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Commodities Consensus: Neoextractivism and Enclosure of the Commons in Latin America

Latin America has recently undergone a passage from the Washington consensus, based on financial valorization, to the commodities consensus, based on the large-scale exportation of raw materials, such as hydrocarbons (gas and petroleum), metals and minerals (copper, gold, silver, tin, bauxite, zinc, etc.), agricultural products (corn, soy, and wheat), and biofuels. The commodities consensus is a complex, fast-paced, recursive process and must be read from multiple perspectives. From an economic point of view, it has involved a process of “reprimarization” of Latin American economies, emphasizing their reorientation toward mainly extractive or rent-based activities, with little added value. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in 2011 agricultural, mineral, and commodity raw materials represented 76 percent of the exports of the countries of the Union of South American Nations, compared to only 34 percent for the world as a whole. The manufacture of advanced technology, in comparison, represented 7 percent and 25 percent, respectively (UNCTAD 2014). China’s entry in the global market compounds the situation, as it quickly imposes itself as an unequal

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partner in respect to commercial exchange with different countries of the region (Rodríguez 2014).

From a social point of view, the commodities consensus deepens the dynamic of dispossession—to use the expression popularized by David Harvey (2004)—the dispossession and accumulation of land, resources, and territories, principally by large corporations, in multiscale alliances with different governments. It is not by chance that the critical literature on Latin America considers these processes to consolidate neoextractivist development (cf. Acosta 2010b; Dávalos 2013; Gudynas 2010; Machado Aráoz 2012; Svampa 2011, 2013b), which is usually defined as the pattern of accumulation based on the overexploitation of generally nonrenewable natural resources, as well as the expansion of capital's frontiers toward territories previously considered nonproductive. Developmentalist neoextractivism is characterized by large-scale enterprises, a focus on exportation, and a tendency for monoproduction or monoculture. Its emblematic figures include strip mining, the expansion of the petroleum and energy frontier (which also includes the exploitation of nonconventional gas or shale gas, using the questionable methodology of hydraulic fracturing or fracking), the construction of large hydroelectric dams, the expansion of the fishing and forestry frontier, and the generalization of the agribusiness model (soy and biofuels).

A key feature of neoextractivism is the immense scale of the projects, which says something about the size of the investment: they are capital-intensive, not labor-intensive, activities. For example, in the case of large-scale mining, for every \$1 million invested, between 0.5 and 2 jobs are directly created (Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011). In Peru, mining employs a mere 2 percent of the economically active population, compared to 23 percent in agriculture, 15 percent in retail, and almost 10 percent in manufacturing (Maquet 2013: 37).

In relation to the previous period of the Washington consensus, the current moment can be read in terms of ruptures as much as continuities. The Washington consensus placed financial valorization at the center of its agenda and included policies of adjustment and privatization, which redefined the state as a metaregulating agent (Santos 2007). Today the commodities consensus focuses on the massive implementation of extractive projects oriented toward exportation, establishing greater flexibility in the state's role. This tendency toward exportation allows for the coexistence of progressive governments, which question the neoliberal consensus, with governments that continue to deepen a neoliberal, conservative political framework.

Finally, the commodities consensus is built on the idea that there is—tacit or explicit—agreement about the irrevocable or irresistible character of the current extractivist dynamic, resulting from growing global demand for raw materials. The aim is to limit collective resistance and close off the possibility for considering other notions of development and to install a comprehensive-historical threshold in regard to alternatives. Consequently, critical discourse or radical opposition is considered in terms of antimodernity, negating progress, “infantile ecologism,” or even “colonial environmentalism” promoted by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or foreign agents.

In the vision of the progressive governments that support it, the commodities consensus is associated with the state’s action as producer and regulator, as well as with funding social programs for the most vulnerable from extractivist rent. The state installs itself within a variable geometry, which means within a multi-actor scheme (marked by a complexification of civil society through social movements, NGOs, and other actors). At the same time, it operates in tight association with multinational capital, which plays an increasingly important role in Latin American economies. This association places clear limits on the national state’s action and an inexorable threshold on the very demand for democratization of collective decision making by communities and populations affected by large extractive projects.

