crimes committed during the dictatorship; many of these criminals were recycled in the state bureaucracy and intelligence apparatus.



The experience of the Brazilian PT, Bolivia's MAS, or the state transformation initiated by Kirchnerismo in Argentina could serve as a contrast to the Chilean case, since in Chile the processes of radical popular organizations that made explicit the crisis of governability of the dictatorships in the 80s were appropriated by the old political elite, constituting itself as the central political actor when the dictatorship ended. From this process of juxtaposition of old partisan cadres and its actors, minimally renewed through social democratic robes, a logic of hegemony under which the central actors continued to be the state, the national army, and the traditional political parties was rearticulated. Thus, in the 90s we see the emergence of a securitarian rhetoric directed not anymore against the communist, but against the delinquent, the drug lord, or even indigenous people and anarchists. This served a single goal: political decisions had to be consensually taken within Parliament and among parties, and not in the streets. There was a clear need to deactivate the social movements that, against all odds, had not ceased to occupy the streets and protest the inherent contradictions of the Chilean democracy.

On the other hand, one of the clearest signs of the institutional or juristocratic (Hirschl 2007) limits of the Chilean model rest, precisely, on the indefinite postponement of demands of the subaltern indigenous population, traditionally punished under times of dictatorship and subjected to the policies of appropriation by banks and by the forestry sector. Chilean democracy, recovered during the early 90s according to the official state discourse, was a zero-sum game for the Mapuche movement. The official acceptance of the multicultural and pluri-ethnic character of the nation, vis-à-vis a fetishistic, ideal, totemic indigeneity, only deviated the gaze from the repressive policies directed at the Mapuche people to the folkloric representation of the indigenous as yet another touristic catalogue of curiosities. The appropriation by dispossession studied by Marxist geographer David Harvey (2007) becomes evident not only during the time of the dictatorship, but also in the need for energetic developmentalist expansion that amounts to the sacking of natural resources such as rivers, lakes, and forests.

### **The continuation of dictatorship within democracy**

The concentration of wealth, the precarization of the lives of the popular sector, the hasty increase of financial profit in pension investments, health, or banking, along with the public debt and criminal interest rates, the sustained drive to privatize natural resources, and the overwhelming presence of corporate elites within the state apparatuses (the same families rotate in public appointments), not only confirm the limited character of the Chilean democracy, but the perpetuity of the dictatorship within the so-called “democracy”. The re-election of Michelle Bachelet, following a series of social protests that bear witness to the incapacity of the center-right administration, was conducted on the basis of a promise for structural constitutional reforms and deep changes in the health and education sectors; changes that have not taken place as of today.

Certainly, these reforms have yet to take place, and have only been accommodated through institutional consent, capturing the social demands of recent years within parliament. Chile, the exemplary model of a center-left government, is in fact a classic example of a governmental administration responsible for the neoliberal model and its macroeconomic policies in the hands of an uncreative political class that superficially reinvented itself by changing its name from *La Concertación* to *La Nueva Mayoría*. The political frame of this false premise remains the same as the one conceived in the 1980 Constitution, which functioned as an effective juridical trap fomenting the operative legacy of the dictatorship.

### **The question of the state form**

I would like however to restate the fact that this description of the Chilean case is not *symptomatic* of the rest of Latin America, nor is it based upon a political discontent or a moral denunciation on my part. To be precise, I think that the Chilean case allows us to formulate the question about the form and function of the *late Latin American states* in general. This is a central question that needs to be raised at the moment.

First, I would like to clarify what I mean by *late state form*. I argue that it is not simply a question of the historical evolution of the state, but rather, it is related to the process

of institutional re-foundation that the region has been going through. Taking into consideration the constituent processes and new constitutions in Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and to some extent the constitutional reforms in Chile and Central America, this new beginning is regularly associated with the evident failure of the post-colonial republican project that emerged out of the consequences of nineteenth century emancipatory movements and civil wars. I do not mean that this failure is associated with a precise moment of globalization understood as the universalization of the flexible pattern of accumulation constitutive of contemporary capitalism, but rather globalization itself is the *coup de grace* of a republican post-colonial project always already in crisis.

Second, it seems to me that it is important to determine the specific *function and form* of this late Latin American state. In principle, discussing the form is relevant because what is at stake goes beyond the differentiation between an institutional restructuration and the contingent political organization at the level of government. These two levels of analysis are not enough. From the question about state form emerges the problem of the status of law and power as a single machine that allows us to take a certain distance from the monumental notions that tend to delimit politics on variations of one and the same model of domination. In the same way that a contemporary genealogical discourse broke away from the institutional or monumental schematics of power, we need to think the state not as a transcendental entity, but as a field of struggle (*campo de lucha*), as defined in the discussions of the members of the group Comuna in Bolivia and Álvaro García Linera (2010).

In a similar way, instead of thinking sovereignty as an attribute proper to the juridical state order (always already pre-defined as the master key of modern governmentality and condition of the biopolitical closure), it would be pertinent to think of sovereignty as an indeterminate relationship. One could argue the same for law. Far from being a simple ideological supplement to domination (a mythic violence that conserves the social order), it is also a performative practice open to juridical creativity. I think this is what is at stake in recent theoretical debates (as in Derrida's critique to Agamben's notion of *Homo Sacer*, or in Deleuze re-elaboration of Hume's associationism and jurisprudence); that is, the possibility of thinking the state, the

sovereign relation and the law not as separate markers on social life, but also as indeterminate instances that wage and define the political struggles in the present. In this sense, the question of the late *Latin American state form* is also a question of the instances where that state, far from being a simple ideological apparatus of reproduction and confirmation of class domination, is a field in which this domination is articulated, but also where it could be interrupted.<sup>3</sup>

### Post-neoliberalism?

Finally, the question of the function of the late Latin American state form is related to the possibility of discussing what has been called post-neoliberalism; or alternatively, second-order neoliberalism, which, hinging on the state as the catechon or the containment of the demands of social movements (through diverse forms of repressive and persuasive strategies), guarantees the hegemony of capital and secures the macroeconomic space for flexible patterns of accumulation.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, if neoliberalism was effectively implemented in Chile, within the frame of an authoritarian government that resulted in policies of fiscal adjustment, reduction of social expenditure, and financial deregulation; neoliberalism of the second order does not seem to need military dictatorships, since it articulates itself with a state that lacks interventionist potential with the ultimate responsibility of securing the productive and extractive processes in line with what Maristella Svampa has termed the commodities consensus and destructive-development (*maldesarrollo*) (2007).<sup>5</sup>

I want to linger on this aporia: if on the one hand the state form indicates an opening for struggles of social transformation, on the other, the determination of its function is what demonstrates the extent to which those initiatives of social transformation taken up by the governments of the *Marea Rosada* have viability or remain palliative

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida. *The Beast and the Sovereign I*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 408-443. Gilles Deleuze. *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*. New York: Zone Books, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> For post-neoliberalism or what I am calling second order neoliberalism, see Verónica Gago's *La razón neoliberal: economías barrocas y pragmática popular* (Tinta Limón, 2015). The flexible pattern of accumulation is the object of exploration in Gareth William's *The Other Side of the Popular* (Duke, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2015/4/22/the-commodities-consensus-and-valuation-languages-in-latin-america-1>

to what John Kraniauskas has called “the cunning of capital” (2014). To what extent have the redistributive policies not only been able to produce substantial welfare structure, but also remain active enough as to keep the constituent political processes expanding the democratic institutions in their struggle against transnational capital?

Perhaps this is, once again, the lesson to be learned from the Chilean case: far from confirming the empowerment of social movements that have disputed neoliberal rationality, the “political class” entrenches itself around the state’s Pinochet-designed Constitution that has consistently expropriated citizen participation, enclosing their demands within the narrow institutional parliamentary frame. To repeat, this should not be taken as a moral critique of the status quo, but as a historical reflection on how this particular “political class” continually perpetuates political distrust of the social movements and the “people”.

The “people” that I am referring to, however, cannot be considered as the historical subject produced within national identity, nor an ethnic-political subject of the liberal criollo project. Nor can it be its “neo-indigenist” symmetrical inversion. “People” refers, on the contrary, to a cathacretic figure, unrepresentable by the modern categories of the political as George Didi-Huberman has recently suggested (2014). Instead of being an “exposed people” (*pueblo expuesto*), as in the case of the juridical and historical narratives about The People, narratives that conform and determine, normatively, what this people should be, we are referring to a “figuring people” (*pueblo figurante*) that deactivates the very coordinates of juridical, political, and cultural representation polluting the logic of populism and its fictive ethnicity with multiple forms of participation and social constitutions (Williams 1999).

Therefore, I am not thinking of the “people” of the modern Latin American political (hegemonic) imagination, but rather in the “peoples” where one can account for the possibility of interrupting the savage processes of accumulation in force today. It is in the “peoples” where the *Marea Rosada* should have placed their bet (instead of inscribing them as another emancipatory subject), so as to locate a central actor to wage a battle no longer situated in the infinite reproduction of the total apparatus of development (its governability, security, private property, and the market), but in the

potentiality of other forms of power and social organization. This would be a politics oriented towards a “plebian experience”, as traced by Martin Breugh (2013), where the plebe names the improper site of a community without attributes that allows for dissent as the fundamental condition for a profane republicanism in our times.

The current ‘exhaustion of Marea Rosada governments’, denoted by other scholars, is due both to the inability to fulfill their promises and to the structural exhaustion of the modern Latin American political imagination.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, the progressive and democratic character of these governments does not transcend that historical imagination, placing them in what we might call a late version of traditional *criollismo*. This *criollismo tardío* (including the decolonial delinking option) is a horizon of thinking still unable to understand politics and history as something other than the battle for recognition, limiting contemporary heterogeneous practices of resistance to neoliberalism to the identitarian agenda of state politics.

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<sup>6</sup> On the question of the ‘exhaustion’ or crisis of the political cycle, see in this dossier the articles by Bruno Cava, Gerardo Muñoz, and Salvador Schavelzon.

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SALVADOR SCHAVELZON<sup>1</sup>

## The End of the Progressive Narrative in Latin America<sup>2</sup>

Are we witnessing the end of the progressive governments' cycle in Latin America? This question seems to come up after every electoral defeat or disappear whenever there is a victory. After more than a decade of continuous political successes in Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, as well as other Central Americas countries, 2015 was the year that signaled adverse results and a drop in electoral support began. Without diminishing the importance of elections, whence the progressive governments derived their legitimacy, it is the time to evaluate the vitality of the political projects away from the narratives that constituted them in their peak moment. Beyond the polls, there looms an undetermined time of change. Due exhaustion of the model and to the internal transformation of the progressive, plurinational or Bolivarian political narrative (electoral defeats), we find a political language that was able to inscribe a new political time in Latin America, which comes to an halt with leaders involved in charges of corruption and as well as accompanied by the lowest indexes of popular support.

Since progressive governments occupy the center of the political spectrum, there has

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<sup>2</sup> A first version of this article was published in Spanish in June 2015 in the Bolivian newspaper La Razón. Vice-president, Álvaro García Linera declared in national TV that it was impossible to speak of an end of the progressive cycle in Latin America, was one of the first to react to this piece. A few months after, the electoral results in Bolivia made visible the need to rethink the internal political crisis of the MAS government. This is a revised and updated version of the original article with new statistics and bibliographic references for the publication in this special issue. Open Democracy translated an early English version of the Bolivian original, and Gerardo Muñoz substantially modified the English translation for the purposes of this dossier. In Alternautas the article was published in: <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/5/24/the-end-of-the-progressive-narrative-in-latin-america> on May 24th, 2016.



been a reshuffling of forces and mounting mobilization on both the left and the right. The map of the political situation is not homogeneous and cannot be generalized, but *governistas* (governists) — the term used in Brazil to refer to militant government supporters with strong participation in social networks and characterized for not accepting the slightest criticism, combined with a rhetoric of pragmatic politics — expressed some degree of concern. After taking the first policy measures in the aftermath of its close win in the October 2014 elections, *governismo* in Brazil showed remarkable difficulties in holding on to its own narrative. Brazil was probably the country where the end of the political cycle was visible for the first time. In part, due to the fact that it was the country that did not experience a strong systemic transformation of the political system, obliging the PT to govern with political allies that did not necessarily shared their same ideals. The defeat of *kirchnerismo* in Argentina and *chavismo* in Venezuela tragically demonstrated the political fragility of the situation. A few years ago it would have been difficult to imagine losing broad popular support or achieving victory by thin margins.<sup>3</sup>

The political climate is not very different from the one in Bolivia and Ecuador, where the opposition has won important cities, leading up to Rafael Correa's refusal of his candidacy for the next national elections, as well as the recent defeat of Evo Morales' in referendum for presidential reelection. In 2016, too, Dilma Rousseff lost the support of allies, which opened an impeachment process in the parliament.

