

JOURNAL FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK



SOCIOECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Ulrich Brand, Birgit Daiber The next oxymoron? Debates about strategies towards transformation **Birgit Daiber** Contradictory Transitional Experiences of Progressive Governments in Latin America **Alex Demirović** Reform, Revolution, Transformation **Maristella Svampa** Resource Extractivism and Alternatives **Edgardo Lander** The State in the Current Processes of Change in Latin America **Oscar Vega Camacho** Paths for Good Living: The Bolivian Constitutional Process **Ulrich Brand** Green Economy and Green Capitalism

JOURNAL FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK

herausgegeben vom Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik
an den österreichischen Universitäten

vol. XXVIII 3–2012

Socioecological Transformations

Schwerpunktredaktion: Ulrich Brand, Birgit Daiber

mandelbaum *edition südwind*

Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)
Austrian Journal of Development Studies

Herausgeber: Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den
österreichischen Universitäten

Redaktion: Markus Auinger, Gerald Faschingeder, Karin Fischer
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Produktionsleitung: Bettina Köhler

Umschlaggestaltung: Bettina Köhler

Titelfoto: Szymon Kochański, www.mywayaround.com („Los marchistas
del TIPNIS llegan a La Paz, 19/10/2011“).

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ULRICH BRAND, BIRGIT DAIBER

The Next Oxymoron?

Debates about Strategies Towards Transformation

Due to the multiple crisis of finance and the economy, of climate change and resource depletion, of gender relations, societal integration and political representation, in recent years the term 'transformation' has become more and more prominent. It is used analytically in the sense that the world is considered to be experiencing today a major transformation towards a globalised system which is becoming multipolar and can not any longer be politically steered. Karl Polanyi's 'great transformation' from the agrarian to the industrial society is the conceptual reference here. The term is also used normatively to indicate that given such various and severe problems, the world needs to be transformed into a more just and sustainable society. Again, Polanyi comes into play with his thoughts about the re-embedding of an economy which was formerly disembedded. And the term 'transformation' has an interesting semantic connotation, since it suggests a kind of radical change.

However, 'transformation' has the potential to become an oxymoron (like sustainable development) that opens up an interesting epistemic terrain but remains then blurred. Many contributions refer to the term because it is fashionable but it might become increasingly unclear if there is a certain 'core of meaning'. However, such a core meaning does not simply 'exist' but needs to be worked out.

Among other things, and this is the starting point of the current issue, a more thorough analysis of the context of transformation is needed, i.e. the manifold experiences which are made in different places and at various scales. Theoretically speaking, we need to think the 'subject of transformation' (often referred to as governance) but probably it is more complex than a simple mode of steering because it includes everyday practices and

subjectivities, societal dispositives and economic relations. And we need a better understanding of the 'object of transformation' because all too often this remains unclear: Does it encompass the (world-)society, concrete and general problems, the crisis? The authors' proposal is to think domination-shaped political, economic and cultural societal relations as an 'object' which needs to be changed – and which also co-constitute the 'subject' of transformation.

In this issue of *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik* we want to explore some crucial aspects of this debate (see abstracts at the end of the respective articles) by referring to theoretical debates and recent experiences. This special issue is a result of a workshop which was held in June 2011 in Brussels. About 20 scholars and activists came together in order to better understand what is going on in the actual crisis, how to make sense of it and how to link it to the current transformation debate. The regional focus was Europe and Latin America, a focus which is also mirrored in the contributions to this volume.

Birgit Daiber presents some important results of ongoing debates among Latin American scholars about the space of action of progressive governments. Alex Demirović refers to historical debates about reform and revolution, their meanings and shortcomings, and proposes an integration of the productive historical experiences and horizon under the heading of transformation. Maristella Svampa explores one of the most dynamic and pressing developments in Latin America in the last decade: the (re-)orientation of economic policy towards resource extractivism and the broad Commodity Consensus. Edgardo Lander looks more closely at the antinomies of progressive governments, their strategies, successes and failures, by comparing different countries. The focus is, however, on Venezuela. Oscar Vega Camacho analyses in depth the case of Bolivia by comparing the core advances of its new constitution and the ambitious aims of a decolonisation with concrete developments. Ulrich Brand introduces the distinction between transition and transformation in order to better understand the meaning of the debate about a green economy and puts it into the context of a potentially emergent green capitalism.

First of all, as guest editors we want to express our gratitude to the authors for their articles and the participants at the Brussels workshop for their contributions. Moreover, we would like to thank the Rosa-Luxem-

burg Foundation Brussels for having organised and financed the workshop and supported the publication of this special issue, Bettina Köhler for her editorial work on that issue, the translators for their translations, and the anonymous reviewers for their excellent and thoughtful comments. We hope that we can contribute to one of the most dynamic and important debates of our times.

Vienna/Brussels, August 2012

BIRGIT DAIBER

Contradictory Transitional Experiences of Progressive Governments in Latin America: The Context of this Special Issue

In eight Latin American countries (plus Cuba) the left is currently in government, and the anti-capitalist dynamic still seems to be strong. Stronger still, however, is the compulsion to follow the logic of capitalist development. Starting in the nineties – after a long period of neoliberal regimes which caused the destruction of public institutions, state functions and entire economies – the left in governments implemented relevant policies of change, such as the process of nationalisation of resource industries in Venezuela and Bolivia, the reduction of external debt and the development of a new domestic financial architecture in Ecuador, and the resumption of industrialisation and the development of manufacturing industries in Argentina and Brazil. Another important issue is the reconstruction of the state, i.e. attempts to reconstruct democracy and transparency.

Thus, the acquisition of control over a country's own natural resources, development of industries, participatory democracy, and in addition, the development of policies of social redistribution, are the real core of governance in many countries. Left political forces see their central task not as blind faith in development (*'desarollismo'*), but rather as the creation of practical alternative priorities by deepening democracy and encouraging the participation of the people, and in the reduction of poverty, with respect for the indigenous peoples as a particularly important aspect. At the same time, moreover, there have been concrete steps for transcontinental cooperation, such as the organisations CELAC (*Comunidad de Estados Latinamericanos y Caribenos*) and UNASUR, the ALBA Cooperation, the cooperative effort of left parties in the *Foro São Paulo*, as well as an alternative transnational financial architecture based on the Banco del Sur, which came into operation in the spring of 2012.

In order to initiate a process of reflection between progressive political forces in Europe and Latin America, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation has organised conferences and seminars in Brussels in 2009, 2010 (see Daiber 2010, 2011) and 2011, in which the experiences of the Latin American and European left in government participation were discussed. The following compilation and preliminary results refer both to the papers and to the analyses of the Latin American partners.

The general questions for an analysis of the development of left strategies in Latin America in these European-Latin American dialogues were: Is it possible to change the correlation of forces in favour of the working classes through the presence of the left in governments? And beyond that: Is it possible to achieve this through an accumulation of forces to overcome capitalism? And to what degree is a different mode of production intended, or, more specifically: Are there relevant processes of socio-ecological transformation which can be implemented?

In addition to the major issues, concrete goals determine the policies of left governments. The most historically important goal to emerge from the history of dictatorships and authoritarian systems in Latin America may be a respect for the autonomy and participation of the indigenous peoples, which have been oppressed for many centuries. It is they particularly who fought for liberation from dictatorships and from foreign control. Based on these experiences, left governments are attempting to develop alternative models of democratisation, in which the autonomy and dignity of the individual are seen as key values.

An equally important goal is the implementation of social policies, which could permit people affected by misery and social exclusion not only to gain access to economic resources and to jobs, but also to stabilise their social situations by participation in public education programmes and healthcare systems. The implementation of such fundamental rights as education, health, housing, and decent work for the majority of the people will require a reorientation of national budgets, financial policies and, not least, the transformation of administrations. Here too, what is at issue are processes of democratisation which would enable transparency and participation.

In some countries – especially Brazil – the implementation of social policies is being pushed forward, especially in the context of the classical

social-democratic compromise between capital and wage labour, by means of classical resource and industrial policies and agribusiness on the one hand and redistribution policies on the other. Other countries, such as Venezuela, are trying to explore socialist models of production and reproduction, alongside the classical social-democratic strategies. Thus, the question as to whether capitalist relations can be overcome, or whether what is at issue is not rather the generation of space for redistribution policies by means of an efficient state, is open.