The Latin American setting illustrates the coupling not only of neodevelopmentalist extractivism and neoliberalism, as seen in the paradigmatic cases of Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, but also of neodevelopmentalist extractivism and progressivism, complicating the current problematic even more. The most paradoxical scenarios of the commodities consensus are those presented by Bolivia and Ecuador. In these countries, where there exist strong participatory processes, new concept horizons have been generated, such as the plurinational state, autonomy, *buen vivir* (living well), and the rights of nature, which appear in the Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitutions. However, with the consolidation of these regimes, other questions, linked to the deepening of neoextractivism, become central.

Whether in the crude language of dispossession (liberal neodevelopmentalism) or in pointing to the state’s control of the surplus (progressive neodevelopmentalism), the current development model is based on an extractivist paradigm. It draws from the idea of “economic opportunities” or “comparative advantage” provided by the commodities consensus and deploys social imaginaries (the vision of El Dorado) that overstep the political-ideological borders constructed in the 1990s. These positions reflect the

tendency to consolidate a model of appropriation and exploitation of the commons, which advances on populations through a top-down logic, threatening the improvements in the field of participatory democracy and inaugurating a new cycle of criminalization and violation of human rights.

Conflict, Environmentalization of Struggles, and Bad Development

One consequence of the current extractivist turn has been the explosion of social-environmental conflicts, visible in the strengthening of ancestral struggles for land by indigenous and campesino movements, as well as the emergence of new forms of mobilization and citizen participation focused on the defense of the common, biodiversity, and the environment.

By social-environmental conflicts, I refer to those linked to the access and control of natural resources and territory, which suppose divergent interests and values between opposing parties, in the context of a great asymmetry of power. These conflicts express different conceptions of territory, nature, and the environment as well as understandings of development and democracy. To the extent that multiple megaprojects tend to reconfigure the territory as a whole, they jeopardize not only preexisting social and economic forms but also the very scope of democracy, since they are imposed without the population's consent, generating strong divisions in society and a spiral of criminalization and repression of resistance.

The explosion of social-environmental conflicts parallels what Enrique Leff (2006: 28) calls "the environmentalization of indigenous and campesino struggles and the emergence of a Latin American environmental thinking." New social-environmental, rural and urban, multiclass struggles, characterized by an assembly format and an important demand for autonomy, were established in this context. The most novel element was the creation of a complex social fabric, characterized by the articulation between different actors: indigenous-campesino movements, social-environmental movements, environmental NGOs, networks of intellectuals and experts, and cultural collectives. These struggles recognize new languages for valuing territory and natural resources (Martínez-Alier 2003), leading to the emergence of expert knowledge independent from dominant discourses and the valorization of local knowledges, often with campesino-indigenous roots. Additionally, these languages of valorization have promoted new laws and norms and even legal frameworks seeking to construct an alternative environmental institutionality in opposition to current extractivist public policies and the dominant culture itself.

Beyond the specific contexts (which depend on local and national settings), the dynamic of social-environmental struggles in Latin America gives rise to what has been called the ecoterritorial turn (Svampa 2012), a common language illustrating an innovative intersection between the indigenous-communitarian and environmental discourses. The commons, food sovereignty, environmental justice, and *buen vivir* are among the topics emerging from this productive intersection between different frameworks, to which can be added the ecofeminist perspective. In this sense, it is possible to talk about the construction of common frames of collective action, which work not only as alternative diagrams of cooperation but also as producers of a collective subjectivity.

It is impossible to list all the self-organized national and regional environmental networks in Latin America today. Examples include the National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining (started in Peru in 1999), the Union of Citizen Assemblies (formed in Argentina in 2006 to bring together grassroots organizations against megamining, the agricultural model, and, most recently, fracking), and the National Assembly of the Environmentally Affected (created in Mexico in 2008, organizing against megamining, hydroelectric power plants, savage urbanization, and large-scale industrial farming). A relevant transnational network is the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations, which has brought together organizations from Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Chile since 2006 to advocate for the creation of an environmental crimes tribunal. Finally, there are various research observatories dedicated to these topics, such as the Latin American Environmental Conflicts Observatory, created in 1991 with its headquarters in Chile, and the Latin American Mineral Conflicts Observatory (OCMAL), which started in 1997 and includes more than forty organizations, such as Ecological Action in Ecuador.