Although it is true that contemporary electoral campaigns are confined to political marketing and to the languages of commercial advertising, it is imperative to analyze the nature of the progressive political projects at a greater depth; that is, beyond the electoral moments and against rhetorical arguments that sustain the progressive narratives. In this analytical register, we find that the social movements that ignited

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<sup>3</sup> This is evident in Ernesto Laclau's words a few months before passing away regarding current President Mauricio Macri: "[Macri] tiene tantas posibilidades de ser presidente constitucional en la Argentina como yo de ser emperador de Japón". (*La Nación* 16/11/2013). <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1680549-la-ultima-entrevista-de-ernesto-laclau-con-la-nacion>

new political agendas that in turn paved the way for the emergence of the progressive governments have lost most of their creative energy and potential for effective transformation. The disappearance of the social movements and urban protests from the political scene reintroduced the discourses and insistent practices favoring governmental administration.<sup>4</sup> It is from this space whence conservative positions, led by corporate lobbies, could in fact win spaces that are far removed from the political vision that initially supported the governments.

The arrival of a neoliberalism foisted by taking minimal decisions or renouncing other alternatives, has delimited the space of the narrative of social inclusion, the battle against inequality, the sovereignty and privilege of the social space; in short, all the elements to which these governments committed themselves following the election of Hugo Chavez in 1999. After leading an electoral campaign that exalted these principles, Dilma Rousseff appointed conservative ministers and opened the doors for austerity policies and fiscal adjustment that ran counter to her promises during the campaign. This resulted in the end of the grand narrative that functioned to legitimize the government. In this way, according to polls (April and May 2015), Dilma Rousseff's approval rate lies between 7 and 10 percent. And her once extremely popular predecessor Lula da Silva, a likely candidate for 2018, is starting to be affected by current discontent.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to an indignant opposition, government criticism has quickly reached the mass of its own voters. To the most cynical governists, however, neoliberalism is a

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<sup>4</sup> Joao Pedro Stedile, leader of the largest social movement in Latin America, MST (Movimento Sem Terra) explained the Dilma Government to BBC Brasil in these terms: "O governo Dilma paralisou o processo de reforma agrária, sobretudo nos últimos dois anos. As únicas famílias que aparecem como assentadas foram na verdade colocadas em lotes vagos de assentamentos antigos. [...] Estamos completamente insatisfeitos com o governo Dilma. No final do ano, com a troca do ministro da Fazenda, quando parecia que ela poderia recuperar seus compromissos de campanha, nos assustamos ao vê-la retornando à política neoliberal, com a reforma da Previdência. Depois fez acordo com (José) Serra (PSDB-SP) para encaminhar as reservas do pré-sal [oil reserves] a empresas e levou ao Congresso uma lei antiterrorismo que nem na Europa se atreveram a levar. Fez cortes que atingiram fundamentalmente educação, saúde, moradia e reforma agrária. É burrice, é um governo que não se deu conta que, com a agenda neoliberal, perde a base social que o **elegeu**." [http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/03/160304\\_stedile\\_rs](http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2016/03/160304_stedile_rs)

<sup>5</sup> In December 2015, the opposition taking advantage of the lack of popular support, translated the crisis into a process of impeachment that began in May 2016 leading to Rousseff deposition of her executive position and the temporal taking command of ex-vice-president Michel Temer.

stage left behind, and the current drop in popularity is due to a crisis in the making for which they hold no responsibility, and to the influence of the mainstream media. There is still talk about the “Revolución Ciudadana” in Ecuador or “proceso de cambio” in Bolivia, when in fact what we are witnessing is the decline of the effectiveness of those enunciations. In fact, Dilma Rousseff’s popularity was already very low during the clashes of June 2013, and later during the FIFA world cup in 2014. On these two occasions, the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT), corporate power, the allied conservative parties, and the opposition became indistinctive political actors.

A perception of a conservative front being joined by progressivism is precisely what triggered the breaking of the progressive narrative. In the opposite direction, the presidential election of 2014 allowed the PT to recover its historic voters thanks to a remarkable polarization of the electorate. It did away with both Marina Silva, perceived as an associate of neoliberalism, and Aetius Neves, outplayed by the focus on social issues during the campaign. It would not be too strange to compare this situation to other national realities. During times of election there is always polarization, in contrast to the time of governing, when there tends to be a unified conservative front.<sup>6</sup>

But the disenchanted majority vote for Dilma was followed by real outrage at the appointments to the cabinet and the first government measures. Together with austerity, in sharp contrast to the campaign promises still ringing in people’s ears, Lula and Rousseff’s PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*) accepted the inclusion of the economic advisor from the opposition, and to undertake spending cuts weighing on the working classes and on education. Another shocking appointment (as Minister of Agriculture) was that of Katia Abreu, director of the corporate agricultural association, who some time before had been awarded by the indigenous peoples a symbolic prize for her role defending environmental crimes and promoting the expansion of agribusiness in indigenous lands. These gestures to the markets did

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<sup>6</sup> In opposition to the movement from the streets lived in Brazil in 2013; the polarization that was imposed in 2014 was again the frame of the political situation when the impeachment, presented by the government as a coup d’Etat, was proposed.

nothing to neutralize the demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of citizens calling for Dilma's impeachment. Stressing an anti-corruption platform, they hinted at the possibility of a closing of the cycle in a most conservative way. The voices that were first heard in the streets are now also being expressed in Congress. There, the influence of *la Bala, el Buey y la Biblia* (the Bullet, the Ox and the Bible – also known as BBB) has grown significantly as they control the House of Representatives and exert much more influence in the government than social movements. These political forces on the far right have recently united in favor of the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, in spite of having received allocated key political ministries and support from the PT.

Conservative sectors both in government and within the opposition managed to curb ongoing anti-homophobic educational initiatives (such as the lack of printed material on anti-homophobic education in public schools, called “kit-gay” by the conservative forces) to pass a constitutional amendment reducing age of criminal responsibility (to sixteen years of age), and to allow outsourcing in all sectors of the economy. The end of the cycle is happening in Brazil through the abandonment of the project of change that brought *progresismo* (left) to power and the inability to mobilize the citizenry and stop conservative reforms, with the progressives' direct involvement in these reforms in some cases (i.e. the deterioration of labor rights, an initiative from Rousseff's government after raising the age for retirement). Nevertheless, *progresismo* is still in command, and in Brazil could very well come out on top again by campaigning against the same sectors with which it actually runs the country.

### The worship of technocracy

The end of the cycle entails the acceptance of a conservative model considered to be a necessary condition for stability and political continuity. Opinion polls and electoral calculation therefore determine the *gobernista* political project, leaning towards the cult of institutions and technocracy while maintaining a discourse that, by focusing on social issues, caters to its original constituency. In Argentina, Kirchnerism lost the presidential election fielding a candidate, Daniel Scioli, who was first launched into to political sphere by Carlos Menem. He never enjoyed Néstor

Kirchner's and Cristina Fernández's confidence, but was accepted thanks to his strong performance in the polls. Scioli's candidacy attests to two things: that Peronism is still more than Kirchnerism, and that it holds political positions very similar to those of its rivals' in the conservative arena. Another generic trend seems to be that the progressive *governists* want to defend their governmental position vis-a-vis a metamorphosing of right-wing discourses. By abandoning the route that would allow for antagonism between the government and the rural entrepreneurs (Argentina), or taxation of net wealth (in Brazil and other countries), there is a return to explicit policies of security and nationalist discourses that displace the struggle for social rights and a Latin Americanist integrationist effort.

Old politics are also creeping into the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement towards Socialism — MAS) in Bolivia. MAS' hegemonic tendencies have led to co-opt media and recycled opposition figures, as if decisions on candidates and election agreements had no consequences on the grounds of the political project. Any objectives other than occupying institutions are thus being dismissed, and popular mobilization is being replaced by the assumption of the adversary's positions, views, and demands. Any attempts to put forward stronger reforms and to question both the shape and operation of the 'colonial' State — as promised in the wake of Evo Morales's re-election in 2014 — are being abandoned.

On the other hand, the dynamics of the political system have made it impossible for renewal of the movements that led the left and progressive presidents to power. Indeed, political campaigns are financed by the corporate sector, and State revenue depends on some of the worst development and extractivist activities. They are also the basis for spurious alliances with both local chieftains and multinational capital with no other aim than to cash in as fast as possible on investment. Most social policies depend on this source of financing. Both the brand and the popularity of the progressive governments are now closely associated with an economic model that is highly dependent on international prices, which also has catastrophic ecological consequences.

An assessment of the Latin American progressive governments should include

important criteria such as: progress in regional coordination; the declaration of unconstitutionality of the laws of impunity for dictatorship related crimes; the universal child allowance ('Asignación Universal Por Hijo') in Argentina; some elements of the constitutional 'plurinational' reforms in Bolivia and Ecuador; sovereign debt negotiations; poverty reduction, social intervention and infrastructure building in poor neighborhoods. The end of the cycle is related to the disruption of these agendas, an increase in poverty in Argentina and unemployment in Brazil, and to the constraint on the rights and the guarantees of urban dwellers and indigenous peoples facing eviction from their territories. The negotiation of bilateral agreements in Ecuador and the imprisonment of opponents in Venezuela have broken some taboos too; in particular, the thought that a political program could be defined against national political status quo still haunted by the colonial and dictatorship wounds. The balance sheet is equally negative in regards to industrialization and the phasing out of the primary economy model, now wholly dependent on the international commodity prices. The fall of the price of the commodities, on the other hand, fuels the political crisis from an economic dimension and adds more weight to the coming of the end of the progressive cycle.

### **The new ideological framework**

When talking about structural changes in the inequality and economic model, progressive governments seem to have been transformed by power and institutions, rather than the other way around. The force by which the progressive governments took place in the early 2000s merely contested the executive (presidentialist) role with their agenda, but that at the same time accepted the structural limits – instead of transforming the tools of the State – in exchange for political stability and clientelist advantages of many of its political leaders. While orthodox recipes are announcing a comeback, the possibility of strengthening processes arising from the principle of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) and aiming at another type of development, vanishes from

the scene.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the new ideological framework of *progresismo* ensures popularity and keeps the governments in power, but abandoning the principles and the anti-capitalist demands that inaugurated the progressive political cycle riding on a wave of popular demonstrations that was able to depose unpopular presidents in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Brazil. This is made quite clear by the progress of three elements: consumerist ideology,<sup>8</sup> consensus on development, and the political agenda brought in by religious sectors.

*Governist* propaganda presents consumption growth as the access of millions of people to the middle class. In addition to abandoning the peasant, indigenous, and workers' agendas, the revision of economic priorities and the redistribution of wealth, is being shelved. On top of it, access to consumption does not include access to healthcare, education, and quality transportation, all of which remain beyond the reach of the majority. Pope Francis' accession to the Vatican, just a few days after Hugo Chávez's death, has already resulted in some setbacks for progressive legislation. It halted changes in the Argentine Civil Code, and legitimized the collapse of the bond between governments and minority struggles historically embraced by the left, thus stopping incipient progress in some countries.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio's transformation went from being the Archbishop of Buenos Aires that censored art shows (such as a León Ferrari's exhibition) and did not assume a critical position during the Argentine dictatorship, into a progressive world leader cannot be reduced to a marketing or media invention.<sup>9</sup> It marks the end of progressivism as we know it. Consumption growth and a conservative agenda are now entwined with a statist and hyper-presidential perspective linked to nationalist political identities — with their *Batllista* variant in Uruguay (José Batlle, president of

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<sup>7</sup> On the concept of "Buen Vivir" (Good Living), and different works that tries to think beyond development, connected with the fights against fracking, extractivism and violation of indigenous territories see Schavelzon (2015) Svampa & Viale (2014), Gudynas & Alaiza (2011) Acosta & Martinez (2009), Escobar (2010).