Essential for a political understanding of the left governments in Latin America is the attempt to define democracy as a participatory model, although the very marked orientation of politics toward charismatic leaders represents a considerable difference from European traditions. The fact that previously excluded groups of the population have become autonomous political actors is of extraordinary significance; nonetheless, it does mean, as conflicts in Ecuador and Bolivia have shown, that there are contradictions to be resolved between the governments and the social movements. A realisation of this political understanding can only be successful, however, if a functional state structure which meets the classical criteria can be established. Carlos Castaneda from El Salvador described the tasks facing his country after the electoral success of the leftist FMLN in 2009 as follows: “Making development possible requires a welfare state, a democratic state under the rule of law that is functional and powerful, and provides legal and civic security as well as access to the vital goods and services for the population. That requires a profound democratisation of power and state relations, as well as market regulations and non-privatisation of public services, and is expressed in a truly democratic government, capable of promoting the construction of a widely shared vision” (Castaneda Magaña 2010: 109).

At the same time, the opposition against the left governments in Latin America is very active. The attempt by the left in Latin America to change the direction of history is constantly under threat. The 2010 coup against the left-liberal President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras, the attempted coup against Rafael Correa in Ecuador in 2010, and the ‘cold’ coup against Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo in 2012, as well as the repeated attempts to use the political struggles in Bolivia for a coup against the leftist government, all tell a clear story: the national oligarchies, who fear for their power, as well as the United States, are continuing their attempts to maintain

control. Fernando Lugo ruled in Paraguay against a right-wing majority in Parliament. The situation in many Central American countries is dominated by drug wars and the rule of violence. The extensive crime wave among the young people of Mexico is an especially terrible example of how a once relatively well-functioning country could turn into a failed state as a result of pursuing the neo-liberal agenda. The opposition in the countries ruled by left governments in Latin America is aggressive, and would shun no act of violence or coup d'état in order to regain their power. They use strategies of secession from the nation-states, electoral fraud and media campaigns in order to destabilise the leftist governments. They are still powerful, and in spite of the considerable differences between the different countries, Iole Ilíada of the Perseu Abramo Foundation in Brazil has reached the following sobering conclusion: "It is imperative to realise that those who control financial capital, production, the land, the media, knowledge and science have in effect maintained their dominance, and even possibly increased it. From a structural point of view, these societies have not changed profoundly [...] The presence of the left in governments via elections, as much as we want that presence to last, is always a transitional experience" (Ilíada 2011: 46).

Under such restricted conditions, the left governments can nonetheless point to considerable successes: Venezuela, with its project for a 'Bolivarian Revolution', has most clearly demonstrated its refusal to enter into compromises with the reactionary forces; at the same time however, Venezuela is the one country whose wealth is 90% dependent on oil. The redistribution policies of the leftist government in favour of the previously excluded groups of the population depend on the ability of the country to function in the capitalist process. At the same time, experiments with socialist models of production and reproduction are taking place. The socialist mode of production seeks to consolidate an endogenous economy of multiple internal productive chains, diversifying its export potential for goods and services, after meeting domestic needs. It seeks to promote scientific and technological innovation adapted to the goal of meeting those human needs. However, the greatest contradiction, without a doubt, is the development in Brazil. That country is consistently following the classical social-democratic path of compromise between capital and labour, and the concomitant policies of stabilising social relations.

Reports from other countries, too, have critically addressed the progress achieved to date, and the limits of political autonomy. All reports have made clear that what is at stake is no less than the transformation from a capitalist to a socialist mode of production. One fact which is assessed as revolutionary is the nationalisation of resources – especially petroleum – as well as the development of manufacturing industries and the social redistribution of the profits thus achieved. In this context, the countries see democratisation and the participation of the previously excluded groups of the population as a key factor, and are attempting to implement by means of a redistribution process social policies in the areas of education, health and basic needs, as well as securing the livelihood of the peasantry. However, all this is being carried out in the context of globalised and regional capitalisms. Héctor Rodríguez Castro's vividly formulated characterisation of Venezuela can certainly be generalised: One could argue that the political and social left is trying to develop a socialist soul in a capitalist body (Daiber/Kulke 2010: 14).

The transitional practice in particular countries includes, to very differing degrees, the perspective of socio-ecological transformation. The contradiction between industrialisation, exploitation of resources, exhaustion of nature, and the realisation of ecological goals is just as deep in Latin America as it is in other regions of the world. In his critique of the global North, Valter Pomar (2011: 86) from the *Foro São Paulo* says: "In all countries, including those where the official discourse is in favour of environmental protection, there is a growing conflict resulting from an obvious equation: if rich countries do not assume responsibility for the environmental costs and continue to threaten the political and economic stability of poor countries, these countries will be forced to choose between rapid economic growth, with its potential for major environmental damage, or growth with a high degree of environmental protection, which is then very expensive and slow."

That means that the left governments are in a position in which they have few options. On the one hand, they have to try to initiate industrialisation processes, and to exploit their often enormous natural wealth in order to develop their economies in such a way that social redistribution processes of significant dimensions will be possible. And on the other, they must at the same time try to preserve their wealth of yet little-damaged

ecosystems. The contradiction which thus emerges can hardly be resolved under existing conditions: On the one hand, huge areas of land are being consumed for the production of energy crops, fire clearance in the Amazon area is literally heating up the climate crisis, and the pollution of the soil by poisonous waste water is inhibiting the conditions of life of the local people. On the other, ambitious projects are being realised to protect the natural environment, the rain forest and the conditions of life of local indigenous peoples. The process of rethinking is however being determined less by concrete practice than by the general formulation of new fundamental societal values. The goal of harmonious life (*'vivre bien'*) formulated in the new constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, the establishment of nature as a legal entity, the recognition of inter-culturalism and cultural self-determination of indigenous peoples, as well as thorough-going gender justice, together constitute a value system revolutionary both in its complexity and in its particular aspects. For the first time, the interconnection of human development and nature is being formulated non-hierarchically, with neither subordination nor exploitation as its legally determining foundation. The recognition of nature as a legal entity is moreover a new concept that bursts the framework of all classical judicial theories.

The existential contradiction between industrial development and the environment remains unresolved – as is clearly visible in the development strategies of Venezuela and Brazil. One urgent issue is the transfer of the rich natural and mining resources to national control, i.e. the struggle with the global capitalist major players, the development of national processing industries, and the introduction of minimal social standards for all citizens – in other words, classical redistribution policies. None of the oil-producing countries – Venezuela, Ecuador or Brazil – can, in view of the massive impoverishment of major sectors of the population after centuries of feudal rule and imperialism, dispense with redistribution policies. By the same token, none of the countries with valuable natural or mining resources, such as lithium or rare earth metals, can dispense with their exploitation.

Thus, the contradiction seems to be threefold: (1) to implement, under the regime of capitalism, transformational strategies which will open up a post-capitalist, socialist perspective; (2) to re-appropriate the rich resources, including their exploitation; and (3) to initiate a process of democratic participation and articulation of new values of 'the common good of human-

kind' (cf. Daiber/Houtart 2012) – i.e., of values which are of significance for all humanity worldwide – but which provoke conflicts within the respective societies.

The new values demand the preservation of the conditions of life of local communities, and investment in sustainable and locally appropriate technologies, the maintenance and reconstruction of small-holder agriculture, and an end to the destruction of the rain forests, and the participation of indigenous peoples in the political decision-making processes. It also involves an attempt to re-determine the basic values of societies, including respect for nature and living entities with their own rights, and to realise the goals of good cohabitation of human beings beyond the structures of consumerism.

But there is also the classical duty to pursue industrial development and introduce social standards for the working classes. This contradiction is neither purely theoretical, nor practically resolvable in the real world – at least not under the capitalist conditions which are dominant globally today. This sobering fact only becomes bearable if the main emphasis is placed both on implementing concrete projects, for the practical and visible improvement of the social situation of those strata of the population affected by social exclusion, and, at the same time, on practical and visible projects of ecological and cultural renewal. Even if what is taking place in the countries governed by the left in Latin America is a controversial process, it is obvious that we are seeing the beginning of transformational social processes, in which the two sides of the social contradiction are confronting one another.

Latin America teaches us that it is necessary to be aware of the contradiction between current societies and their bio-physical basis, and to repeatedly decide on a case-by-case basis and in the democratic process of negotiation in which direction we need to act – and also to apply that same standard to our own actions, and work for ecological embedding in industrial processes.

This contradiction is without doubt the most pressing expression of the conflict between the domination of nature and a democratic shaping of society's relationship to nature. But it cannot be resolved in the context of the current historical situation. What we can, however, demand of ourselves – regardless of whether we live in the North or in the South – is

that we create consciousness regarding this contradiction, and seek intelligent solutions in the concrete contexts of action, so as to make possible a step-by-step reduction of the domination of techno-capitalist processes over the human conditions of life on our planet.