Of all the extractive industries in Latin America, large-scale metal mining faces the most opposition. Today not a single Latin American country with large-scale mining projects has been free of social conflicts pitting mining companies and governments against communities. According to OCMAL, there were 120 mining conflicts involving 150 affected communities in 2010; in 2012 there were 161 mining conflicts, including 173 projects and 212 affected communities. In February 2014, the number of conflicts had risen to 198, involving 297 affected communities and 207 projects. The countries with the largest number of conflicts are Peru (34), Chile (34), Mexico (29), Argentina (26), Brazil (20), Colombia (12), and Ecuador (7). Six conflicts are cross-border struggles (OCMAL 2011).

This context of conflict directly or indirectly contributes to the judicialization of social-environmental struggles and human rights violations, including the murder of activists in some countries. For example, in intense repressive episodes in Panama at the beginning of 2012, two members of the Ngäbe-Buglé indigenous community lost their lives. In Peru, since Ollanta Humala's inauguration in July 2011, repression has claimed twenty-five lives, mainly in the Cajamarca region, where residents are mobilizing against the Conga Project, a mining enterprise that threatens to destroy important water sources.

However, criminalization and repression are not the exclusive prerogatives of conservative governments. In Argentina, after ten years of local conflicts related to megamining, made invisible by the governments of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, a popular uprising in Famatina, a small locality in the country's north, put the issue on the national agenda in January 2012. However, after Cristina Kirchner's government explicitly expressed its support of megamining, the mining problematic was again contained in the provinces. A repressive wave that reached its height in Catamarca (with seven repressive episodes in 2012) followed. Additionally, policies of harassment and murder, linked to the expansion of the soy frontier and landgrabs, constantly affect indigenous peoples, as is emblematically illustrated by the Qom community, in the province of Formosa, where six deaths have occurred under suspicious circumstances since November 2010. Another noteworthy case is Rafael Correa's government in Ecuador, which under the guise of laws against "sabotage and terrorism" has processed 213 people, many of them linked to resistance against megamining.

A large part of the Latin American Left and progressive populism has maintained a productivist vision of development, which tends to privilege the conflict between capital and labor, minimizing or giving little attention to new social struggles concentrated on territory and the commons. In this political-ideological framework dominated by the productivist vision, the current dynamic of dispossession becomes a nonconceptualizable blind spot. Social-environmental problematics are considered secondary or expendable in the light of the severe problems of poverty and exclusion in Latin American societies. Although the Latin American Left has undergone a process of revalorization of the communitarian-indigenous matrix in recent decades, it still adheres to a productivist vision of development, tightly linked to the ideology of progress and confidence in the expansion of productive forces.

Progressive governments seek to justify extractivism by affirming it as the path that allows the state to generate revenue, which is later reoriented

toward the redistribution of income and domestic consumption or, rather, toward activities with more value-added content. This discourse, whose real reach must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, seeks to oppose social issues (redistribution) to environmental issues in a reductionist way, leaving out complex and essential discussions that would strategically link the problematics of development, the environment, and democracy. Toward this end, I am interested in four issues.

First, within the framework of the commodities consensus, Latin American progressive governments have opted for a predatory type of extractivism, as demonstrated by the enormous multiplication of development programs based on large-scale extractive projects (gas, soy, oil, and minerals), whose social, environmental, cultural, and political consequences are systematically denied or minimized. Due to the characteristics of territorial appropriation and new social, ethnic, and gender-based inequalities, these extractive projects can only be imposed through a troubling setback in human rights and freedoms. The association between extractivism and the decrease in democracy becomes a recurrent event: without social license, without consulting populations, without environmental controls, and with little state presence or even with it, governments tend not only to empty the already bastardized concept of sustainability of all content but also to manipulate forms of popular participation, seeking to control collective decision making.