<sup>8</sup> The idea of the democratic expansion of the consumer sector prospers by including the popular sector into the middle class. This project does not only entail economic inclusion, which has been questioned, but more importantly it seeks to democratize through the Western capitalist way of life, associated with consumerism, debt, and individualism, rather than collective association.

<sup>9</sup> "La Iglesia advirtió que la muestra de Ferrari "es una blasfemia" (*La Nación*, 2004). <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/659247-la-iglesia-advirtio-que-la-muestra-de-ferrari-es-una-blasfemia>

Uruguay, 1899–1903 and 1911–1915), *Peronista* in Argentina (Juan Domingo Peron, president of Argentina, 1946–1955 and 1973–1974), *Emenerrista* in Bolivia (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, MNR, founded by President Víctor Paz Estenssoro (1941-1952) and the big coalition that governs Brazil with parties from the right — if not to supporters of the dictatorship themselves, if we are to judge by the development model that is being adopted.

Maybe one should take seriously the proposal to found a new International led by the Pope, which was called for by Italian philosopher and politician Gianni Vattimo and hailed by some of the main *gubernista* players who attended the Forum for Emancipation and Equality (*Foro por la emancipación y la igualdad*) in Buenos Aires, in March 2015.<sup>10</sup> Rafael Correa staged in a sudden and rather overplayed attack against what he called the "abortion agenda" with the aim of preventing legal regulation on this issue, and against "gender ideology" on minority rights — which adds to Correa's already classic diatribes against environmentalists and indigenous peoples.

Thus, a politics in the name of social, racial and decolonized antagonisms is being replaced today by conservative values conveyed through a sense of brotherhood and reconciliation that leaves aside the fight against class and ethnic inequality. Popular sectors are being framed and demobilized through the establishment of State and religious paternalistic welfarism. The new perspective comes with a new consideration of dissidence as radicalism — that is, contrary to the interests of the nation. In geopolitical terms, the increased repression and criminalization of dissenters is conducted with an eye to the East — that is, with a discourse and an economic vision close to that of authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China, devoid of any anti-capitalist emancipatory horizon.

Progressivism and the left in power, substituting working class and social and indigenous movements for 'family' and 'middle class' values, cease to be what they were. They take the path of security and consumption that defines the new

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<sup>10</sup> For a full recording of Gianni Vattimo's intervention in the *Foro por la Emancipación* see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXVixgBeXfA>



developmentalist nationalism. This is quite obvious in Nicaragua, where Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas returned to power in 2007. The reconciliation with the church, which they fought in the 70s, is now a fact: a law has been passed prohibiting abortion under any circumstance. In 2014, moreover, the Nicaraguan Congress, with no debate and no previous information, passed another law giving the green light to the construction of an inter-ocean canal. It grants sovereign rights for fifty years to a Chinese company, and suppresses and criminalizes farmers and populations who will be displaced by the new canal. The political cycle founders also when development policies draw progressive or leftist Bolivarian governments close to the nationalist-liberal efforts currently undertaken in Peru, Colombia and Mexico: they are all manipulating State power to guarantee a model that is anything but progressive.

Instead of an anti- or post-extractive outlook as an alternative for a new political cycle, what we are witnessing today is the emergence of a new Right with a revamped, “post-ideological” and “for the people” discourse. It raises an “ethical” and “anti-corruption” flag that the Left has lost. Lacking citizenship engagement and no policies linking territorial struggles with the struggles in the cities, the new cycle is giving way to a system of political restoration, combining social nationalism, religious discourse, and individualistic republicanism, all conveyed through a fuming anti-State discourse.

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DIEGO VALERIANO<sup>1</sup>

## Liberation through Consumption: Six Hypotheses on the Passage from Exclusive Neoliberalism to the New Runfla Capitalism<sup>2</sup>

1. Throughout this last decade and a half, and in parallel to the general crisis of global capitalism, a wide popular urban sector of the periphery (from Argentina but also from elsewhere) sought a favorable cycle that included themselves in consumption. One could think of this new access to wealth as a process of liberation (unlike the orthodox critique that interprets it as *alienation*), with the caveat of amplifying the very notion of “liberation”.

2. With the increase of consumption there are new modes of sensing, desiring, thinking, socializing; but also other ways of being, loving, enjoying, and dying that have been radically altered. New possibilities emerge and the traditional knowledge of governing populations radically breaks down. Far from pointing to a decline in the old forms of social organization, collective action opens a new gap in a time that is unprecedented and incalculable. The feast of consumption and the social conflict are the new promiscuous standards that enable the transfiguration and organization of the everyday. Many actors belong to this new process, more often than not against their will, such as the unions, the NGOs, the grassroots and social movements

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<sup>1</sup> DIEGO VALERIANO writes for the argentine digital publication Lobo Suelto ([www.anarquiacoronada.blogspot.com](http://www.anarquiacoronada.blogspot.com))

<sup>2</sup> This article was translated by Gerardo Muñoz. It was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/6/21/liberation-through-consumption-six-hypotheses-on-the-passage-from-exclusive-neoliberalism-to-the-new-runfla-capitalism> on June 21st, 2016.

(whether in alliance with the State or not) and citizens in pursuit of justice.

3. The old neoliberal regime that produced social exclusion was destroyed, first and foremost, from below; that is, from the daily experience of the great majority that populates the periphery. *Runfla*<sup>3</sup> capitalism was built on its corpse. *Runfla* capitalism entails a new superior stage of consumption, of popular stability that is both festive and inclusive. The 'good government', parallel to this stage, was its necessary accomplice by unleashing a populist rhetoric that took great efforts in sustaining and fomenting its participation in this process.

4. If we posit the idea of liberation at the center it is because the engine of *runfla* capitalism is consumption by those from below. This took place, mainly, in the spatial periphery of the world-system, as it was called in the past but that in our times has transformed into the effective BRIC axis. The success of *runfla* capitalism depends, I want to emphasize, on its access to consumption as the authentic political kernel of the current transformations underway in the region. The new government of 'restoration', at least in Argentina, challenges these transformations, even though they are defended on a daily basis in the streets by *runfla* lives.

5. This process of liberation always has to be understood ambiguously and in constant dispute. It is true that this process of consumption can also be interpreted on the basis of creating new dependencies (in the "objective" sense: global markets, financial, and technological systems; but also in the "subjective" sense, such as the pattern of consumption or the constant subordination of time to guarantee the vitality of consumption, etc.). Nevertheless, we insist on the fact that these processes contribute in vitalizing *runfla* lives through consumption. Those from below (the youth, the thieves, the immigrants, the *cholas*) without ever abandoning being so, learned to exploit the social hierarchies for their own benefit. They do did so through the technique of permanent transgression in the territories to the point of making the

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<sup>3</sup> Translator Note: *Runfla*: The term *runfla* is not easy to define or translate, and thus we have chosen to retain the original Spanish term. According to the *Diccionario etimológico del lunfardo* (Penguin, 2011), *runfla* is characteristic of the plebe, "gente de mal vivir", referring to the lumpen and the indecent. In an exchange with Valeriano, he reminds me that it also has the connotation of 'obscure business', 'illegality', and 'low life'. Valeriano wishes that this term were not reduced to its *lunfardo* etymology. According to Valeriano, *runfla* necessarily lacks conceptual definition and should be understood just by its sound.

territories incomprehensible, irrational, extensive, festive, and ungovernable (at least from the point of view of the old art of governing).

6. This force will not cease, since the '*runfla* vitality' is confronted from multiple registers: statistical indexes, imposed restoration, solidarity and depolitization, and a recycled Franciscan poverty. Isn't the emphasis on Christian 'love' an attempt to capture the liberating force of this process? These struggles for the process of liberation are waged furiously on a daily basis. Today these are more sharply expressed due to the new political scenario. We have reached the exhaustion of 'good' and permissive governments. There is a long lasting confrontation between the *runfla* lives and the repressive state (and privatized) apparatus, and from what can be seen today there is no truce in sight. In any case, *runfla* capitalism is inseparable from a generalized form of urban micro-guerrillas, and the micro-politics of life, where consumption, the feast, and the new conflict open worlds to come. These worlds are far more interesting than the previous ones, but less comprehended by the standardized and conventional forms of analysis.

GERARDO MUÑOZ<sup>1</sup>

## The Democratic Horizon of Emancipation: Interview with Maristella Svampa on the Crisis of the Progressive Cycle in Latin America<sup>2</sup>

*Maristella Svampa is a sociologist and researcher at CONICET (National Technical and Scientific Research Council) at the University of La Plata. She is the author of a dozen books that have had a significant impact on the academic and public discussion of regional politics, social movements, and the function of the state in Latin America. Among her most recent books are Fifteen Myths and Realities of Transnational Mining in Argentina (Colectivo Ediciones Herramientas, 2011), Maldevelopment: Extractivism and Plunder in Argentina (co-written with Enrique Viale, Katz, 2014), and Latin American Debates: Indianism, Development, Dependency, and Populism (Edhasa, 2016). Over the course of the decade, Svampa's critical work has constituted a sustained effort to understand the progressive actors of the region, as well as an inquiry into the geopolitical configuration at the intersection of state form and transnational capital. Her well-known thesis of the "commodities consensus" has had a broad influence across Latin Americanist thought of this decade, expanding the analytical frameworks through which we understand the so-called Latin American Pink Tide, that is, the series of progressive governments that came*

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<sup>2</sup> This interview was originally published in Spanish on the digital magazine Fronterad and can be found in <http://www.fronterad.com/?q=maristella-svampa-y-crisis-ciclo-progresista-en-latinoamerica>. It has been translated by Anne Freeland and was published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/6/21/the-democratic-horizon-of-emancipation-interview-with-maristella-svampa-on-the-crisis-of-the-progressive-cycle-in-latin-america> on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

*to power following the election of Hugo Chávez in 1999. Her analysis of the new forms of extractivism (mega-mining, fracking, and deforestation, among others) constitutive of the current processes of accumulation has shed light on the internal workings of the redistributive policies of these states and their development models. In this interview, Svampa takes up some of the questions that have been central to her work in light of the so-called “exhaustion of the progressive cycle,” a moment in which we seem to be witnessing the decline of the progressive governments with the electoral defeat of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina, the succession of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, and Evo Morales’s defeat in Bolivia, where a referendum to amend the constitution and allow Morales to run for a fourth term was rejected. Within this conjuncture, Svampa’s political reflection is oriented toward a horizon of radical democracy—against all identitarianisms—grounded in a shared experience that she calls “a common good of humanity” and the possibility of thinking politics otherwise.*

**GM: How do you see the exhaustion of the cycle of progressive governments in light of the resounding electoral victory of Mauricio Macri in the recent election in Argentina? Can we in fact speak of the “end of an era” in the region, and the rise of a new regional right, considering what’s happening at the same time in Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela?**

MS: Let’s start with the first part of your question. For some time I’ve been speaking of the end of an era in the region, which doesn’t just include Argentina. Between 2000 and 2015, a lot has happened in Latin America. Over the course of these fifteen years, the different progressive governments went from being considered a new Latin American left, arousing keen expectations of political change, to being understood in terms of a twenty-first century populism. In the passage from one conceptualization to the other, something important was lost, there was a sense of abandonment, the loss of an emancipatory dimension of politics and the evolution towards traditional forms of domination, based on personality cults and the identification of the leader with the state.

As for the rise of the right. I’d like to distance myself from conspiracy theories, and not because I don’t think that the right has done anything to erode the legitimacy of the progressive governments. We know they have. But I think the possibility of the

rise of a new right is due largely to the mistakes and excesses of the progressive governments, which have been emphasizing their least pluralistic, most populist dimension, evident in the concentration of power in the executive and in their clear intolerance of dissent.