The significance of this establishment of values for humankind in general is evident. They are of fundamental significance for socio-ecological transformation processes, not only in Latin America, but for all of humankind. Their intention is a new mode of living in opposition to the laws of capitalist economic development. At the same time, people affected most by the implementation of industrial development projects often come into conflict with one another, a prime example being the partial interests of affected people in the preservation of their natural environment coming into contradiction with the general interest of reducing poverty and realising general rights of protection. This has been shown repeatedly in current conflicts in Ecuador and Bolivia. The contradictions stemming from society's relationship to nature have not been overcome yet. This task is being carried out in the space between the short-term goal of implementing fundamental classical social reforms, and the equally urgent requirement to preserve and develop the natural environment. This contradiction is emerging clearly, and has to be addressed repeatedly. Perhaps the key difference is that the realisation of participatory democracy permits citizens to carry out these disputes in public, and to negotiate solutions. The upsurge in Latin America is only the beginning of a development which is significant not only for the continent itself, but also for globalisation-critical ecological and progressive movements in other parts of the world, or, as Valter Pomar concluded: "In addition to what has been said above, the socialists of the twenty-first century cannot plead ignorance with regard to the complexity and the long struggle to overcome capitalism. The struggle for power can be resolved in years, but the creation of a different society is a project that will last decades and centuries. Making development possible requires a welfare state, a democratic state under the rule of law that is functional and powerful, and provides legal and civic security as well as access to the vital goods and services for the population. That will require a profound democratisation of power and state relations, as well as market regulations and the non-privatisation of public services, and must be expressed in a truly democratic government, capable of promoting the construction of a widely shared vision" (Pomar 2011: 89).

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ALEX DEMIROVIĆ

Reform, Revolution, Transformation

The OECD countries are facing multiple crises involving a number of discrete yet interlocking crisis dynamics (cf. Demirović et al. 2011). In addition to the crises of the financial market and of the economy, societal nature relations is in many ways disturbed, particularly with respect to the climate, to energy and water, to food, and to the urban-rural relationship; moreover, the labour market is in crisis, as are labour relations and the living situation of many wage dependent people, as well as the social systems, mobility, education and training systems, and the forms of reproduction of the subject. The need for change is accordingly great, and far exceeds measures for dealing solely with the current economic crisis. Moreover, it goes beyond the crisis situation itself, for even that which is considered as desirable normality and stability is not sustainable. Different crisis policies are showing themselves to be a form of social domination which attempts to crowd many contradictions out of society, only to find them to deepen the crisis. This large number of generic crisis elements is an indication of the precarious character of these 'normal conditions of living'.

In all these respects, it appears that the highly developed societies are moving in slow motion. No problem is being solved. The nuclear accident at Fukushima has shown this clearly once again; it is like the repetition of the situation in 1986, after Chernobyl. For the neo-liberal form of capitalist dominance is also a robber of time; three decades have been lost. Relevant insights made during the '70s and '80s were not implemented, so that we are forced to repeat them again today. Society's development path must be made subject to a democratic process of discussion and decision-making (cf. Allespach et al. 2010).

Neither in a reformist nor in a revolutionary manner has the left really been able to make a breakthrough. As far as revolutionary politics are

concerned, this would appear obvious, for there is overwhelming evidence to indicate that the familiar socialist political revolutions have clearly not succeeded in bringing about the realisation of the emancipatory goals with which they have symbolically been associated. However, reforms, too, have failed to achieve the results expected of them. The experience with reforms, reform-oriented parties and reformist governments which were also supported by left forces – in Germany, the Social Democratic-Liberal coalition of the 1970s and the Red-Green coalition between 1998 and 2005 – have taught us that here, too, a reversal of the original goals was possible. Like revolution, reform, too, cannot, in view of its decades-long experience, any longer be carried out in accordance with its objectivistic orientation; rather, it too is being forced to consider its failure and the consequences thereof. Any radical policy today must address this issue of the evaluation of its practice and its results.

The dialectic of revolution and reform must be rethought. Although the two terms have, in the history of the socialist movement, often been seen as opposites, today, after the failure of both strategies, the question arises of the conception of a strategy of *transformation* which would have the support of many societal groups, as it would give them the space and the possibilities to pursue their respective emancipatory goals. In the following, I would first of all like to identify one of the problems connected with the terms 'revolution' and 'reform'. The foil for that is the 'need for political action' which is so often being called for in political discussions. In the second section, I will present arguments for the term 'transformation'. Finally, in the third section, I will present three examples of approaches to transformation. If transformation is seen not as an evolutionary process, but rather as the result of societal, democratic action, actors will have to be clear as to the level at which transformation will have to be initiated, what barriers such a strategy will have to count on facing, and which preconditions transformation actors will have to fulfil in order to be successful.

1. The dilemmas of revolution and reform

In theories of societal change or evolution, the view is often put forth that these processes of societal development are rarely accessible to

the collective will of people. However, in view of the depth of the crises which characterise global society, the question arises as to the possibilities of democratic access to societal paths of development, and hence the problem of public discourse and of democratic decision-making ability. This leads me to the more abstract question of the time – or rather the timeframes – which reforms or revolutions will require. It appears that in the historical discourse on the topic of revolution or reform, revolution has been associated with urgency, determined action and the promise of rapid solutions to problems, while reform has been associated with a slow, cautious, hesitant, evolutionary approach. My impression now is that the temporal semantics have changed, and that the timeframe assumptions of past years have indeed been reversed. Kathrin Buhl has addressed this issue with a view of the Latin American situation: “The question as to how we can succeed in developing sustainable, just economic models dedicated to people rather than to profit, remains a challenge. More difficult yet: the process will necessarily be *longer-term*, but the present conditions of living of large parts of the Latin American population demand immediate solutions, which appear possible only through a continuation of the existing economic model and a state-organized redistribution process. There is grave doubt as to whether this path might not necessarily mean an abandonment of the transformative processes – apart from the fact that it contains no solutions for the ecological problems” (Buhl 2010: 6, emphasis AD). Thus, it is precisely the urgency of freeing people from the deepest poverty which forces radical solutions into the background. By contrast, the discourse of former days would have argued for moving on quickly to a revolution and the political seizure of power, for only a revolution promised the rapidity with which societal problems could be changed for the better. For:

(a) The market, which is oriented toward profit and not toward the needs of society, can be considered inappropriate, because it is too slow, too selective, too particular, and too contradictory to mobilise collective resources for solving society’s problems. The most recent example can be seen in Japan; after the triple catastrophe of an earthquake, a tsunami and a nuclear accident, and the resulting economic collapse, the rating agencies downgraded Japan’s credit-worthiness. Precisely at the point where Japan needed worldwide solidarity, and was receiving it to some extent through contributions and through support by the scientific commu-

nity and the governments of other countries, the ‘markets’, i.e. primarily those institutional investors who had just been rescued by governments, turned against Japan.

(b) Parliamentary democracy, with its dependence on business, with its rhythms and legislative terms, its changes of governments and oppositions, its principle of representation, its exercise of control through general legislation, and its generally weak monetary powers, favours irresponsibility, corruption, misdirection and the failure of controls. Especially in view of the ecological dynamics of crisis, it is too slow and too ineffective (cf. Demirović 1997: 183ff).

Nevertheless, in the context of the ecological discourse too, we can observe these changes in temporal semantics. In view of the urgency of many problem complexes, particularly in the case of the accelerating climate crisis, the argument is often heard that the time window is closing rapidly, and that ‘we’ no longer have any time to wait until people are ready for fundamental solutions. Radical perspectives and strategies for changing society, which have the goal of providing fundamental solutions to problems of poverty or environmental destruction, are considered too slow and too time-consuming, and therefore useless. Reformists promise a more rapid solution, since they can form alliances with those interests which are currently powerful. That should make it possible to reduce CO₂ emissions, or to mobilise investments for the generation of solar energy on the basis of state regulation and support, using the tools of the market. This would be the foundation for the strategy of green capitalism or a Green New Deal: in realisation of their self-interest, the owners of capital would see the necessity of pursuing an environmentally friendly investment strategy. The interests of the owners of large fortunes in profit would ultimately dovetail with those of the common good, with no conscious plan or political strategy for radical change – which would after all only provoke massive resistance.