Second, the predatory extractivism described above entails the consolidation of unsustainable development models in the medium and long term, or rather models of bad development (*maldesarrollo*; Dumont and Mottin 1982; Shiva 1988; Tortosa 2011). For René Dumont and Marie France Mottin, bad development was an explicit reference to Latin America, related to a paradox: a subcontinent that demonstrated considerable growth in terms of productive forces and the wealth produced, important industry, gigantic cities, and with more contamination and gridlock than developed countries, in short, a misuse of natural resources and labor power. Thus inequality, waste, and plundering, among other things, configured what Dumont and Mottin called bad development, without wishing to oppose it to a supposed ideal development by Europe and the United States. Bad development refers to problems “that affect the system as a whole and that represent a decrease in the satisfaction of human needs and/or in people’s opportunities” (Unceta Satrustegui 2009: 14). This concept then contains a double component: it is an observable—referring to the empirical—diagnostic; it is also a critical reading—what is undesirable as a society. In the context of asymmetrical globalization, where the dynamic of dispossession is central, the concept of bad

development becomes relevant again to illuminate both the failure of development programs (as an ideal, a promise), that is, their unsustainable character, and the different dimensions of “bad living” (Tortosa 2011: 41), which can be observed in Latin American societies as resulting from the advancing frontiers of extractivism.

Third, in the framework of the commodities consensus and in the name of “comparative advantage,” Latin American governments promote a model of inclusion tied to consumption, where the figure of the citizen-consumer overdetermines the imaginary of *buen vivir*. The short-term coupling of the state’s advance, economic growth, and the citizen-consumer model appears as the condition of possibility for governments to have electoral success and remain in power. Additionally, as Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen (2013) argue, the social imaginaries and patterns of consumption consolidated in our societies today (in the global North as well as the South) have given way to a hegemonic mode of life tied to certain ideas about progress that permeate our language, practices, and daily life and on which understandings of quality of life and social development are based. In Latin America, the central wager that progressive governments place on the citizen-consumer model, based on the hegemonic imperial mode of living, reinforces the refusal to consider any hypothesis or scenario of transition and gradual exit from extractivism. Also, given the predominance of an imperial mode of living, which encourages consistency between certain patterns of production and consumption, it is notoriously difficult to create a connection or social and geopolitical articulation between different struggles (social and ecological, urban and rural, among others) and their emancipatory languages.

Fourth, unlike during its first years, the commodities consensus has stopped being a tacit agreement that embarrassingly links extractive progressivism to liberal neodevelopmentalism. On the one hand, progressive governments have recently been consolidating a conspiracy hypothesis, which emphasizes the interested action of outside agents and foreign NGOs. On the other hand, in the heat of territorial and environmental conflicts, they have assumed a belligerently developmentalist discourse, accompanied by a practice of criminalizing resistance. This link between discourse and practice even occurs in those countries that had awoken the most expectations of change, such as Bolivia, illustrating the evolution of progressive governments toward more traditional models of domination (in many, linked to the classic nation-state model). Although various episodes anticipated the collision between the indigenous narrative and extractivist practice, in Bolivia the turning point occurred between 2010 and 2011, with the

Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) conflict, as a result of the construction of the Villa Tunari–San Ignacio highway. The TIPNIS has been a natural reserve since 1965 and in 1990 was recognized as indigenous territory, the habitat of Amazonian peoples. The highway was to open the door to extractive projects that, with or without Brazil as a strategic partner, would have negative social, cultural, and environmental consequences. Ultimately, the escalation of the conflict between indigenous and environmental groups and the government included various marches from the TIPNIS to La Paz, as well as a dark repressive episode and the formation of rural indigenous peoples', social, and environmental organizations in a multisector block with the support of poor urban sectors. Finally, in 2012, Evo Morales's government called for a consultation of the TIPNIS communities. In its official report it claimed that 80 percent of the consulted communities approved the highway's construction. However, an April 2013 report from the Catholic Church, in conjunction with the Permanent Human Rights Assembly of Bolivia, indicates that the consultation "was not free nor in good faith, and also did not comply with standards of prior consultation and was carried out with bribes" (FIDH 2013).