On the other hand, the extractivist model has shown its limitations in the context of a sharp decline in international commodity prices (some have called it the end of the commodity supercycle). This seems not only to have limited the “comparative advantages” that fueled economic growth over almost a decade (2003–2013), but also to have thrown these countries into an ever-deepening economic crisis, demonstrating the inability of these governments to transform the productive models, their dependency upon and consolidation of a primary product export model. It has also shown the volatility of the success of this model, with rising poverty and the disaffection of the middle classes.

If we look at the Argentine case, there was no indisputable triumph of the right. Macri won by a small margin, and he was as surprised as anyone at the results of the first round, which led to the *ballotage* (the second electoral round). In fact, Kirchnerism was the architect of its own defeat. We must keep in mind that Kirchnerism had long ceased to be a center-left phenomenon, even if it enjoyed a quasi-monopoly of that space over the past decade, and this surely explains part of the exhaustion of a society in the face of the dramatization and polarization of politics that Kirchnerism exacerbated. Its support for the candidacy of the many-faced Aníbal Fernández (accused of having ties to drug trafficking), dismissing the claims of his complicity with the police and the region’s drug trade as if this were just part of the opposition’s “narrative,” was one of the signs of the moribund state of Peronist progressivism.<sup>3</sup> So there were many factors: corruption and enrichment of the governing class, including the presidential family and the vice president, crony

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<sup>3</sup> On the allegations of Aníbal Fernández’s connection to the drug trade, see *Jorge Lanata presentó un informe que vincula a Aníbal Fernández con el narcotráfico*.



capitalism (known as *capitalism among friends*), sustained inflation since 2007, and a significant deterioration of the economy.<sup>4</sup>

**GM: How do you see the emergence of Cambiemos-PRO and Macri on the Argentine political scene? Are we witnessing a rearrangement of certain economic policies of Kirchnerism, or is it simply a neoconservative restoration? Or maybe a combination of the two?**

MS: The new Macri government represents a break, but also some continuities with the previous government. I will discuss only some of them. To begin with, we have the ideological break: as of December 10th of 2015, Argentina ceased to be governed by a regime identified with an intense populism, based on the concentration of power, intolerance of dissent, and Cristina's hyper-leadership; the new regime is one of right-wing liberalism, based explicitly on a "business-community" model, that is, pro-business, but one that is prepared to work to build its political base, and understands politics in terms of management and marketing.<sup>5</sup>

But I don't think this ideological break means a simple return to the neoliberalism of the nineties. I have no doubt that this will lead to greater social inequality, but this also depends on the limits that Argentine society imposes on the new government. Public sector layoffs, spiraling inflation both pre- and post-devaluation, pro-business measures, the exorbitant increase in utility prices, and a weak social agenda, testify to a government that tends to focus on a single sphere, and not that of the majority.

On the other hand, we must not forget that we live in a different society than we did two decades ago, and this is clear in the capacity for social protest and the expanded language of rights. All this suggests that there should be little room for such a regression. It's no accident that Macri seems to want to establish himself in a space of variable parameters, oscillating between, on the one hand, a less state-centered developmentalism and a recognition of the importance of the social, and, on the other

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<sup>4</sup> Svampa develops the ideas of the "new contractor nation" and "capitalism among friends" in *Maldevelopment*.

<sup>5</sup> The ideologist of "political marketing" in Mauricio Macri's campaign, Jaime Durán Barba, discusses this in his *El arte de ganar: Cómo usar el ataque en campañas electorales exitosas* (Debate, 2011).

hand, a post-nineties neoliberalism, in the style of the former Chilean president Sebastián Piñera. It's still too early to say how this balance or tension between the one and the other will play out, which of the two tendencies will prevail, but the first two months of Macri's government have demonstrated a tendency toward business-centered developmentalist neoliberalism.

On the other hand, there is a continuity with Kirchnerism with respect to extractivism—mega-mining (the government has already announced the elimination of mining taxes), fracking, land-grabbing, and agribusiness. It's true that the appointment of CEOs to various ministries has caused considerable alarm, and especially among communities affected by extractivism, which doesn't mean that these communities have forgotten the recent past. After all, Miguel Galuccio, the CEO of YPF, came from a major multinational company almost on the scale of Shell and the Kirchnerist minister of mining, Jorge Mayoral, is associated with firms that supplied Barrick Gold. Kirchnerism was particularly effective in consolidating a powerful business community, although it availed itself of a language of political mediations and a narrative of heroic progressivism, and could count on the complicit silence of so many intellectuals. In this vein, Macri's program represents a social shift and further extractivism, so we will very likely see new situations of repression and disregard for democracy.<sup>6</sup>

GM: Two recent books—**Verónica Gago's *Neoliberal Reason: Baroque Economies and Popular Pragmatics*** (Tinta Limón, 2015) and your ***Maldevelopment: Extractivism and Plunder in Argentina*** (Katz, 2014) (with Enrique Viale), expose the limits of the economic model of redistributive policies coupled with the perpetuation of a flexible model of accumulation and development. I'm also thinking here of Gareth Williams' groundbreaking work, ***The Other Side of the Popular: Neoliberalism and Subalternity in Latin America*** (Duke University Press, 2002). This economic model seems to consist of complex registers that function simultaneously at the macro and micro levels, that negotiate inclusion in the sphere of consumption and more global models of extractivism. How

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<sup>6</sup> Maristella Svampa. Estruendos en la mina. *Revista Ñ*, February 22, 2016.

**should we understand the heterogeneous composition of the region's economy at the moment? How do you understand the relationship between consumption and accumulation in the popular processes in the region in the past years of progressivism?**

MS: The kind of production that goes hand in hand with today's dominant model of commodification of nature and of social life is associated with certain social paradigms and imaginaries of consumption. That is, they contribute to the consolidation of a way of life, that which is currently hegemonic, grounded in certain ideas of progress that permeate our language, our practices, our everyday life; how we conceive of quality of life, the good life, and social development. Ulrich Brand speaks of an "imperial way of life," referring to the universalization "of a mode of life that is imperial toward nature and in its social relations and that is in no way democratic, in that it does not question any form of domination. The imperial way of life does not simply refer to a lifestyle practiced in different social milieus, but to imperial models of production, distribution, and consumption, cultural imaginaries and subjectivities strongly rooted in the everyday practices of the majority in the north, but also, increasingly, of the emerging upper and middle classes of the south."

In this sense, the progressive regimes have not been very innovative with respect to the models of consumption, because they have stimulated the model of the consumer-citizen or of inclusion through consumption, rather than a model of citizenship based on rights. This is not what happened in the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, when part of the Latin American left, despite being rather indifferent to environmental issues, thought in terms of "basic needs" and questioned the universalization of the model of consumption of the societies of the north, which, in its expansion toward the richest sectors of the societies of the south, not only implied increased concentration of privilege and wealth, but also constituted an unsustainable development model. I want to underscore this because today the progressive governments are far from questioning consumption; they glorify it. I remember in 2015, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner boasted that the Argentines were

the world's top consumers of soft drinks.<sup>7</sup> We are moving away from the association of Coca-Cola with the United States, a country in which there is a campaign against the consumption of soft drinks as a cause of obesity. Latin America is an emerging market for a lot of products, which become aspirational symbols, something that the various governments encourage while simultaneously availing themselves of an antisystemic rhetoric.

Much of the prominence of the notion of development is due to the fact that the models of consumption associated with the hegemonic model permeate the entire population. That is, today, what is considered to be a “better life” is associated with a demand for the “democratization” of consumption, rather than the necessity of bringing about cultural change with respect to consumption and the environment, based on a different theory of social needs and the relationship with nature. The correspondence between the models of production and consumption, the generalization in the countries of the north, but also of the south, of a “hegemonic way of life,” makes the social and geopolitical connection or articulation between the different struggles (social and environmental, urban and rural, for example), and their respective emancipatory languages, notoriously more difficult.

**GM: Along with the crisis of the progressive cycle we see an explicit return of the politico-theological. In what way do you think Pope Francis affects the current Latin American map? There are some who think that there could be an alliance with a certain Franciscanism as a new contentious force in the international arena. This is the argument that Gianni Vattimo made at the Forum for Emancipation and Equality in Buenos Aires, where he predicted that the Vatican would become a Fourth Communist International.<sup>8</sup> What do you think are the limits of such an alliance?**

**MS: I'm very skeptical about this. Certainly Francis (a Peronist pope) adds a new level of complexity to the current Latin American configuration, but I think the**

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<sup>7</sup> Diego Valeriano. Consumamos, lo demás no importa nada.

<sup>8</sup> Gianni Vattimo's talk at the *Forum for Emancipation and Equality*, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRBcrrmnDE>

importance of his role in Europe is exaggerated. And this exaggeration has less to do with the Latin American reality and much more to do with a certain ideological vacuum in Europe, beyond the promising leftist movements, like that which has emerged in Spain. In Latin America, despite the crisis of the progressive movements, there is no such vacuum, because there's another backdrop, made up of the social organizations and social movements, which have contributed and continue to contribute to the emergence of a new language of valorization (of the land, of nature) and a new political grammar.

On the other hand, Latin American societies are very religious, but Catholicism has lost ground to evangelical churches whose conservative and reactionary character is alarming, and which are beginning to occupy political positions (as a parliamentary bloc in Brazil, or a sector within the Movement Toward Socialism in Bolivia, or in the context of indigenous organizations aligned with the government, as in Ecuador). Francis is a relevant figure and his new encyclical, *Laudato Si*, is critical of the extractivism of the current governments, whether of the right or of the left, and is surely a source of support for social and environmental organizations. But his environmental preaching has found little resonance in the current governments.

**GM: Bolivia seems to be one of the countries on the Latin American political map that has escaped the general exhaustion (notwithstanding Morales's defeat in the referendum to authorize another presidential term). But to what point is the hegemonic communitarian horizon—proclaimed by vice president Álvaro García Linera himself over the years in his public speeches, and published on the website of the Vice Presidency of the Plurinational State<sup>9</sup>—sustainable in the context of extractivism or internal domination within the logic of hegemony?**

**MS:** There is no doubt that Morales's government represented a redistribution of social power in a country where the indigenous majority has historically been excluded and subjected to systemic racism. It's also true that the political task has not

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<sup>9</sup> See *Geopolítica de la amazonia* (2012) and *Socialismo comunitario: un horizonte de época* (2015). Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia.

been easy; in its early years it had to contend with regional oligarchies that threatened to secede. But this “catastrophic stalemate” ended toward 2009, the year in which the new constitution of the Plurinational State was approved, and thus a new stage began, with the growing hegemony of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) and the ever greater importance of Evo Morales’s leadership. The government was characterized by its redistributive programs, a new agrarian reform, economic growth and stability, and the strategic nationalization of certain companies, along with the escalation of natural gas extraction and agribusiness.

But conflicts like the one with the TIPNIS (Indigenous Territory of Isidoro Secure National Park) over the construction of a highway without due consultation with the indigenous populations reconfigured the political scene, unmasking the real politics of the government, beyond its eco-communitarian discourse in defense of Pachamama. The indigenist and most autonomist wing of the government thus succumbed to the more statist wing, increasingly oriented towards a traditionally populist form of domination. Vice president Álvaro García Linera—who during the TIPNIS conflict would accuse critics of “colonial environmentalism,” an anathema that conflated the leftist NGOs and dissenting indigenous groups with international organizations—headed the defense of the extractivist model. A “revelatory conjuncture,” as political scientist Luis Tapia (a former colleague of García Linera in the intellectual collective Grupo Comuna) would say, after TIPNIS, nothing was the same again in Bolivia.<sup>10</sup> In the past few years the ruling party has increasingly displaced oppositional indigenous organizations (marginalizing dissenters and creating power structures recognized by the state), silenced critical journalists by cutting off public support, and generated a growing process of self-censorship in the non-official press; and finally, the threat to expel the critical and leftist NGOs, for which the government wrote a new law for disciplinary purposes.

It is in the framework of this attempt to close off channels of expression that the

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<sup>10</sup> Luis Tapia. *El Leviatán criollo*. La Paz: Autodeterminación Ediciones, 2014.

government launched its proposal to renew the term of the presidential ticket, which has just been rejected in a referendum (with 51.56% against and 48.44% in favor), in a context in which the political opposition is weak and fragmented (despite controlling several departments and despite the regime's defeat in the referendum).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the concentration of power forecloses the possibility of an emergence of a new political leadership from below. If the government had won the referendum, Evo Morales and García Linera would have been permitted to remain in power for twenty consecutive years. Only ten years ago, these same leaders would have vehemently opposed any other political figure or party that attempted to perpetuate its rule in this way, and yet today, they can unabashedly claim that only the renewal of their own mandate can guarantee the continuation of the process of change within the framework of a popular government and prevent the dreaded return of the right.