Time becomes a political factor. Evidently, the timeframe pattern is reversing. Reforms are being seen as providing rapid and determined measures, since they can be connected to broad complexes of interest, and will not spark resistance through their radical intent. By contrast, the concept of reform in the history of the left has had a twofold target: it has challenged, first, the apocalyptic expectation of the revolution as being someday inevitable, with the implication that we therefore need not bother

changing things in the interval; and second, the revolutionary impatience which expects that on the day after the revolution, all problems will have been solved with one blow. Paradoxically, both assumptions are similar, in spite of their juxtaposition. For with this latter radical attitude too, one might justify waiting until the revolution, or fighting for the revolution only as a transcendental event, while criticising any work for small improvements in the framework of the existing system, thus contributing to upholding precisely that existing system. Only if an improvement of concrete conditions with the goal of a fundamental transformation is conveyed will it appear to be acceptable. The orientation towards a revolution promises the opportunity to step out of the linear progression of time, and to halt its progress. "The consciousness of exploding the continuum of history is peculiar to the revolutionary classes in the moment of their action. The Great Revolution introduced a new calendar" (Benjamin 1940: n.pag.). Benjamin sees the metaphor for that in the fact that during the July Revolution in Paris, shots were taken at a number of clocks on church steeples, in order to stop the progress of time. Revolutions create a moratorium, and thus the conditions under which societal relations can be reordered in such a way as to enable the avoidance of the hitherto familiar crises: unemployment, economic crises, destruction of resources, prevention of democracy, or the destruction of its institutions.

The expectations thus associated with revolution contain a number of problems. In fact, revolutions do not spring up as quickly as revolutionary determination would have them do. The question thus arises as to how to use the time that will elapse prior to such an event. In expectation of the future revolutionary struggle, one possibility is to refuse to recognise the many possibilities for change that may exist for mitigating the hardships of life in the here and now. Moreover, everyday life and its problems are simply ignored in light of the bright promise of the future, or else they are reduced to the simple and in fact cynical realisation that capitalist conditions are what they are, and that it is impossible to hope for a good, fair, satisfying life under them. Thus does this critically intended materialist approach become a positivist affirmation in a sense like: 'After all, we are materialists, and we know that the relations of forces are what they are'. Of course that is not entirely wrong, for in fact an expectation that life in today's world might be lived and experienced as meaningful, fair and free could

be seen as raising the danger of false reconciliation. Accordingly, suggestions and practices for reform are often naïve, since they suggest that all you need is commitment, goodwill, good ideas, well thought out and viable concepts, and the participation of many, and change will indeed come.

According to a further argument, the preparation of the revolution and the implementation of revolutionary action release a logic of their own, which can rapidly slide into instrumentalism; while not entirely ignoring everyday life and social relations, one nonetheless tends to one-sidedly view all problems and all persons solely under the aspect of their usefulness for the grand event that is to come. That is almost inevitably tied to a devaluation of many individuals. Those who support the revolutionary goals lay claim to a privileged position; on the one hand, they claim the epistemological privilege of knowing how society develops and how its problems can be solved. Beyond that moreover, revolutionaries support the common good, they are self-sacrificing and determined to implement it. The others represent only particular interests, prevent any fundamental solution to problems, or do not understand the historical mission. Now, that is not wrong per se. Individuals who support fundamental, long-term transformations do in fact develop a special knowledge, and do in fact represent universalist goals. In many cases however, these are no longer placed into any relationship to the goals of other people, and to the alternatives they embody. It thus becomes possible to see individuals in a historical-philosophical sense as mere means to an end. With a shift in the revolutionary process, this can apply to revolutionaries themselves as well, if their positions come to be considered as representing particular interests, and as treason to the common goals. Even a poor social situation can in this way be evaluated as supportive for one's own goals. One may believe that this oppressive situation can be rendered even more oppressive by means of the spiral of struggle with the forces which the revolution seeks to eliminate, a struggle carried out by ever more violent means. This may lead to great political success, but, unlike the claim often made in revolutionary theory, that is then the case not for logical, but rather for contingent reasons. If both forces use the means of violence, this could also set loose a dynamic which can cause great damage to the revolutionary goal. Violence become structurally formative in and of itself, since society may find itself occupied

for decades with overcoming the effects of destruction, and subsequently with reconciliation.

Third, the revolutionary process itself carries with it the potential for great conflict and violence. Since revolution interrupts the normal course of societal reproduction, it must arrive at rapid solutions. Those who have organized the revolutionary process may be overwhelmed by the rapidity of events and the multiplicity of demands. Their resources in personnel and their knowledge are too thin. The expectations that everything will be solved as a result of the situation itself, that the revolution will, in its revolutionary processes, create the appropriate people in sufficient proportions, and that the appropriate skills will emerge from them just as spontaneously, is false. On the one hand, one should not deny the fact that revolutions themselves represent relationships which create their own potential for action. But often, revolutionary processes remain limited to a few cities or regions. Moreover, the skills important for the reorganisation of complex processes of production, distribution and decision-making, and for the establishment of long-term routines, do not necessarily emerge rapidly.¹ Indeed, a long-established tradition may be so powerful that it can limit the creativity of the revolutionary situation. The German Social Democrats fought for so long for the right to vote and for parliamentarism that in 1918 and 1919, when more than that was possible, they rejected the possibility of fighting for more, and held fast to their obsolete catalogue of goals, only to have the bourgeoisie in German society deprive them even of that parliamentarism. “One could claim that the German Social Democrats, up to the moment when they seized political power, gave precious little thought to the ascertainment of a positive formula for the socialist organization of the national economy, and hence to the practical solution to the question of nationalization” (Korsch 1980 [1919]: 161). In other words, what is meant by revolution does not occur simply without further ado. On the ‘day after’, solutions to the pressing problems will still have to be found. The number of problems will then however not be smaller, but rather greater, and there will not necessarily be enough people and enough skills available. Revolutions too need plenty of time; they may come rapidly, but then they have to reorganise the relation of forces. On the other hand, the revolution has to bear the responsibility for such a reorganisation, and is thus in danger of discrediting itself. A fair-minded person, according to Kant in *The Contest*

of Faculties, could never decide to make a revolution, in view of the misery and the atrocities it engendered, even if one might hope to be able to carry it through happily the second time. Indeed, Marx too criticised the model of the *political* revolution, and argued for an orientation towards a process of social revolution. There were two reasons for that critique: First, in the context of the conception of political revolution, action appears as a relationship of political will. Moreover, this thus yields the expectation of being able to force through by political and legal means changes which can only occur in the form of social processes. As a result, the political revolution becomes authoritarian. “The more developed and the more comprehensive is the political understanding of a nation, the more the proletariat will squander its energies – at least in the initial stages of the movement – in senseless, futile uprisings that will be drowned in blood. Because it thinks in political terms, it regards the *will* as the cause of all evils and *force* and the *overthrow of a particular* form of the state as the universal remedy” (Marx 1972 [1844]: 407). However, as soon as the organising activity of socialism begins, when “its soul emerges, when it shows that it is an end in itself, then socialism throws its political cover aside” (ibid.: 409). However, Marx did not systematically think through this relationship between the political and social revolutions, although there are numerous references to it in his texts on the Paris Commune.

In view of the enormous challenges and dangers connected with a revolution, social democratic intellectuals developed a concept of gradualist evolution. In their description of the economic democracy discussions within the SPD, Fritz Vilmar and Karl-Otto Sattler (1978: 8f) pointedly recalled these social democratic concepts. They claimed to pursue an evolutionary and gradualist strategy. By means of reforms, the introduction of new elements of control, the continual supervision of economic power, and with the expansion of the rights of codetermination and self-determination, a transformation of the existing economic order was to be achieved. The authors distinguished this gradualist position from the revolutionary total solution on the one hand, but also from the position of “only carrying out marginal corrections on a day-to-day basis and without any perspective” (ibid.), and without pursuing the goal of overcoming capitalist society. This is to occur step-by-step, with each next step in the context of a dynamic concept becoming one that could never appear as the conclusive one, but

always as the necessary preparation for a more demanding socio-political concept. Associated with such a gradualist concept is evidently an assumption that is not plausible in and of itself: Vilmar and Sattler apparently assumed that gradual reforms would enable learning processes, so that institutional changes might be tried out. That would permit the various groups of the population to familiarise themselves with such changes, dissolve old ties of interest, and tie their interests to new regulations and institutions, in order to re-examine preferences and create new ones. As a result, the changes would ultimately obtain increasingly strong support, and thus the relations of power would gradually be changed. This approach appears as a kind of trick, in which a very slow step-by-step process is to advance toward radical systemic change. The expectations of these authors were that each decision would lead to 'boundary shifts' and self-association of the actors, which would become the premises for further decisions, so that in the process of marginal changes, certain threshold values of societal reproduction might be transcended.