The TIPNIS conflict yielded two important conclusions. First, in the virulent and politicized context of an escalating conflict, the possibility of obtaining indigenous peoples' free, prior, and informed consent—as established by Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization in 1989—inevitably becomes very improbable, and the definition of its procedures, mechanisms, and topics ends up being very controversial. Second, the TIPNIS conflict shut out the government's discourse in regard to what it understands by development, which Vice President Álvaro García Linera aimed to defend in his book *Geopolitics of the Amazon* (2012). For García Linera, without extractivism to sustain social programs the government would fail, leading inevitably to the return of the Right. Thus the ideological placement of resistance is clear—critiques of neoextractivism are openly accused of promoting a "colonial environmentalism." Similar situations have occurred since 2009 in Ecuador with the growth of megamining and in Brazil, following the conflict sparked by the construction of the Belo Monte megadam. In both cases, the governments opted for using a nationalist language and ignoring the issue, negating the legitimacy of claims and attributing them either to "infantile ecologism" (Ecuador) or to the actions of foreign NGOs (Brazil).

In short, the campesino, indigenous, and new social-environmental movements are located on a difficult battlefield. On the one hand, they must

directly confront the global action of large transnational corporations, which have clearly become the hegemonic actors of the extractive-export model in this new stage of capital accumulation. On the other hand, they must also confront the general orientations and politics of popularly elected progressive governments that, for the most part, believe that in the current international conjuncture extractive industries constitute the most rapid path—if not the only path—toward progress and development. Finally, they must wage an immense and necessary cultural battle in the material as well as symbolic realms in relation to the hegemonic mode of life that has been generalized not only in the global North but also in the South.

***Buen Vivir* and the Rights of Nature**

Latin America has an important tradition of critical thought that derives its topics, theoretical talent, and power from current social and political conflicts, in other words, from the forms assumed by social, racial, territorial, and gender-based inequalities in peripheral societies. Ideas such as dependency and revolution, democracy and human rights, or, more recently, the plurinational state and *buen vivir*, among others, are categories of Latin American thought, inextricably linked to social and political struggles that traverse and structure different periods. Additionally, these ideas not only are supported and invoked by various critical currents and schools of Western modernity but also are derived from a Latin American tradition usually denied or made invisible in epistemological terms, for example, in respect to vernacular knowledges or the cosmological visions of indigenous peoples.

The commodities consensus has opened a breach, a profound wound, in Latin American critical thought, which was much more united during the 1990s against the monopolistic character of neoliberalism as an ideological powerhouse. Consequently, diverse tendencies presently exist, among them the need to distinguish between positions proposing a “sensible and rational” capitalism capable of combining extractivism and progressivism and critical positions that openly challenge extractivism and current models of bad development, proposing an alternative paradigm that centers on disputed concepts, such as *buen vivir*, the rights of nature, the commons, and the ethics of care.

One of the most mobilizing concepts is *buen vivir*, in Kichwa *sumak kawsay*, in Aymara *suma qamaña*, and in Guaraní *ñandareko*. The concept proposes new forms of relation between human beings and nature and among human beings (Acosta 2010a). Highlighted in the framework of this

new civilizational paradigm are the abandonment of the idea of development as unlimited economic growth, a sustainable solidarity economy, and the egalitarian prioritization of other ways of valuing activities and goods beyond financial considerations, in short, a deepening of democracy. The vision also revolves around the recognition of the rights of nature (Gudynas 2011a), which supposes not a virgin nature but rather respect for nature's existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary processes, the defense of life systems.

The rights of nature propose a profound civilizational change that questions the dominant anthropocentric logic and become a vanguard response in the face of the current civilizational crisis. In line with the proposal of *buen vivir* or *sumak kawsay*, they are about building a society based on the harmony of relationships between human beings and nature. Thus if development aims to "Westernize" life on the planet, *buen vivir* rescues diversity; it values and respects "the other" (Acosta 2010b).

This recognition has various consequences. First, the new paradigm points to a progressive and indispensable process of the decommodification of nature. Second, dignity, the foundation of human rights, presupposes that all human beings have an intrinsic value. The paradigm of the rights of nature also recognizes the intrinsic value of nature itself independent from human valorization (Gudynas 2011a; Svampa and Viale 2014). Third, nature as a subject of rights demands a relationship of equality and respect. Equality must transcend the human to recognize in nature a life that must be respected, a necessary interrelation between humanity and nature, humanity as part of nature. Fourth, recognizing the rights of nature encourages the establishment of another field of justice: ecological justice, whose objective would be not to charge fines for damages but rather to engage in environmental recomposition independent of its economic cost. Criteria for such justice focus on ensuring vital processes and not economic compensation (Gudynas 2011a: 273–74).