The topic of reelection is not a new one in the Latin American conjuncture and has been a source of social polarization. In 2013, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner flirted with the possibility but found that there was too much social opposition. In Ecuador, Rafael Correa also had to renounce the prospect of reelection after a year of conflict with both the right and the left in 2015. To my knowledge, the only ones who succeeded in authorizing indefinite reelection were Hugo Chávez, in 2009, in his second attempt, and the Sandinista Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, whose government is unequivocally authoritarian. These governments, despite their differences, represent a process of concentration of executive power in a hyper-presidential framework and ultimately represent a messianic historical narrative, because they believe that historical change is effected by a leader and not by a change in the correlation of social forces.<sup>12</sup>

In my opinion, we do no service to the Latin American left by leaving these problems to the political right. Neither the defense of freedoms nor the critique of the

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<sup>11</sup> Official results here: <http://52.86.73.107:55>

<sup>12</sup> Maristella Svampa. *La sociedad excluyente: la Argentina bajo el signo del neoliberalismo*. Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2005.

concentration of power is the ideological property of the right. Moreover, in line with what Roberto Gargarella maintains, it's almost impossible to think that the expansion of popular participation and the concentration of power can go hand in hand.<sup>13</sup> And reelection is clearly a move towards the concentration of power. Finally, it is precisely the most vulnerable sectors and those on the left who are the victims of the recurrent closures of political spaces and violations of human rights. In sum, returning to Bolivia, perhaps because it's the country that aroused the greatest political hope in the region, it is today an exemplary case that is putting the critical intelligence of the various Latin American lefts to the test.

**GM: Critical Latin Americanist discourses (produced within and outside of Latin America) have upheld the notion of the “communitarian” or “the commons.” The “turn to the commons” seeks “direct” access to democracy, and positions itself at once against the institutional verticality of the state and against the charismatic process of populism. But the discourse of the common or the communal is also installed within the rhetoric of some of these states (such as the Venezuelan or the Bolivian).<sup>14</sup> To what extent can the communitarian (identitarian) be a democratic horizon of emancipation?**

MS: Concepts in the process of their construction tend to be disputed concepts. So there is a symbolic debate around the new horizon of concepts and a risk of their abuse; they can be twisted or emptied of their potentiality. It's the danger of the “perverse convergence,” as Evelina Dagnino warned in reference to concepts like that of “democratic participation” back in the nineties, with their appropriation by the World Bank and the neoliberal governments. This is occurring today not only with

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<sup>13</sup> Roberto Gargarella. *La sala de máquinas de la Constitución: dos siglos de constitucionalismo en América Latina (1810-2010)*. Buenos Aires: Katz, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Three major works on the so-called communitarian turn in Latin America: *Dispersar el poder: los movimientos sociales como poderes antiestatales* (Ediciones desde abajo, 2007) by Raúl Zibechi; *Los ritmos del Pachakuti: movilización y levantamiento popular-indígena en Bolivia* (Tinta Limón, 2008) by Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar; and “*Se han adueñado del proceso de lucha*”. *Horizontes comunitario-populares en tensión y la reconstitución de la dominación en la Bolivia del MAS* (SOCEE/Autodeterminación, 2015) by Huáscar Salazar Lohman.



the concept of “common good” but also with that of *buen vivir*, installed within the governmental rhetoric in countries like Ecuador and Bolivia, and to a lesser extent in Venezuela.<sup>15</sup> Both likewise appear in the pro-establishment rhetoric of certain international organizations.

Beyond the debates, it should be emphasized that the grammar of the common appears as an element of convergence between the countries of the north and those of the south. But the nuances must also be emphasized: while in the countries of the north the grammar of the common is oriented toward the public, that is, against policies of adjustment and privatization (against neoliberalism), against the appropriation of knowledge, the new economy of knowledge (cognitive capitalism and its forms of appropriation), and only more recently against extractivism (particularly against fracking), in our peripheral countries, the common is opposed rather to the various forms of developmentalist neoextractivism, which include land grabs, privatization of seeds, and overexploitation of natural resources as a whole.

From a perspective consonant with the reality of Latin America, the Belgian François Houtart associates common goods with *the common good of humanity*, in the most general sense, which implies the foundations of the collective life of humanity on the planet: the relation to nature, the production of life, collective organization (politics), and the interpretation, valorization, and expression of the real (culture). It’s not, however, a question of patrimony, but of a “condition” (wellbeing, living well), a result of all the different aspects of the life of human beings, of men and women, on the earth.<sup>16</sup> The Common Good of Humanity as a democratic horizon of emancipation refers to the defense and reproduction of life, which are threatened today. Its potentiality, within the framework of the current civilizational and environmental crisis, is huge.

**GM: Lastly, in *Maldevelopment* you reflect on the role of women in relation to forms of resistance that are not domesticated by state power, but expressed**

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<sup>15</sup> On the concept of ‘buen vivir,’ see *Plurinacionalidad y Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir: dos conceptos leídos desde Bolivia y Ecuador post-constituyente* (Ediciones Abya-Yale, 2015), by Salvador Schavelzon.

<sup>16</sup> François Houtart. ‘From *common goods* to the *common good of humanity*’ *HAOL*, No. 26, Otoño, 87-102.

within a logic of **solidarity and of the common**. You write: “... it is necessary to underscore the role of popular feminisms in the emergence of a pro-communal ethos, especially those visions tied to feminist economy and eco-feminism, based on an ethic of care and values like **reciprocity and complementarity**.”<sup>17</sup> Do you think that feminisms and these new struggles for the commons reappear now at the center of the agenda in the face of the exhaustion of state progressivism?

MS: I don't know if these new struggles will be at the center of the agenda with the crisis of progressivism. We must not forget that these progressivisms have absorbed part of the creative energy of the various social movements and organizations, which they rewarded with certain policies, but while taking away their autonomy, in the sense of lessening their capacity to determine an agenda, a political agenda independent of the government.

Of course, there are a number of territorial, socio-environmental, indigenous, and feminist struggles that through their persistence, their insistence on the protection and reproduction of life, on the quest for a non-exploitative relation to nature, from a perspective that emphasizes eco-dependence, open up new relational ontologies, that question dualistic and hierarchical views, that appear independently of the market and the state. But the danger is that, in the face of the failure of state progressivism and the loss of power of the social organizations and movements that are organically linked to these states, a disenchantment will spread and the new grammar of life, of the common, based on the principles of complementarity and reciprocity, will be considered unrealistic. We know that it is necessary to recreate the very idea of a pluralistic, democratic, emancipatory project of the left, but this is not the same task today as it was fifteen years ago. The experience of the progressive governments has opened many wounds, not only in the social movements and organizations but also in Latin American critical thought.

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<sup>17</sup> Maristella Svampa, *Maldesarrollo*. 398.

A BOOK REVIEW by MICHELA RUSSO<sup>1</sup>On the Imaginaries of Crisis<sup>2</sup>

Review of Ticio Escobar, *Imagen e intemperie: las tribulaciones del arte en los tiempos del mercado total*. Madrid: Capital Intelectual, 2015.

*Imagen e interperie: las tribulaciones del arte en los tiempos del mercado total*<sup>3</sup> is a collection of five essays and an interview, written during the past ten years by Ticio Escobar, one of the most distinguished figures of the contemporary cultural, and political, panorama in Latin America on the question of art and representation.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most influential art critic in Paraguay, as well as a philosopher, lawyer, and former Minister of Culture during Fernando Lugo's presidency (2008-2012), Ticio Escobar has been an attentive reader of different artistic practices at both the

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<sup>2</sup> This book review was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/6/21/book-review-ticio-escobar> on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> The Spanish title of this book can be translated into English as "Image and Exposure: Tribulations of Art in the Time of Total Market." The Spanish word "intemperie" has many nuances and does not have a direct equivalent in English, but it seems to me that the word "exposure" somehow embraces the spectrum of meanings evoked by the original Spanish. Although at first glance there seems to be little difference between the two, I choose the word "exposure" over "exposition" because the former is enriched by an additional meaning derived by the use made in photography, which refers to the action of exposing a surface to light. Moreover, "exposure," like "exposes" in French, and "expuesto" in Spanish, is a notion central in Georges Didi-Huberman's work – with which Ticio Escobar is in open conversation throughout this book –, especially in his *Peuples exposés, peuples figurants* (2012), where the notion of exposure gets complicated precisely by the reference to light. Didi-Huberman, in turn, moves from Walter Benjamin – another of Escobar's references – especially when, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," the German philosopher writes on the cult value and the exhibition value of a given work of art (*Illuminations*, 2007). "Intemperie," thus, in a broad sense, means "outdoors," and the Spanish locution "a la intemperie" refers to the fact of being "exposed out in the open."

<sup>4</sup> The first four essays contained in this collection, "El arte fuera de sí," "La irrepertible aparición de la distancia: Una defensa política del aura," "El marco incompleto," and "Nandí verá," appeared translated in English respectively as "Art Beside Itself," "The Unrepeatable Appearance of Distance," "The Incomplete Frame," and "Nandí Verá: The Brilliance of Nothingness" in *La invención de la distancia. The Invention of Distance. Cuatro Ensayos - Four Essays* (Asunción: AICA Press / Fausto Ediciones, 2013). This bilingual publication was realized after the conferral to Ticio Escobar of the *Premio AICA a la Contribución Distinguida a la Crítica del Arte* during the 44th AICA (International Association of Art Critics) Congress in 2011 in Asunción, Paraguay.

local and global levels for decades, confronting questions posed by indigenous and popular art, crossed with a form of critique of mercantile-capitalist discourse. Among Escobar's previous publications, we should mention *Una interpretación de las artes visuales en el Paraguay* (1982), where Escobar began delineating, in the light of the Enlightenment definition of art, the question posed by different forms of popular production, whose imageries have been so vividly present within the cultural texture of the region. *El mito del arte y el mito del Pueblo: cuestiones sobre arte popular* (1986), written during Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship (1954–1989), pivots on the analysis of the concept of “popular,” and finally, *La belleza de los otros* (1993) engages with the notion of otherness.

The work of Ticio Escobar, however, cannot be said to openly thematize what has been called either the “progressive cycle,” the “pink tide” or “Socialism of the 21st century,” a phenomenon which transformed the Latin American political landscape in the past twenty years or so (Schavelzon 2016). Nor can Paraguay be said to have been among the countries whose government fully undertook such a “turn to the left.” Why, then, include in a dossier dedicated to this specific political and cultural phenomenon, and its inchoate crisis, a review of his latest publication?

First of all, because Escobar's work clearly nests inside the fissures opened by a post-Cold War cultural and political epochality, which incidentally coincided, in Paraguay, with the end of Stroessner's dictatorship. This political landscape is the one that has seen, on a global scale, the rapid diffusion of a new world order characterized by a neoliberal definition of the political, the social, and, why not, the cultural, through the diffusion of open markets, new constitutionalism, and multicultural discourses. This is also the site of the emergence of the Latin American “progressive cycle.” The importance of reading both the progressive cycle and, therefore, Escobar's work in a larger geopolitical context appears more evident if we observe, as Patrick Iber does in his *Neither Peace nor Freedom* (2015) on cultural Cold War, that the signification of internal political conflicts and, thus, the meaning of the role played by intellectuals in Latin America at that time, was overdermined by the inscription onto the superpower competition. In a similar order of ideas, Escobar's work is a *writing* in an epoch of transition but also a *writing of transition*. It is a writing during

the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Paraguay, but it is at once a writing overdetermined by the inscription into a global context, embracing questions central to the discursive construction of the “progressive cycle” in Latin America. His work, concerned with the intersection of the aesthetic and the political, may help us to think through the “crisis” of this progressive cycle, which necessarily implies a crisis of imagination: the manner in which we imagine is fundamentally a condition for the manner in which we do politics; politics cannot overlook the faculty of imagination, as Didi-Huberman argues, following Hannah Arendt.