The objections to these theses are obvious. When such a process is stated as being evolutionary, the speculation is that it will be carried out behind the backs of the actors, as a process of non-intentional effectiveness. This involves a curious lack of public openness and democratic discussion of strategy, and threatens, *de facto*, to abandon the process to the technocrats. For inasmuch as people at all levels are actually involved in the economic reproduction process, it is obvious that they will not only determine the goals, but also the speed of the reform processes. At the same time however, the basic goal has already been established, and must only be administered appropriately and rationally, with political means. Thus, the issue is to motivate people to take these steps. This constitutes a teaching relationship towards people. Hence, the process is first of all precisely not designed as an open one. However, it is marked by trust that each next incremental improvement will lead to a change of the whole. That is a very questionable kind of trust: "Whether the 'next step' bears within it the potential for the whole, or whether it strangles and prevents that, can always only be ascertained afterwards; and to imagine that the 'next step' will without question and in fact extend to cover the whole, basically requires a full dose of Hegelian metaphysics, which, after all, continues to

show its effect in Marx, in other words, I would say, requires a solid belief in the world spirit" (Adorno 2008 [1964]: 9, translation PH). The conception of the next steps is thus a special kind of burden, for it is challenged not only by the countervailing forces, but also by the factor of resignation, and – in the name of realism – of adaptation to existing conditions. Adorno himself evidently did not imagine any linear concept of the emancipatory course. He argued for an open course, which he evidently saw as a series of aleatoric processes. Emancipation at the world-historical level has long since been possible. That is what gives reforms their special priority of place, for each is necessary and makes sense, but each must also be carried out in such a way that it might be the last one, the one which immediately brings about the condition of reconciled humankind. Thus, Adorno and Horkheimer wrote that, in view of the multiplications of things and of the forces of society, control by the few was no longer in accordance with the times, for all were capable of exercising that control. All people "finally learned to forgo power. Enlightenment consummates and abolishes itself when the closest technical objectives reveal themselves to be the most distant goal already attained" (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002 [1947]: 33).

Second, we need to take into account that even in processes which are conceived as gradualist, rational and conscious, decisions which develop step-by-step could themselves again lead to unforeseen and unintended changes. In order to convince and win over possible opponents to a project, changes will be made in that project by way of compromise, causing it over time to assume an entirely different character (cf. Bachrach/Baratz 1977: 77). Preferences and meta-preferences may shift in the course of reforms; the expansion of state operated social systems may ultimately strengthen the desire for a self-determined life to such an extent that the bureaucratic administration of insurances against life's risks itself appears as a problem.

Third, interestingly enough, precisely the activity of those who wield power and use it to oppose the gradualist reform strategies remain outside the scope of the arguments for a reformist strategy. However, these powerful and dominant groups are not stupid, to put it bluntly; they too understand the gradualist strategy as one that is directed against their interests. They play 'global intellect', and try to drive a wedge between the goal and the single steps, and to intervene in the process in such a way that it does

not proceed in an evolutionary and gradualist manner. Certainly, these powerful groups will be weakened in the course of this process, as some of them are pried out of the power block. But those who have the most to lose will seek to prevent precisely such a development. The relations of forces since the 1970s have proceeded in such a way that precisely the foundations of evolutionary reform strategies have been weakened. While Vilmar and Sattler expect an evolutionary strategy to produce a gradual reconstruction, neo-liberals and system theoreticians have developed a concept of evolution, and imposed it upon society, which opposes any rationally planned strategy for the reconstruction and steering of the whole of society. Thus has a counter-reformist concept been developed which not only blocks all expectations which speculate on a gradualist reform strategy, but in fact reverses them. Such expectations include the security guaranteed by the welfare state and participation in it, economic framework planning, investment control, expansion of communal economy and politically controlled areas of the economy, and hence ultimately the creation of the primacy of democratically legitimate policy over the logic of profit of the private economy. The concept of a gradualist evolutionary development toward socialism, as it existed in parts of the social democratic movement and in the unions during the mid-1970s, has been disappointed just as much as has the radical, cultural revolutionary concept pursued by large parts of the non-dogmatic New Left during the post-1968 period. Such disappointments may be one of the reasons why the Social Democrats and the unions hardly see socialism as the goal of their political efforts, but rather as having the significance of one respectable ethical value among many others. Therefore, it is certainly appropriate to note that the Social Democrats have not yet theoretically reflected upon the defeat of the reform strategy. I would like to emphasise that evolutionary concepts too are part of the societal relation of forces, and that the ruling bloc is mobilising against them. However, since such evolutionary concepts are precisely not associated with concepts of political struggle, but that it is instead often assumed that the decisive factor is the logical plausibility and the economic and political feasibility of such a proposal, an analytical gap arises which is fatal to further reflection within the left.

2. The perspective of transformation

The contradiction between revolution and reform has been seen by many as unsatisfactory, because it fails to take into account the complexity of real emancipatory processes which have again and again split the left, and have contributed to the fact that no overarching emancipatory perspective has been developed. There have been repeated attempts to overcome this contradiction. Rosa Luxemburg thus spoke of revolutionary pragmatism (*'revolutionäre Realpolitik'*), while the Austro-Marxists, and particularly Max Adler, attempted to counteract the split in the European workers' movement. Also, considerations which have led to the foundation of unified socialist parties, or of industrial unions, were due to the realisation that a split in the emancipatory forces along the axis of revolution vs. reform would ultimately only serve the ruling forces. Hence, the attempt has for some time been undertaken to circumvent and reject this contradiction, which has evidently again and again arisen in everyday political processes, between a radical, revolutionary break and the gradualist, evolutionary transformation. Lately, there has been talk about radical pragmatism or radical reformism. Even if we, again following Kant, were to decide on rational grounds that we didn't want to make a revolution, in view of the practical costs, the moral element in human nature would nonetheless ensure that the desire for revolution would continue to exist: first, because people have the right to give themselves that civic republican constitution which they themselves see as appropriate; and second because only such self-constitutionalisation would have the legal and moral standing that would prevent aggressive wars, and ultimately war itself, which could thus no longer prevent the progress of humankind (cf. Kant 1968 [1798]: 86). The desire for revolution is accordingly a constituent factor of bourgeois society. That society cannot, however, succeed in becoming identical with itself, and in bringing itself to a conclusion at the end of its history. The concept of progress that Kant takes up will always, in a contradictory manner, incorporate both elements. The first is the linear progression of time, an eternal progression, in accord with that bourgeois self-consciousness which believes that actually everything has already been achieved, and only this or that little thing still needs to be improved. Thus does everything continually change, modernise and progress in order to

remain the way it is. Second, however, there is the logic of the break, the holding up of time, the renunciation of constant change so that at long last everything can become different at once. Progress which can only occur in and through society, as Adorno says, still does not dissolve in that society, but rises above it. Progress must take place within the logic of progress itself. “Progress means: to step out of the magic spell, even out of the spell of progress, which is itself nature, in that humanity becomes aware of its own inbred nature and brings to a halt the domination it exacts upon nature and through which domination by nature continues. In this way it could be said that progress occurs where it ends” (Adorno 2003 [1962]: 134). Kant and Adorno, in their reflections, point out that there will always be revolutions, and that they are a factor in the bourgeois logic of progress itself. But as the experiences of the French and Russian Revolutions show, it is not enough to wait for the event of the revolution. Rather, it is necessary to anticipate what is connected with it, and which consequences it will have – and that not so much in the sense of a counterrevolutionary project as to avoid all those potential tendencies which may endanger the goal of a fundamental emancipation of the individual.

There are, I think, three arguments in favour of searching for an alternative between revolution and gradualist reform. First, it makes no sense to wait for change until the point when the change of power has been achieved. The revolution is, in contradiction to Benjamin’s metaphor, not a shot at the clock on the church steeple, with the goal of halting the progress of time. We have not succeeded in replacing the obsolete religious manner of calculating time with a new one by means of political decisions. To take a different metaphor: the ship can’t dock; it has to be rebuilt at sea. After the revolution, the societal problems which gave rise to it will continue to exist. These problems which are generated ‘today’ must be solved. For that reason, it makes sense to restrict the data-setting, fact-creating power of the rulers as much as possible, and thus to reduce the quantity of baggage they will leave behind, which will burden all future progress in the self-determined formulation of a common manner of living for a long time to come, and even bring that progress to a halt. Moreover, it makes sense to solve the problems today that need to be solved today. Why should we wait? What about the people living in the interim period? By what right and based on what principles can we deny them the opportunity of improving their situation right now?