The debate around the rights of nature was put on the agenda by Ecuador's new constitution. There, nature appears as a subject of rights, defined as "the right for its existence to be fully respected, as well as the maintenance and regeneration of its vital cycles, functions and evolutionary processes" (article 71). Nonetheless, this tendency, which started in Latin America, is not globally shared, nor is it the majority view (Svampa and Viale 2014). As at the 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, known as Rio 92, where the model of "sustainable development" triumphed over other forms of conceiving the relationship between humanity and nature, at the 2012 summit,

Rio +20, the national states endorsed the document “The Future We Want,” whereby the “green economy” achieved global consensus in the international community, at the expense of concepts such as the rights of nature and *buen vivir*, promoted by the Latin American social movements.

From Defense of the Common to a Communal Ethos

The concept of the common appears today as key in the search for an emancipatory paradigm in the new grammar of social movements in the global North, where struggle is defined against policies of adjustment and privatization (neoliberalism), as well as in countries of the South, where struggles confront developmentalist neoextractivism. The resurgence of interest in the commons from different disciplinary and scientific perspectives (including, among others, climate change, cities, digital commons, protection of water, seeds, scientific production, and cultural patrimony) also coincided with recognition of the work of economist Elinor Ostrom—winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences—which gave special attention to the existence of common goods and spaces that do not inevitably lead to the overexploitation of resources and the loss and erosion of that patrimony (Subirats 2011).

In Latin America, struggles for the common are usually marked by the defense of seeds, the protection of water, and generally natural goods and territory as a space of collective life and the ecosystem. On one level, common goods are not understood as *commodities*, as pure merchandise, nor are they exclusively understood as *strategic natural resources* or *the public good*, as different progressive governments seek to define them. Beyond their differences, each of these languages imposes a utilitarian or instrumental conception, which implies ignoring other attributes and valorizations that cannot be represented through a market price. The affirmation of the common remits the necessity of maintaining certain resources and goods outside the market that, because of their character as natural, social, or cultural patrimony, belong to the community and possess a value beyond any price (Svampa 2013a).

Beyond utilizing the concept of common goods (principally in the cases of the Ecuadorian and Bolivian governments), governmental narratives oscillate between the vision of natural resources as commodities and their redefinition as strategic natural resources. This second register connects the dispute over forms of territorial construction, given the progressive narrative’s tendency to affirm a statist concept of territory converging in the idea of “productive territory” with a classical developmentalist narrative. Finally, the

notion of common goods is also different from public goods, which are the dominion of the state and therefore are subject to states exercising their jurisdiction without obligation to consult communities.

On a second level, the notion of the common poses a different view of social relations, based on the configuration or emergence of spaces and forms of social cooperation and the use and enjoyment of the common, in the spirit of what Gustavo Esteva (2007) characterized a few years ago as “spheres of communality” or what could be called, as freely inspired by Ecuadorian Bolívar Echeverría (2002), a communal ethos (Linsalata 2011). In the current moment, confronted by the encroachment and sequestering of the common, faced with the generalized capitalist fact in its phase of dispossession and commodification of life, new resistances manifest themselves through the emergence of spaces of community and alternative forms of sociability, that is, of fields of collective experimentation that reclaim the production and reproduction of the common, beyond the state and the market. In short, what is referred to as a communal ethos is inserted into a confrontational dynamic. Paraphrasing Echeverría, this ethos aims to structure the lifeworld in reference to a qualitatively defined “telos” that acts based on the use value of things, their practical consistency, as opposed to capitalism’s structuring principle, which emanates from exchange value and becomes autonomous as capital-value.