In this respect, it is important to mention that Escobar is also the founder and director of the *Centro de Artes Visuales / Museo del Barro*<sup>5</sup> in the capital city of Asunción. The museum, instituted in the 80s, has played a central role in carrying on such discourses on popular, indigenous, and urban art, and conveying, among others, imaginaries that evoke a pluricultural and multiethnic Ibero-America national frame. Here, the exhibition of indigenous and popular art pieces is not organized following ethnographic, folkloric or historical semantics, but exclusively according to “artistic” criteria (*El Mito del Arte* 8). The reflections on different artistic practices, the status and the role of image and the notion of art, together with the cultural initiatives promoted by the museum, have also been directed towards supporting and strengthening the fragile and tormented democratic process in the country.

The creation, in the year 2000, of a parallel space named *Espacio/Crítica*, is crucial in this respect as a supplement to the expositive capacity of the museum, articulating a variety of intellectual practices. This space promotes workshops and discussions, research and publications, while hosting a series of seminars concerned with themes like *Identidades en Tránsito* [Identities in Transition], *Estudios de Contingencia* [Studies of Contingency], and, most recently, *Imágenes Disruptivas* [Disruptive Images].<sup>6</sup> Escobar reminds us that, as Walter Benjamin noted, capitalism seems to be taking more time to change the cultural superstructure than the economic base, and it is precisely this discrepancy that allows the identification of revolutionary practices

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<sup>5</sup> For details on the Museo del Barro, see: <http://www.museodelbarro.org>

<sup>6</sup> See “Espacio Crítica”: <http://espaciocritica.org>

within the same superstructure (*Imagen e Intemperie* 51). Through his work and in his writings, Escobar seems to fully endorse Benjamin's assumption that both cultural and aesthetic practices cannot but play a decisive role within social and political processes of change.

It shall not be taken as an overstatement, then, if we consider the book *Imagen e Intemperie* both as a collection assembling different discourses displayed in Escobar's work over the years and, for this same reason, as a contribution which somehow complements, or it is complemented by, the work of the museum. The problematization of the disruptive potential of images bridges both dimensions, especially when confronted with the fetishism of the image produced by the alliance between market, politics, and culture.

The essays featured in the book can be grouped in two parts; first, Escobar enters into dialogue with thinkers "of the crisis," who lived the experience of thinking (at) the edge of the *crisis* of European modernity, both as a limit-experience or experience of the limit, such as Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes.<sup>7</sup> Second, we see an ongoing conversation with many of those contemporary thinkers who are the heirs of the post-structuralist debates, like Jacques Rancière, Georges Didi-Huberman, or Slavoj Žižek, for whom the *maîtres* of the crisis had involuntarily opened the way for recommencement.

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<sup>7</sup> Here, I would like to stress, *en passant*, the proximity between the ideas of *crisis*, *limit*, and *critique*, as theorized by Willy Thayer in *Tecnologías de la Crítica: entre Walter Benjamin y Gilles Deleuze* (2010), which, in turn, takes as its point of departure Derrida's reflections in the context of deconstruction. Both terms, "crisis" and "critique" (including, for our context, *art critique*), share the Greek etymology "krinein," which conveys a constellation of senses that somehow imply a sort of "manual task": examining, separating, selecting, but also excluding (22–24; 31–35). Both terms would, then, recall each other, while indicating the possibility of engaging with limit-experiences or experiences of the limit of signification(s) or within a given system of signification. To both belongs a sort of "destructive" character in the senses provided by "krinein." The *critical* moment – understandable both as a moment pertaining to the *practice* of criticism, and as grave and severe *momentum* – would be intimately intersecting and intersected by an instance of crisis. Escobar dwells on the question of limit as a form of indecidability between inclusion and exclusion, referring to Derrida's reflection on the concept of *parergon*. This figure enables us to think the frame of any given representation as something which is simultaneously both inside and outside, and neither outside nor inside the work of art, making the work of art the liminal dispositive *par excellence*.

Escobar sets out, then, from the affirmation of the *crisis* of art provoked by the loss of its autonomy, that is to say, the loss of the *aura*, the *specificity* of the work of art. Nevertheless, Escobar argues, we remain within the frame offered by the Enlightenment's concept of art. In this respect he situates himself in a breach already opened by Walter Benjamin, particularly in his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," whose concluding paragraphs point, as is well known, to the imbrication of aesthetics and politics, which is, in turn, a sort of subtext of Escobar's book, and of his work in general. In the first part of *Imagen e intemperie*, Escobar engages with a series of reflections on the question of representation, and in the second part on the relationship between art and ethics.

The essays echo each other through a writing which is almost aphoristic, intermittent and fragmentary, and, I would say, *necessarily incomplete*, whose *montage*, or *textual collage*, to quote Marek Bartelik, president of AICA-international (International Association of Art Critics) (Escobar 2013), is visible only at the surface. This writing somehow mirrors what Escobar himself calls the "paradox of the representation," which is also the tragedy of language itself, that is to say, the promise, impossible to fulfill, to re-present what is, in fact, irremediably absent. In other words, this is the tragedy of the impossibility of reducing the *distance* between the sign and the object, where the sign announces the object but shows the image, and, similarly, between the subject — and its *gaze* — and the object. It is a matter, then, of "administrating" this distance, of "administrating" this gaze. This is the theme, precisely, of the first essay of the collection, "El arte fuera de sí." But there is another way of understanding this "distance," which is the one epitomized by the Benjaminian *aura*, which, says Escobar, indicates nothing but the exclusivist nature of the work of art; its aristocratic origin, which considers the artist as a genius and sacralizes the work of art, drawing it apart from the masses; bourgeois individualism and authority over private property.

The loss of the *aura* could have had, then, an eminently political potential and the reduction, or even the cancellation, of the distance between the work of art and the "subject" of the *gaze* could have represented the "democratization" of the aesthetic experience. The sacrifice of the *autonomy* of the work of art, that is to say, *auratic distance* and its cult value, had, thus, a progressive sense and a democratizing effect

(*El mito del arte* 18): the possibility for the work of art (and culture in general) to get closer to the masses. Technology and technical reproducibility, in principle antithetical to and incompatible with the notion of aura, may have represented the ideal way to evacuate such a process. However, and this is also the subject of the second essay, “La irrepressible aparición de la distancia: Una defensa política del aura,” if the loss of the aura may have represented the possibility of substituting the cult value of art with an emancipatory politicization through modern technology, such a loss of autonomy actually meant the subjugation of art itself to objectives external to it.

The expansion of technology altered the aesthetic experience, fracturing the autonomy of aesthetics and declaring the crisis of art, but at the same time it inaugurated a process of *re-auratization* through an exacerbation of what Escobar calls the “aesthetic function” (that is to say, the “form,” the mediating instance which conveys artistic contents) in all the spheres of human life during the epoch of what Guy Debord had called *the society of the spectacle*. Benjamin’s utopia, the attempt to realize a “positive concept of barbarism” based on Marxism, was not fulfilled: “the new aestheticism appeared in a market format; capitalism anticipated the avant-gardes, took on infinite reproducibility, and removed distance and the autonomy of art in search of other objectives”: greater consumption, exacerbation of the object’s exhibition value, and the institution of a new concept of aura, that is to say, the “mythical phantasmagoria of the always-new” (*La invención de la distancia* 240). At stake is, of course, the divide between “high” and “low” culture, the dichotomy between the great art system and the circuit of “minor” arts, and the need to assume, as a political project, Benjamin’s task: taking responsibility, in the context of collective and social projects and the support of state politics, says Escobar, for any democratizing possibilities, awakening the emancipatory potential of any given situation, while looking for modalities of critical and creative appropriation of imaginaries (*Imagen e Intemperie* 62).

However, the question is not, says Escobar, about dismantling the distinction between the erudite [*culto*] and the popular, but to consider it as contingent and provisory (*El Mito del Arte* 16). Escobar assumes Benjamin’s gaze of Janus and his



ambivalence towards the question of the aura, calling, as a practice of dissidence and disagreement, against the consumerism of the image, for a recuperation of the aura and that minimum distance between the image and the object necessary to enable the play of the gaze and the economy of desire while offering and at once subtracting the presence of the object itself. But how does one accomplish such a task without falling into idealist traditions and authoritarian privileges? Escobar goes back to popular and indigenous art, whose ritual forms surround bodies and objects with absence and invest them with the power of imageries, able to perturb and disturb everyday life (*El Mito del arte* 20).

After all, Benjamin had said that the origin of aura resided in “primitive” rituals. Escobar paganizes the aura and depicts a scene constituted now by a proliferation of “other” *auras*, which are alternative auratic models, represented by certain indigenous forms of art, whose artistic practices had always occurred at the margins of modern Western art. According to the modern gaze, these practices were nothing but craftsmanship and folklore, committed to archaic rites and superstitions, and realized through rudimentary techniques: they did not comply with formal requisites of modern aesthetics, they are not “autonomous,” they are not “useless,” in the Kantian sense of the term (*Imagen e Intemperie* 65–67). Nevertheless, there is something in the scene of the ritual representations that confers to bodies and things the auratic cult value, the unrepeatable manifestation of distance, the luminescent appearance of the aura. Whether it is the *inscription* in another order of signification or the execution of an aesthetic function, at stake is the production of a distance through the distortion of an ordinary setting, “the manipulation of sensibility, and the management of forms” (*La invención de la distancia* 272), in a word, a secularization of the concept of aura. It is in “El marco incompleto,” the third essay of the collection, then, that Escobar wonders about the *critical* possibilities of artistic practice in a global context more and more marked by blends of pluricultural registers.

Reviving the question of the transgressive vocation of art, the role of the *avant-garde* and, implicitly, its relationship with the political, Escobar maintains the need for a de-essentialization of figures like avant-gardism, emancipation and utopia, in order to consider them as hazardous historical products, and finally take responsibility for

the challenges posed by any *minoritarian* forms (“becoming-minoritarian” was the strategy proposed by Deleuze and Guattari at the end of the 70s). This refers to what we will see later as the “ethic of the image.” “Nandi Verá” is the last essay of the first part of the book, dedicated to the question of representation. The title of this essay, which in the Guaraní language means “the brilliance of nothingness,” recalls that of an art installation by Osvaldo Salerno at the *Museo de Artes Visuales* in Santiago de Chile in 2005. In this work, the opening sides of a quadrangular window had been draped with tulle where the words *Nandi Verá* had been written with beeswax. Due to the porosity of the tulle, the wax, during the writing process, has passed into the other side. This image points to the *porosity* of the work of art, which, through the play of the gaze, and its constant displacement, opens to the possibility of the event, maintaining the space *as* available space, “making a space for the space” (*Imagen e Intemperie* 136). Here the question of *otherness* also emerges, and the *Unheimlich* inquietude it provokes, a preoccupation that has been at the center of Escobar’s work. This essay is followed by the second part of the book which, with “Prácticas de frontera: Consideraciones sobre la ética de la imagen contemporánea,” finally deals with the relationship between ethics and art. According to Escobar, the ethical dimension of art derives from its concern with the human condition. The “ethics of image,” the dissident gesture of critical art, which presupposes a “politics of the gaze,” consists in being able to disturb the hegemonic imaginary order. Art will not solve historical conflicts, whether political, social, economic, but can offer a variety possible images, imaginaries and scenarios; it can provoke demands, activate desires (*Imagen e Intemperie* 160–161). An interview in two parts conducted by Kevin Power, who was a poet, essayist, and art critic working with Spanish and Latin American contemporary art, and who also served as vice-president of Madrid’s Museo Nacional and Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, closes the collection. Here, the two converse on Escobar’s work over the years and the entire conceptuality he mobilized in light of the political situation of Paraguay from the dictatorship to the transition to democracy, the collapse of a geopolitical order shaped by the Cold War and its bipolar imaginary, and the role art played in this context.