Second, it makes sense to initiate improvements now, because seen from their vantage point, the limitations of contemporary society become more visible. Two things are becoming recognisable: first, the fact that improvements are continually colliding with the limits of the power of dominant interests, and cannot be implemented in the manner intended as long as these relations of power are not fundamentally changed; and second, that the procedures according to which improvements could be carried out are constantly being hampered. Even democratic incrementalism will, as Habermas (1973: 93f) wrote with a view of late capitalism, be confronted with powerful rejection. If however democratic reforms were successfully to be implemented, they would constitute a higher point of departure for any attempt at building an emancipated society.

It is, thirdly, necessary to anticipate the future by means of the practices that are already occurring today. We must thus also anticipate which practices and which attitudes would, in case of major changes in societal relations, have authoritarian, anti-emancipatory consequences. Thus, improvements would also carry with them the possibility of trying things out, recognising weaknesses and contradictions, and getting to know practically and intellectually the dangers and risks of emancipatory projects, and developing the capacities for dealing with them. This involves technical and economic skills and demands as much as it does imply democratic competences, of which many hold the expectation that they might and should, even today, be realised in daily intercourse with one another. This anticipation of practice and knowledge is, not least of all, that which enhances the plausibility of fundamental change and can motivate us to strive for it in the first place.

Encouraged by such considerations, there have in recent decades been repeated attempts to develop a corresponding concept of emancipatory transformation which could not be blocked by the traditional concepts of reform or revolution. Even the older representatives of the critical theory addressed this question. In the above quoted essay on progress, Adorno (2003 [1962]: 138) emphasises that the devastation caused by the progress of the conquest of nature can ultimately only be repaired by the forces of progress. These two concepts of progress – i.e. conquest of nature and devastation – communicate not only in the rejection of the ultimate misfortune, but even in “any current form of the reduction of the continuing suffering” (ibid.). Particularly Adorno, who never left any room for doubt

that what needed to be overcome was not only capitalism, but also, more fundamentally, the natural historical phase of human development itself, repeatedly stressed the necessity for improving concrete conditions of life, because freedom, he maintained, cannot be experienced within the constraints of quasi-natural societal narrowness. “If one were, as it were, for the sake of the purity of class relations, to intend to undermine these things [improvements in work processes and situations of life as a result of union struggles – AD], he would be at once a fool and a reactionary, and indeed a reactionary for the simple reason that any kind of independent insight and autonomy is tied to a certain kind of freedom from the most urgent daily needs, which freedom can be provided precisely by way of such improvements” (Adorno 2008 [1964]: 104f, translation PH).

3. Transformative strategies

In order to avoid the problems which the concepts and strategies of reform and revolution have historically implied, a number of proposals have in recent times been made, at the centre of which the concepts of radical transformation, radical pragmatism and radical reformism have stood. These concepts have attempted to critically transcend the alternative of revolution or reform by overcoming existing relationships of domination and exploitation, and the causes of societal crises, through openness of historical processes, and through goal orientation without authoritarian or lecturing paternalism. At the same time, emancipatory action is conveyed to existing societal apparatuses which takes concrete everyday problems and conflicts seriously, and makes reform proposals without losing oneself within them and failing to take account of the relations of forces. That is the central difference to approaches (cf. Dieterich 2006; Albert 2006) which consider on the basis of theoretical models how socialism might function, without worrying too much about how to get there and how people are to formulate the path to it. To a certain extent, individuals have no choice but to fit themselves into a model which is considered functional, and to implement that model. In the following, I would like to present three conceptions of transformation. The scope of the concepts is different, and in the manner of application not yet in any sense coherent.

3.1 Socio-ecological transformation (Dieter Klein)

Dieter Klein (2010; cf. also Reißig 2009) argues for a second major transformation, which he sees as an economic-social structural transformation, analogous to the first Great Transformation from the subsistence to the market economy in the eighteenth century, as described by Karl Polanyi. This second transformation is a dual transformation: that in the state socialist societies, and that in the capitalist societies, each of which is confronted with its own problems. Klein notes a number of deep-seated problems that place modern society at a crossroads. Hitherto, the left has not adapted itself sufficiently to this situation, or developed appropriate suggestions for an alternative societal project, that of democratic socialism, to be brought into the discussion in the “arena of intellectual-political struggle for hegemony” (Klein 2010). According to Klein, a number of different development paths are emerging: neo-liberal business as usual, neo-liberalism combined with state intervention, post-neo-liberal capitalism based on a new ecologically and socially defined social contract, a de-civilised capitalism, or, last, an emancipatory transformation. Democratic socialism is understood as a transformational process which will be neither a revolution nor a mere series of reforms (Klein 2010: 4). A large number of aspects define this project: individual freedom, meaningful work, high-quality health services, world peace, etc. The central issues are ending the orientation towards economic growth, developing new technologies, and the subsequent transition to a new mode of living.

Although the approach is far-reaching, several central issues can be identified. The first problem has more to do with the approach of Karl Polanyi, to which Dieter Klein refers with his own approach. Polanyi (1978), in his book on *The Great Transformation*, fails to provide any precise definition for the term ‘transformation’. It is not clear whether this process is a transition to a self-regulating market, or a process in which society ultimately begins to protect itself against such a market. In the latter case, the Great Transition would primarily indicate that society is withdrawing labour power, the soil, and money from the grip of the logic of the market. This occurs by means of a number of measures which Polanyi already sees emerging, particularly in the work of Robert Owen: fixed work times, good pay and living conditions, universal education for children and young people, and moral education for the workers. Since the 1930s, this has been

generalised by the welfare state. What is considered socialist, then, is the hemming in of the market by the institutions of parliamentary-representative democracy. Thus, the term ‘transformation’ involves a degree of uncertainty. Historically, it is not clear what exactly is being identified as ‘transformation’: the process of commodification, or that of de-commodification. Moreover, the processes of transformation themselves are not explained: neither the process that leads to the embedding of the market, nor that with which society is to protect itself. Hence, it is ultimately not clear in what manner this process of transformation is itself to be organised over the long term as an intentional, democratically constituted process.

The second is a question of diagnosis i.e., a description of the crossroads after 300 years of capitalism. My objection is that bourgeois society bears the potential for such an emancipation within it, not only at present, but long since, but that it repeatedly engenders such crossroad constellations. The catastrophe, as Adorno says, took place historically with the state ordered racist mass murder of Europe’s Jews, with the Second World War and with the use of the atomic bomb, events which destroyed the limits set by civilisation. These tools are still at the disposal of the ruling structure, and are an inevitable point of reference and the determinant of any further emancipatory perspective. At the same time, the potential elements for a free and self-determined mode of living have long since existed. In other words, Klein’s proposal tends toward a normative model in stages, with an established timeline, while the contingency of the reforms themselves is not sufficiently incorporated into the considerations, any more than are radical developmental thrusts. Klein expects, as a medium-term perspective, “in the most favourable case” a shift of relations of power toward the left. This would be an eco-social reform alternative within the framework of capitalism, supported by the “spirit of saving the world” of the committed bourgeoisie and the critical elites. Radical activists who put pressure on these bourgeois forces and would like to step up the speed of change, have no place in this model. But of course, the question arises as to whether, without such pressure, “space for the democratic implementation of socialist elements and tendencies” (Klein 2010: 3) would in fact be opened up. The concept of a crossroads, taken from Karl Polanyi, is misleading, and has an objectivist tendency, as if such a constellation existed independently of the practice of the participants. It suggests, in contradiction to

its evolutionary theoretical justification, a free choice in this or that direction. That choice does exist, but it is always a choice that emerges from the concrete constellation of forces.

A third question involves the state and the political realm. This area is a blind spot in considerations that have been voiced to date on the second transformation. Some formulations by Dieter Klein suggest that the economic sphere, which, as he sees it, has under capitalism increasingly disembedded itself from society, must be brought back under the control of the political sphere. That raises the question as to how the state itself must be constituted so as to permit it to control the economy. If the state is strengthened in terms of its competences, its revenues, and its possibilities for intervention, would that not also strengthen the logic of statism? Would a state, even with the means of the general laws, monetary control measures and an administration controlled and supervised solely by the government, be able to politically re-embed the economy? How would the state be restructured? Would that happen at the level of the nation-state, or would a Europeanised and globalised economy be forced to engender an appropriate form of European or transnational statehood? Which actors would carry this out? Moreover, there is the question as to how far democracy extends. Are the present forms of periodic electoral participation in representative legislatures by means of parties, and a public sphere controlled by private owners and party politicians, enough to effect such a thoroughgoing transformation? Could the wage dependent and consuming population be permitted to participate, in the context of economic democracy, in the processes of decision-making on investments, processes of production, or products? In other words, would the economy not have to become a public and political sphere?