The notion of a *communal ethos* allows us to consider preexisting communitarian elements in Latin America as well as the current political dimensions of resistance oriented toward radical democracy. We should remember that peripheral societies have historically been factories of solidarity. Situated outside the formal market and confronted with the state’s absence, a large part of the popular sectors have had to develop and reproduce themselves through self-managed structures of cooperation. In the Andean world (Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador), the persistence of the “community” form tends to be the key for explaining the actualization and recreation of networks of cooperation and interdependence. Whereas in urban contexts of rootlessness (Argentina, Venezuela, or Brazil), marked by unequal modernization, the preexisting communal ethos—if it exists—is weak, and therefore new solidarities need to be generated.

Last but not least, what we understand by communal ethos is very close to another perspective, that of the *ethics of care*, which is advocated by ecofeminism and feminist economy and highlights the parallels between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature, through invisibilized and nonrecognized reproductive labor (León 2009). The ecofeminist

perspective proposes the elimination of female marginalization through the social recognition of the values attributed to women and the need for understanding the social presence of those values, linked to the ethics of care, as the foundation of a new paradigm that would change the current state of relationships between humans and nature. In its newer versions, which avoid an essentialist equation of woman with nature, ecofeminism presents the culture of care as the main inspiration of a socially and ecologically sustainable society, through values such as reciprocity, cooperation, and complementarity (Pascual Rodríguez and Herrero López 2010).

Transition and Postextractivism

Debates about alternatives to the dominant development model and its link to asymmetrical globalization in Latin America are neither new nor unique. But the size and pace of the projects currently being implemented in Latin American countries have put diverse organizations, activists, and intellectuals on high alert over the need to elaborate viable alternative proposals that, while taking into account existing exemplary models (case studies, local and regional economies, and experiences of indigenous communities) are also viable at a more general level. Thus in various Latin American countries debates about alternatives to neoextractivism are already taking place.

Prominent are the efforts of the Permanent Working Group on Alternatives to Development (Grupo Permanente de Trabajo sobre Alternativas al Desarrollo) (Lang et al. 2013), funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, where academics and activists representing different organizations and various countries in Latin America (Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, and Uruguay, among others) and Europe (Germany and Austria) intervene. This group proposes a discussion of ways out of extractivism, which implies thinking about transitional scenarios, from two different levels of action: first, a set of public policies acting on a macro-social and global level and, second, intervention on a local and regional scale aiming to detect, value, and empower already existing cases of alter development.

One of the most interesting and complete proposals has been elaborated by the Latin American Social Ecology Center (Centro Latinoamericano de Ecología Social, or CLAES), under the leadership of Uruguayan Eduardo Gudynas (2011b), which argues that transition requires a set of public policies for rethinking the articulation between the environmental question and the social question. Furthermore, it considers that a set of “alternatives”

within conventional development is insufficient to oppose extractivism and that therefore it is necessary to consider and elaborate “alternatives to development.” Last, it stresses that this discussion should take place on regional terms and on a strategic horizon of change, on the order of what indigenous people call *buen vivir*. Working in the Peruvian context, economists Pedro Francke and Vicente Sotelo (2011) demonstrated the viability of a transition to postextractivism through the combination of two measures: tax reform (higher taxes on extractive activities or taxes on mining windfall profits) for increased tax revenue and a mining-oil-gas moratorium for projects initiated between 2007 and 2011. With this exercise, starting from the combination of taxing extraordinary profits and suspending extractive projects, Francke and Sotelo showed that, far from losing tax revenue, the national state would collect much more.

In the field of the Latin American social, community, and solidarity economy, a wide range of possibilities and experiences must be explored. Doing so implies a prior necessary work of valuing those other economies, as well as strategic planning to empower alternative local economies (agroecology and social economy, among others) throughout Latin America. Today the definition of what is a “better life” appears associated with the democratization of consumption, in the frame of the dominant imperial mode of life, rather than the need for cultural change, in respect to consumption and the relationship with the environment, based on a different theory of social needs.

In conclusion, numerous challenges, paradoxes, and ambivalences confront Latin American thought today, linked to the process of the environmentalization of social struggles and, more precisely, to the more radical strands of critical thought. However, the discussion about the common and the transition to postextractivism has opened and is one of the most important debates for all of our societies.

—Translated by Liz Mason-Deese

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