As I have already mentioned, Escobar works at the edge of that liminal zone where the political and the aesthetic enter a threshold of indecidability. I am convinced that his reflections on the question of art and image are absolutely crucial in order to think what I believe is one of the central features of the “progressive cycle” in Latin America, a newborn, although already tremendously ailing, geopolitical conjuncture, that is to say, the “return of the popular” and, thus, the question of representation. Escobar’s book ultimately disjoints the notion of “progressive cycle” or “pink tide” from its exclusively national or state-driven discourse in order to see a ‘scattered panorama,’ which nonetheless may open more punctual, interstitial or intermittent, even nomadic spaces disconnected from the ones limited or restricted to a party organization. That is to say, spaces which are possibilities *in spite of all* (Didi-Huberman 2012), against the totality of the machine, its system and networks of significance; in other words, the ground of the hegemonic system that upholds all hegemony.

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A POEM by ANDRÉS AJENS<sup>1</sup>

## ALLENDE, EVO, OVER<sup>2</sup>

near the ekeko of alasitas, lord  
of wands, beyond, more-  
over the indio, false or ver-  
ified, in the words of silvia rivera,  
nobody voices over you, falsely  
or de-votedly, devoted, evo,  
you'll never have been, above  
a miner, pastor, cocalero,  
so-called president. But  
whenever we evo-  
ke the *indio*, fishy or seal-  
ed in gold, an Andean metaphysics  
flaps its fins; "An-  
dean metaphysics": not  
a turn of phrase by jesús or silvia  
or the vice president or saenz but  
by denis arnold weaving  
*aguayos* with juan de dios  
yapita (1998), that *Andean*  
*order of things* which denis, lit-

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<sup>2</sup> This poem was translated by Michelle Gil-Montero and was originally published in <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/8/12/allende-evo-over> on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

igating and maybe just delit-  
 erating jacques the ripper,  
 like silvia, reiterates: metaphysics  
 of the *indio*, authentic  
 or inauthentic, the whole pro-  
 gram of first heidegger, “before”  
 the clause, before the de-constructed,  
 if you will, of what’s been called “Andean  
 logo centrism” (arnold 2005)  
 alias *chachawarmi*: were we to  
 translate that as mother-*patria*?  
 but what is *patria*, now of all  
 times, in bolivia, *chachawarmi*? mot-  
 tled delinquent peeks, me-  
 rely dominations? cambia-colla  
 unsurmountable ascent or boundless  
 micro-loco-meddled disasters?  
 the DEA will never get it (the CIA maybe  
 a little in ñancahuazú, with pre-gale-force  
 currencies, greening along the gorge) between  
 shinahota, okinawa, san ignacio, fortuna,  
 gabriela and ernesto fidel, morón,  
 de los robles, cachuela  
 esperanza and *el loco* all aboard  
 if spilling over a bit,  
 by leaps and bounds.

\* \* \*

like the devil etcheverry turning back to chapare  
 like che on his way back from la higuera  
 like uru murato, irohito, chipaya, and even mataco  
 like mbói bebe and hans staden, what a liking  
 for ink, kunumi letteredly illiterate

a graphophagus, pure *at times*, already mot-tled

\* \* \*

(oh, emma, how can we not burn el alto!)

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ALLENDE, EVO, aquende  
el ekeko de alasitas, señor  
de las varas, allende  
el indio, el falso como el ver-  
dadero al decir de silvia rivera,  
nadie habla aquí por ti, falso  
o vero; overo, evo,  
jamás lo habrás sido, antes  
minero, pastor, cocalero,  
dizque presidente. Pero  
cada vez que el *indio* entra  
en escena, el trucho  
como el salmonídeo, meta-  
física andina aletea; la  
“metafísica andina” no fuera  
giro de Jesús ni de silvia  
ni del vice ni de saenz sino  
de denis arnold trezando  
aguayos con juan de dios  
yapita (1998), tal *orden  
andino de las cosas* que denis, ley-  
endo y acaso nomás desleyendo  
a jacques el destripador,  
como silvia, reitera: metafísica  
del indio, del auténtico

como del inauténtico, todo el pro-  
 grama del primo heidegger, “antes”  
 de la cláusula, de la de-construida  
 si prefieres, del dicho “logo-  
 centrismo andino” (arnold 2005)  
 alias *chachawarmi*; ¿fuéramos  
 a traducir eso por patria-madre?  
 ¿qué fuera, pero, *patria*, y sobre todo  
 hoy, en bolivia, *chachawarmi*? ¿a-  
 bigarrados morosos entreveros, só-  
 lo dominaciones?, ¿camba-colla  
 insuperable ascensoría o inmensurables  
 micro-loco-interferidos desastres?;  
 la DEA jamás entendiera (la CIA acaso  
 algo en ñancahuazú, con pre-venda-  
 val verde en la quebrada) entre  
 shinahota, okinawa, san ignacio, fortuna,  
 gabriela y ernesto fidel, morón,  
 de los robles, cachuela  
 esperanza y *el loco* de borda  
 desbordado apenas aquí,  
 de vuelta en vuelta.

\* \* \*

como el diablo etcheverry de vuelta al chapare  
 como el che de vuelta de la higuera  
 como uru murato, irohito, chipaya, y aun mataco  
 como mbói bebe y hans staden, qué  
 manera de comer, kunumi tan letrado iletrado  
 grafonófago puro *a ratos*, ya abigarrado

\* \* \*

(uy, emma, ¡cómo non quemar el alto!)



JON BEASLEY-MURRAY<sup>1</sup>

## Pyrrhic Victories: The Fall and Rise of the Left Turns<sup>2</sup>

All victories are Pyrrhic, to a greater or lesser extent. That is, no victory is ever complete; victors always have to concede something to the vanquished. At the very least, for instance, those who emerge victorious from a political (or other) struggle either depend upon or, worse still, have to make do without the recognition on the part of the vanquished that they have indeed won. Either, that is, the losing side sign, metaphorically or otherwise, the equivalent of some kind of document of surrender, in which case they have retained the power to determine that the struggle is indeed at an end. And this retained power forces an acknowledgement, on the part of the winners, that their victory cannot be total even if the surrender is unconditional. Or, worse still, the losers do not sign such a document, either because they refuse to acknowledge defeat or because they will not or cannot acknowledge the victors and the legitimacy of their victory. In which case, symbolically and perhaps not just symbolically, the struggle continues and victory remains elusive for the victors. All this is of course merely a variant of Hegel's famous dialectic of master and slave, itself the foundation of much postcolonial theory: either the master (the colonizer, would-be hegemon) depends upon recognition from the slave (the colonized, would-be subaltern). Or, worse still, something escapes and he has to make do without it. And in fact something *always* escapes, which leads to the frustration of any and every project for hegemony, stuck between the demand for recognition, which would be a

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form of defeat in any case, and the reality of its withdrawal, its stubborn subaltern betrayal, which makes even that defeat elusive.

None of which is to say there are not in fact winners and losers, that (say) by some kind of postcolonial ruse the colonized emerge victorious from the violent clash that is colonial rule, whether that be thanks to their mastery of mimicry, their destabilization of the signs of power, or some similar conceptual subterfuge. No. Pyrrhic victories are still victories. The toll they take on the vanquished is always worse than the toll taken on the victors, at least in the short run. (And by contrast in the long run, as John Maynard Keynes reminds us, “we are *all* dead”<sup>3</sup>. But the point is that the winning side is always frustrated by the means by which it wins: it desperately wants a hegemony that is forever unattainable. For the outcome of any struggle is always only determined posthegemonically.

So let us take for granted that, with the “Left Turns” or “marea rosada,” the Latin American Left won, in some not insignificant sense. From Venezuela to Argentina, Bolivia to Brazil, it took over the levers of state power, which is nothing to be sniffed at. Taking advantage of this victory, as well as of other contingencies such as a favorable geopolitical climate, the exhaustion of their immediate enemies, and an unanticipated commodities boom, left-leaning governments of different stripes have had almost unprecedented freedom to experiment with a variety of progressive political, economic, and social solutions to some (at least) of the problems that have long ailed the region. They helped write new constitutions that threatened dramatically to improve participation and do away with some of the entrenched hierarchies of the creole republics. They ploughed money into diverse schemes to alleviate poverty, reduce inequality, and improve public services for those who most need them. And they presided over a series of reforms that increased the visibility and improved the social and legal rights of women, gays and lesbians, indigenous peoples, and others who have historically been marginalized and oppressed. In other words, there is no point denying that the Left Turns have indeed constituted an almost unprecedented achievement on the part of the Latin American Left, even at the same

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Vincent Barnett, *John Maynard Keynes* (London: Routledge, 2013), 153.

time we insist that they did not go far enough, that in some way they could never have gone far enough.

But equally, we can take it as given that nothing in these victories depended on anything like “hegemony.” And indeed, that the more that these regimes sought hegemony, the more frustrated they were bound to become. But the fact that they ultimately (or even initially) failed to become hegemonic is not in itself the marker or symptom, let alone the cause, of their downfall. Rather, defeat was already inscribed in the moment of their triumph: in the ways in which they were more or less forced, upon assuming state power, to turn against the movements that established them in that power, and to find that (reciprocally) those movements then sooner or later abandoned them and escaped the scene. Or in the ways in which, as a condition of gaining state sovereignty, they had to bear the burden of renewing or sustaining a social pact that was always fictive and perpetually in crisis, and as such they had to do the dirty work for which their bourgeois opponents were no longer fit for purpose. And perhaps most damagingly, at least in the short to medium term, in the ways in which as a result they became increasingly dependent on the elusive powers of sovereignty itself, and so became fixated on charismatic leaders that soon overstayed their welcome and misread the true sources of whatever power they had indeed won.

In turn, however, the various recent victories of an insurgent Right, achieved in very disparate circumstances (from impeachment in Brazil to electoral victory in Argentina to, say, internal drift in Uruguay) are also in some way Pyrrhic, conceding something to the forces that they replace. So the apparent defeat of the Left across the region—or the “end of the progressive cycle” as this dossier puts it—is far from ushering in some kind of posthegemonic age, let alone the renewed hegemony of the Right. After all, the very phrase “posthegemonic age” is quite strictly meaningless, assuming as it does some kind of “hegemonic age” that might have preceded it. But the series of crises and transitions, from Caracas to Montevideo, Brasilia to Buenos Aires, does offer an opportunity to draw up a balance of forces, of victories in defeats and defeats in victories on all sides. It allows an assessment of what the Left has achieved, and the multiple ways in which the struggle (as always) continues.

The Left Turns won, in the first place, because they capitalized on a striking series of social mobilizations that, as Bruno Cava observes, date back to Venezuela's *Caracazo* of 1989 and include also the water and gas wars in Bolivia or Argentina's crisis of December 2001. Cava calls these "democratic mobilizations," which I think goes too far. There was nothing particularly "democratic" about the *Caracazo*, for instance. If anything, coming so soon after the triumphant inauguration of Carlos Andrés Pérez as Venezuelan president in the wake of elections that had been substantially free and fair (and attracted a turnout of over 80% of the electorate), the riots of February 1989 might better be described as *anti*democratic. Or rather, as with the subsequent so-called *Argentinazo* twelve years later, which popularized the slogan "¡Que se vayan todos!" ("All of them out!"), they might better still be characterized as expressing that gap between politics per se (democratic or otherwise) and existence itself that Alberto Moreiras, among others, conceptualizes in terms of infrapolitics.<sup>4</sup> For what was most striking about the majority of these protests was the way in which they simply did not fit within any conventional notion of the political, and did not appear to be the expression of any recognized (or recognizable) political actor. And yet they exerted immense pressure upon political processes, not least on the fiction of a social pact upon which the political compact depended--in Venezuela quite literally, as the *Caracazo* exposed the threadbare nature of the "Pact of Punto Fijo," but the impact of these various mobilizations was just as striking elsewhere. They forced a reimagining of the political and as such (and Hugo Chávez himself was one of the first to realize this) expressed a constituent power, a desire to re-found the political on new bases. But in each case, a kind of latency period followed the protests before any political organization or party could emerge or reconfigure themselves so as to capture this constituent energy, thus demonstrating that the mobilizations themselves were indeed not political in any meaningful sense of the term. It fell to the Left to recast them in political terms, by means of a constituent process that then created the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, "A Conversation with Alberto Moreiras regarding the Notion of Infrapolitics. With Alejandra Castillo, Jorge Álvarez Yaguán, Maddalena Cerrato, Sam Steinberg, Ángel Octavio Álvarez Solís," trans. Jaime Rodríguez Matos with Sam Steinberg and Alberto Moreiras, *Transmodernity* 5.1 (2015), 142-158. Also, the publications in the Infrapolitical Deconstruction Collective's site [www.infrapolitica.wordpress.com](http://www.infrapolitica.wordpress.com)

social identities and actors upon which the new regimes could base their own legitimacy.