Fourth, the reference to the first great transformation concerning some deep-seated forms of domination is insufficient: the instrumental control over nature is a determining characteristic of millennia old practices of rule, since the time of the ancient civilisations. That includes directly, too, the relationship of domination in a societal division of labour between manual and mental labour. The formation and performance of the gender of individuals too is a characteristic which extends much further back and is much more deeply rooted than modern capitalism. In this respect, a transformation will have to be conceived in a more radical manner.

3.2 Transformation of the capitalist state (Nicos Poulantzas)

If, under Dieter Klein's concept of transformation, the state is to play a minor role, it is certainly at centre stage according to the ideas of Nicos Poulantzas, both at the level of the transformation and as a strategy. When Nicos Poulantzas speaks of radical transformation toward democratic socialism, he is primarily looking to a restructuring of the state, so that his approach in the first instance seems to be much more modest. The concepts that existed in the workers' movement are in his view inadequate. Poulantzas sees on the one hand social democracy with its statist orientation pursuing and implementing reforms through the means of the state, while all the while he is uneasy about the democratic demands and participation of the broader population; and on the other, the Leninist/Stalinist tradition, which seeks to smash the state. Even if he himself argues for the withering away of the state, he nonetheless has his doubts that this could be possible in a model of revolutionary seizure of power, dual rule, and a concentration on councils and direct grassroots democracy. He criticises the fact that under this conception, a parallel political power structure would emerge, with, on the one side, the state and its bureaucrats as the instrument of the previously ruling bourgeois class, and on the other, the emancipatory forces, whose goal is self-management. Social movements remain external to the state, with no understanding for the internal contradictions and conflicts within it; by taking possession of it, in order to use it to restructure society, they integrate themselves into it, and thus do not change it from within. Ultimately, the result is an undemocratic statist transformation from which the state emerges strengthened. Poulantzas himself wants to initiate a radical transformation of the state, by expanding and deepening the freedoms and institutions of representative democracy, tying them to the development of forms of direct democracy and centres of self-management. Poulantzas does not see the continued existence of the institutions of representative democracy as an unfortunate remnant, but rather as a necessary condition of democratic socialism. He does however see the problem that with an expansion of democracy, the opponents of the process, too, will obtain more possibilities to "boycott the democratic socialist experiment, or else brutally intervene to put an end to it" (Poulantzas 2002: 292). With these dangers in view, the expansion of democracy is to become possible by means of broad social movements.

However, they must be tied to the transformation of the state. Within the state, effective centres of resistance and power must be formed, developed and reinforced, so that the internal relations of forces of the state apparatus can be changed, and effective ruptures and displacements in these relations of forces can emerge for the benefit of the subjugated. The transformation process is thus open for contingencies resulting from the actions of social movements. That does not mean however that the transforming practice can only take place within state institutions; rather, the key is to develop movements and potentials for direct democracy which would be linked to changes in the relation of forces in the realm of the state, and hence the transformation of its apparatus. "This transformation must be accompanied by the unfolding of new forms of direct grassroots democracy and the expansion of networks and centres of self-administration. A mere transformation of the state apparatus and the development of representative democracy would be unable to elude statism. However there is also a flip side: even the one-sided and unmistakable shift of the centre of power to a movement of self-administration might in the short or long-term fail to prevent a failure, i.e. a technical bureaucratic statism and the authoritarian confiscation of power by the experts" (Poulantzas 2002: 290, translation PH).

Poulantzas' approach too raises questions. He concentrates on the transformation of the state, yet the connection of this transformation with the totality of societal relationships remains unclear. First, Poulantzas assumes that the deeply rooted practices of domination – i.e., the separation of mental and manual labour, national divisions, or the gender dichotomy – will be concentrated in the state. However, it is not clear how a transformation of the state which involved a change in the form of domination might affect these deep-seated practices of domination in the foundations of society itself. Second, much depends on social movements, but he cannot explain how these emerge and remain on a permanent basis to support and maintain a long-lasting process of transformation of the state. Social movements have their own dynamic, which does not abide by the master plan of a long-term restructuring, but rather runs in phases. These movements become active in favour of accelerated measures, they change their issues and their forms of action, and they dissolve themselves again. If they massively mobilise for certain goals, they may run into conflict with other actors, who may also desire the transformation, but who have

other interests and priorities. That, thirdly, raises the question as to how the relationship between the state apparatus, parties and social movements can be democratically regulated. The logic of action will differ, in spite of shared goals: parties will be more likely to represent the logic of representative democracy and state authority and society in general; movements will concentrate on their mobilisable issues, and in so doing may transcend even the rules of the transformational process. Fourth, Poulantzas largely ignores processes of democratic restructuring of the economy. The only reference is to processes of economic self-management, but essential questions regarding democratic decision-making in workplaces and municipalities, the coordination of production and services, the participation of consumers, the orientation of economic activity towards sustainability, and the development of new collective life modes remain unanswered. Here too, the question arises as to how social movement processes can be made permanent at the level of economic self-management, and coordinated by means of state decision-making processes.

3.3 Radical reformism and the mode of life (Joachim Hirsch)

Finally, I would like to mention the approach of Joachim Hirsch, who does not speak directly of transformation, but rather of radical reformism. Like Dieter Klein, he picks up on considerations of Antonio Gramsci's regarding civil society, which Poulantzas, oddly, ignores, and calls for changing these, with the goal of democratisation, in order to "fight against the dominant concepts of order and development in society" (Hirsch 2005: 230). The state is not an instrument, but rather an "institutional expression of fundamental societal relations of forces" (ibid.). For this reason, he says, these relations of forces cannot be changed with its help. It does not have the power to control and supervise society; it is the societal structures that must be changed. However, alternative forms of socialisation will not be developed quasi-automatically out of bourgeois capitalist society. What is needed is conscious action, "which must be directed against the dominant social structures, political forms of institutionalisation, and the shaping of subjects" (ibid.), involving new forms of production and living, organisational contexts independent of existing institutional structures, as well as of the state and parties, and the creation of an independent public sphere. Hirsch uses the concept of reform to indicate that societal changes cannot

be implemented by means of state power, but rather represent a long-term and gradual process of change of consciousness and behaviour through which societal relations of forces are gradually transformed. In particular, that involves changes in civil society: possibilities of independent discourse, the processing of experience, cultural revolutionary modes of living, and the contents of consciousness. According to Hirsch, this reformism is radical because it is not characterised either by particular material goals or by the radicalism of its advance, but rather by the fact that it breaks through capitalist social forms, i.e. the forms of the dominant division of labour, societal production, family and gender relationships, consumerism, and particularly the politics of the separation of the private and the public, of politics and economy, of rulers and ruled, and of citizens and foreigners (cf. *ibid.*: 229).

Hirsch's considerations regarding radical reformism expand the spectrum of reformist activity considerably. In addition to fundamental economic parameters, technological development, economic policy measures, the restructuring of the state apparatus, and a new relationship between that apparatus and society, there now also emerge long-term changes in civil society itself involving the societal division of labour, gender relations, family practices, and the public sphere. However, like Klein, Hirsch sees the struggle for hegemony primarily as a mere change of consciousness, and of the concepts of societal order and development. That is clearly too little, for hegemony also means a material change in everyday habits within a new organisation of culture. His ideas can certainly be considered anti-statist, for – unlike Poulantzas – he calls for a kind of parallel, 'independent' political structure. In order to avoid the obvious consequence of a state rejectionist abstentionism, he stresses that political intervention is unavoidable, since the state structure codifies and guarantees social compromises and rights which have been won by struggle. Accordingly, the state is not only the expression of the societal relations of forces, but rather – as Poulantzas and Gramsci argued – it is itself such a relation; how, by whom and which apparatus makes policy, which interests are to be taken into account, which binding decisions are to be made, to what extent the public sphere can be supervised – all that must necessarily become part of the transformational process. However, Hirsch does not pursue that contradiction to the end, but rather remains appellative: political action carried out in reference to

the state may not, he states, mean the adoption of statist forms of political action and behaviour (ibid.: 232). But it is precisely this which is the area of conflict. We are not entering the arena of the state from the outside so as to then contaminate ourselves through political involvement, but rather, quite the reverse, we have always been within the state as a societal relation, and the point is to transform that state in order to dismember the societal relationship called 'the state'. Public expressions of will, parties and parliaments are state apparatuses, yet Hirsch does not clarify their relationship to the social movements. Apparently, unlike Poulantzas, he sees them as a regrettable remainder. By contrast, Hirsch sees the possibility of democracy as being structurally rooted in capitalist relations, and he sees the expansion of democracy as important (ibid.: 27); democracy may not necessarily have to be practised within the existing forms of representative democracy, but a radical reformism must say what forms would then be better suited. If democracy, in capitalist relations, is structurally rooted in the exchange of commodities, it should moreover be considered that when capitalist forms are pushed back by radical reforms, the foundations of democracy too could be weakened. Thus, Hirsch's state and party-critical ideas lead to a series of internal contradictions and unanswered questions. Since we cannot always simply place our hopes in the social movements, but rather must seek an initiative for the transformation of society at all levels – i.e. also the possible initiatives of parties, unions or even individuals within the state apparatus (remember the Revolution of the Carnations in Portugal) – the relationship of political and social democracy must be further deepened, which raises the question as to how societal formation of opinion occurs, and how transformational processes are initiated and implemented in a generally binding manner.