A similar process had taken place before, of course, in the ructions at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that led to the rise of populist regimes in much of the region. So it is no surprise that left-turn governments were continually characterized (for good or ill) as populist in one way or another. But the term is misleading, not least because it implies that they were little more than a throwback to some previous political form. In fact, however, the Left Turn was distinctly post-neoliberal, in that it involved attempts to deal or reconcile with specific problems (but also opportunities) that neoliberalism had put on the agenda. For the infrapolitical revolt was largely a response to the increasing colonization of everyday life and ordinary habits by political or commercial interests that is a feature of the neoliberal age. Remember that the *Caracazo* started as a protest against the rise in bus fares for commuters; the Cochabamba water war concerned the most basic of natural resources. In short, these were revolts against a particular form of biopolitics. The regimes that followed the revolts then had to negotiate with this new biopolitical horizon, whether by confronting (or allying with) more expansive forms of extraction, by adopting ever more immanent modes of communication and governance that tended to bypass established institutions, or by promoting a drastic enlargement of the domain of political conceptualization, attributing rights for instance to the natural environment. In this context, the rise to prominence of a notion such as “*buen vivir*” as a political concept is a revenge on (but also revenge of) biopolitics, in that it is a recasting of the relationship between politics and life itself that would have been inconceivable in any preceding, populist, era.

In other words, the Left Turns did not so much oppose or roll back the innovations in politics and economics that go by the name of neoliberalism, as instead build on and extend them, albeit in new, unforeseen directions. On the one hand, then, many left-wing governments of the past decade and a half have shown remarkable reverence for markets, including the stock markets. This led to a certain timidity in economic policy, visible perhaps above all in Brazil, but elsewhere, too. For all the desires for Socialism inscribed in left-wing parties’ names or rhetoric, there was little sustained

attempt to transform the mode of production. This was true even in a country such as Argentina, where small but symbolically significant steps had been taken in that direction in the fall-out of the 2001 disturbances, for instance by workers at the various “occupied” factories. But such experiments were never really supported by the state. So it is unsurprising if in many cases (again, perhaps particularly in Brazil, as Salvador Schavelzon notes) the Left in power continued with many of the economic policies that they had inherited.

On the other hand, they introduced new programs (the *bolsa familia*, for instance) that sought more equitable ways to redistribute capital surpluses. Moreover, and in contrast to the populist developmentalist regimes of the 1940s and 1950s, on the whole the governments of the Left Turns spurned protectionism and Import Substitution Industrialization, instead embracing transnationalism but putting it to work in efforts (such as ALBA, the “Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America”) to establish regional networks of mutual assistance and economic, political, and social integration. Consistently, then, rather than refusing or negating what had come to be the “common sense” of neoliberalism, left-wing governments chose rather to adapt or channel it to new ends. Or in Sergio Villalobos’s words, “without opposing neoliberalism [they] tried to radically modify its logic and produce a more humane economy.”

In short, the Left Turns were built on two foundations: an infrapolitical revolt, manifested in social protests and mobilizations; and habits of thought and behavior bequeathed by neoliberalism. These two elements coexisted, in more or less uneasy synchrony, paradoxically presided over by a reinvigorated state that in principle they both opposed. And as became clear, for example when indigenous protests threatened infrastructure construction that would benefit hydrocarbon extraction in Bolivia, when forced to choose ultimately the state would always favor free trade from which it could reap rents and secure its own precarious position.

At the heart of any reflection on the legacy of the Left Turns has then to be an analysis of what Villalobos terms the “question of the state form.” Villalobos argues that in “post-neoliberalism” (which signifies anything but the demise of neoliberalism), the

state may be weak by comparison to the military regime that first imposed so-called “structural adjustment” in a country such as Chile. But it continues to play a key role, in part thanks to its renewed capacity to recast popular protests in political terms, which is that of ensuring “the containment of the demands of social movements (through diverse forms of repressive and persuasive strategies)” and so “secur[ing] the macroeconomic space for flexible patterns of accumulation.” If that sounds too much like a hegemonic project, with its characterization of politics in terms of “repressive and persuasive strategies”—the old dichotomy of coercion and/or consent—Gerardo Muñoz hints at the more properly posthegemonic workings both of the *marea rosada* and of what he calls the “New Right” as the latter steps up to “exploit [...] popular cultures of identification and subjective desires that are no longer the monopoly of the populist affective machine.” Muñoz observes that, in Argentina, Kirchnerismo “orchestrated a contemporary cultural rhythm that hinged on habits and rituals long established in the Peronist sentimental fabric.” In other words, there’s a certain continuity of dispositions and customs, that have little to do with ideology (and which indeed can be paired with very diverse ideological discourses), upon which the Left Turns and their successors both build. The state then benefits from and acts these ingrained habits.

This image of the state as the conductor of a variegated and diverse orchestra, wielding little more than the symbolic power of the baton to maintain a specific tempo and ensure resonance and (relative) harmony between very distinct forms of activity and expression, all of which are the fruit of long training and practice, is probably as good a picture as any of a posthegemonic form of leadership in which neither coercion nor consent are strictly at issue. (Pierre Bourdieu similarly liked to use images drawn from sport to illustrate the workings of the habitus and to disrupt the age-old debate about structure versus agency.<sup>5</sup> With the rise of the New Right, we may see (or hear) rather different rhythms—less of the frenetic bombast of a Hugo Chávez, for instance, with his injunctions for constant mobilization—but the basic

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<sup>5</sup> “Nothing is simultaneously freer and more constrained than the action of the good player. He quite naturally materializes at just the place the ball is about to fall, as if the ball were in command of him—but by that very fact, he is in command of the ball.” Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 63.

principle of a state that seeks not to overwhelm but to orchestrate will no doubt remain in place. This is perhaps a literalization of the frequently-noted confusion of politics with entertainment, already anticipated to some extent in (what John Kraniauskas has called) Eva-Peronism, but whose latest apogee is surely Donald Trump's candidacy in the United States presidential elections.<sup>6</sup>

Yet this same conception of the state as orchestrator also rather undoes Muñoz's over-hasty reduction of the notion of the commons to, first, "communitarianism" and, second and more quickly still, identitarianism. What is common to an orchestra has little to nothing to do with the identities of those constituting it, however much they are fully invested and embodied in the collective. An orchestra is a machinic arrangement that has very disparate parts: brass and strings; French horns and cymbals; musicians at least notionally from very diverse backgrounds. What they have in common, beyond certain habits and experience, is a score and a mode of attention directed to the conductor. None of this depends upon identity. Hence what I think is an element of miscommunication in the interview between Muñoz and Maristella Svampa. When Muñoz moves from the "turn to the commons" to a question about the extent to which "the communitarian (identitarian) [can] be a democratic horizon of emancipation," he compresses many assumptions into a very short passage. No wonder that Svampa should wish to go more slowly, to re-open the conversation: "Concepts in the process of their construction tend to be disputed concepts. So there is a symbolic debate around the new horizon of concepts and a risk of their abuse." At the same time, in turn Svampa moves too quickly in her eagerness (following François Houtart) to associate "common goods with *the common good of humanity*, in the most general sense." If the most significant impact of the Left Turns (as both Muñoz and Svampa seem to agree) has been the shift to the common or commons as one of the key areas for political debate, conflict, and strategy, then their current decline, and the rise of a New Right that seeks now to inhabit this very same terrain,

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<sup>6</sup> 4. "From the point of view of Eva Perón, the Peronist state may be approached as a peculiar combination of tactics and entertainment, in which, on the one hand, the military institution met a working class in the process of (Peronist) re-organisation and, on the other, the exercise of state power passed through the formats of the culture industries." John Kraniauskas, "Porno-Revolution: *El fiord* and the Eva-Peronist State," *Angelaki* 6.1 (April 2001), 147. Obviously, the key difference between Eva-Peronism and Trumpism is that it is business (specifically, property development) that takes the place of the military in this equation.



shows that there is nothing necessarily progressive or noble about the concept. In this sense, the better comparison is not between the commons and communitarianism but more simply with community. The weakness or blindspot of communitarians is that they believe all communities, intrinsically, to be of value. But (to put it most bluntly) everybody knows that some communities are better than others.

Some, perhaps most, communities are exclusionary in one way or another. They can be violent both towards other communities and towards those who have no community, as well as imposing various forms of internal hierarchy and oppression on their own members. In other words, there is no particular normative dimension to community. And perhaps we should say exactly the same thing about the commons. It is not unusual to see the common (or the commons) praised for some inherent virtue it is assumed to possess. But surely this is but a legacy of the fact that the initial stages of capitalism involved the enclosure and privatization of common land. Hence the somewhat nostalgic subsequent drive to “reclaim” the commons. But there is no need even to subscribe the notion of the “tragedy of the commons” to recognize that some commons are better than others. The so-called “common cold,” for instance, or indeed any other endemic disease, is common, and yet hardly to be desired. And there are plenty of instances of common resources and the networks structured around them that are rightly denigrated: these days, for instance, the characteristic of decentralized Islamic terror is that it is organized around just such common sites of information and inflammation that any would-be jihadi can access. Or (to take another extreme) the databases and image collections of paedophile networks are likewise held in common and as far as possible at arm’s length from any named individual. So we may want to fight to expand and preserve the commons, but not *all* commons, or not all equally.

No doubt it would be nice to live in a world with more certainties. A world in which there were straightforward virtues to champion and vices to condemn. Surely this is the attraction of the “decolonial” option in contemporary Latin American reflection: as soon as you have managed to categorize a given phenomenon according to the dichotomy colonizer/colonized, then effectively the work of thinking comes to a halt and a form of Puritanism takes over. The rest is either celebration or castigation. But

the decolonialists are not the only ones. For all his disagreements with them, John Beverley offers a similar gesture in his call to defend the Left Turns, and the achievement of left-wing governments in power.<sup>7</sup> But to point out that the victories of each and every such government are inevitably Pyrrhic is not “ultraleftism”. It is simple realism, and a refusal to abdicate thought in the name of politics. Such abdications demean politics and thought alike.

But life is messier than that. And Diego Valeriano points us to the messy promise of what he calls “*runfla* capitalism” as one of the legacies of the past fifteen years. Valeriano explains that “Runfla capitalism entails a new superior stage of consumption, of popular stability that is both festive and inclusive. The ‘good government,’ parallel to this stage, was its necessary accomplice by unleashing a populist rhetoric that took great efforts in sustaining and fomenting its participation in this process.” These “good governments” are now going or gone, but “*runfla* vitality” continues in the impure admixtures of forces, affects, and habits associated with “the youth, the thieves, the immigrants, the *cholas*” of (especially) metropolitan Latin America.

Surely there was already something of this vitality way back in the festive redistribution of stockpiled goods that characterized the *Caracazo*, the event that serves as the Ur-moment for the entire Left Turns cycle. And if something always escapes, then what escapes (in the dual sense both that it was not fully captured and that it was also produced or further fomented by) the *marea rosada* is perhaps precisely this irreverent, decidedly un-Puritan, transversal attitude to consumer culture that opens up a “micro-politics of life, where consumption, the feast, and the new conflict open worlds to come.” If, as Michela Russo’s reading of Ticio Escobar suggests, we are finally witnessing the full de-auratization of the aesthetic, for both good and ill, then any new options arise from the habits established in “that liminal zone where the political and the aesthetic” and, I would add, the economic “enter a threshold of indecidability.” And where the New Right may discover that its victories, in turn, are as Pyrrhic as those of the Left half a generation ago is in the fact that the real

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<sup>7</sup> John Beverley, *Latinamericanism After 9/11* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

subsumption of society by capital is far from being capital's ultimate triumph. If anything, the fact that capital is now invested in everything, everywhere, makes it more vulnerable than ever. Meanwhile, the players who currently play in tune with the state's sense of rhythm may sometime discover that they do not really need a conductor at all.