4. Concluding remarks

The discussion of socialist transformation has in recent years received important impulses; nonetheless, it is still in its initial stages. Accordingly, a large number of problems and contradictions which must be discussed further have been ascertained. First of all, this involves the evaluation of such concepts as reform and revolution. In particular, the state of know-

ledge about the practices and results of reforms is fairly low. The scope of the concept of transformation, too, needs to be clearly defined. Which areas need to be transformed, and how deep must the transformation be? Second is the dimension of time: fast or slow, gradual, continual, linear or broken up – and the connection between these rhythms. Third, there is the question of societal power, for success does not depend only on the quality of suggestions for reform or concepts of transformation. Fourth, there is the question of the relationship of evolution on the one hand and consciousness, rationality, and moral and ethical concepts on the other. Fifth, there is the question of the possibilities of pursuing long-term reforms in and through the state, and the question of a transformation of the state itself. Sixth, there is the question of democracy in the form of existing institutions and procedures, their expansion, and the connection of the democratic formation of intent with the deep-seated laws which determine the development of the formation of capitalist society. As I see it, there are more questions than answers. Moreover, there is the epistemological question upon which Adorno always insisted: are the contradictions which have emerged historically between the concepts of reform and revolution not themselves objective and historically rational, inasmuch as they are, under bourgeois capitalist conditions, subject to a contradiction which cannot be resolved even with the best theory, but rather represent a further motive force to change these relationships? The dialectic of reform and revolution cannot merely be put to rest; the term 'transformation' is not the logical solution to an existing societal contradiction. Rather, the concept of transformation can contribute to unfolding this dialectic itself, and giving it shape, so that the contradiction can be processed. The concept of transformation is thus oriented not toward the false reconciliation of the contradiction, nor toward logical disambiguation with no theoretical solution. Rather, it defines the field in which these contradictions and questions themselves can be discussed with conscious and strategic intent. For, independent of specific problems, what is lacking is a strategic discussion in which the commonality and the cohesion of all emancipatory efforts can be created, so that the transformation which is seen as necessary can be initiated by means of a number of concepts.

Translation by Phil Hill (Berlin)

- 1 Unevenness between regions can easily be seen in Bolivia, where they have a retarding effect on the rebuilding of the country. Here, I am referring not only to the political conflicts between the indigenous people of the Alto Plano on the one hand and the big landowners in the lowlands on the other, but rather, too, to the conflicts over the question of resource use between indigenous groups and the government. In Venezuela, it can be seen that managers and business people, when they leave the country, often take with them the knowledge of processes necessary to maintain the everyday operational and business activities of their companies. Moreover, within the companies, there are many, and often brutal, conflicts between leftist workers and unions on the one side, and reactionary unionists and mafia-type groups on the other, often resulting in violence. Not only for that reason is it thus important that the workers become familiar with the tasks of democratic business management long before such power struggles emerge.

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Abstracts

The window of opportunity for change is closing, we are constantly being told. Will reforms come soon enough, or do we need a revolution? However, wouldn't it take too long for people to become ready for a revolution? Both concepts – reform and revolution – have long polarised the left debate, and yet both have been questioned. In this essay, I would like to show the necessity for an analysis and an evaluation of the strategic meanings of these terms. Since both have their weaknesses, I would like to propose the introduction of the term 'transformation' – not only as a third term, which might reconcile or supersede the other two, but rather in order to bring a dialectical process into motion by means of which the concepts of reform and revolution might mutually stimulate one another.

Das Fenster, in dem Veränderungen möglich sind, sei dabei, sich zu schließen, so wird uns permanent gesagt. Kommen die Reformen rechtzeitig genug oder benötigen wir eine Revolution? Oder würde es zu lange dauern, bis die Menschen zu einer Revolution bereit sind? Beide Begriffe, Reform und Revolution, haben lange Zeit die linke Debatte polarisiert,

und schließlich haben sich beide als fragwürdig erwiesen. In diesem Essay möchte ich die Notwendigkeit aufzeigen, die strategische Bedeutung beider Konzepte zu analysieren und zu evaluieren. Da diese ihre Schwächen haben, schlage ich die Einführung des Begriffs „Transformation“ vor – nicht nur als dritten Begriff, der in der Lage wäre, die beiden anderen zu versöhnen oder zu ersetzen, sondern auch, um sie in einem dialektischen Prozess in Bewegung zu bringen, damit Reform und Revolution sich gegenseitig stimulieren können.

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MARISTELLA SVAMPA
Resource Extractivism and Alternatives: Latin American
Perspectives on Development¹

“Even when these nations try to break free from their colonial heritage, that is, their dependence on the export of primary products, through the implementation of development plans directed at diversifying their economies, they generally need foreign currency to achieve this. But they can only access foreign currency by exporting primary products, which again increases their dependence on exports. Paradoxically, by trying to exploit their comparative advantages, these countries that are exporters of natural assets, are frequently reassuming their colonial role as exporters of primary products- a role now redefined in terms of the neoliberal rationality of globalising capitalism. For them, neo-colonialism is the next step on from post-colonialism.” (Coronil 2002)

I. Transition into the ‘Commodities Consensus’ and the change in the extractive economy

Over the last decade Latin America has switched from the Washington Consensus with its focus on finance to the Commodities Consensus based on the large-scale export of primary products. Although the exploitation and export of natural assets is by no means a new activity in the region, increasing growth was evident in this area towards the end of the 20th Century. Against the backdrop of a changing system of accumulation, the expansion of projects geared towards monitoring, extracting and exporting natural assets without (greater) added value intensified.

What we are therefore referring to here as the ‘Commodities Consensus’ is the line drawn at the beginning of a new economic and political order sustained by the boom in international prices for raw materials

and consumer goods, which are increasingly demanded by industrialised and emerging countries. This new economic cycle is characterised by extraordinary profitability and the high growth rates of Latin American economies. According to CEPAL (2011a: 65), “in spite of recent trends to stabilise prices, increases during the first half of the year were so great that a significant improvement in exchange terms in Latin America is expected.” The majority of the region’s exported commodities grew exponentially during the last few months of 2010 and the beginning of 2011. Food prices reached an all time high in April 2011 (maize, soya and wheat). Prices for metals and minerals too were above the maximums registered before the crisis of 2008. CEPAL data projects a 4.7% growth in GDP for 2011 compared to the 6% achieved in 2010 (see CEPAL 2011a; Bárcena 2011). Thus, even within the context of an international economic and financial crisis that heralds great uncertainty and volatility in the markets, Latin America will continue on a positive track.

Nonetheless, and in despite the promise of further economic growth, which cannot be valued highly enough after decades of economic austerity and structural adjustments, the current economic model displays numerous structural fissures. On the one hand, compared to the 1980s, the demand for raw materials and consumer goods has led Latin American economies to rapidly become providers of primary products. An earlier report by CEPAL demonstrated this trend. The figures for 2009 showed an increase compared to the year before. In the Andean Community the percentage of primary products exported went from 81% in 2008 to 82.3% in 2009. This growth was even greater in the MERCOSUR, rising from 59.8% to 63.1% (CEPAL 2010). As Gudynas (2009) showed, Bolivia leads this process of *re-primarisation* (92.9% of Bolivia’s exports are primary products), but this dynamic even affects a country like Brazil. During Lula da Silva’s two successive presidencies, the share of primary products in exports rose from 48.5% in 2003 to 60.9% in 2009.

It is also worth mentioning that this process of re-primarisation is accompanied by a loss of food sovereignty, which seems to be linked as much to the large-scale export of food as to the end purpose of this food. The growing demand for these products is increasingly geared towards live-stock feed or bio fuel production. This is because other energy sources are becoming more expensive and also because of the adverse climatic conditions in other countries.

On the other hand, in terms of the logic of accumulation, the new Commodities Consensus delves into the dynamic of dispossession of land, resources and territories whilst simultaneously creating new forms of dependency and domination. It is no coincidence that a large part of critical Latin American authors believe the result of these processes will be the consolidation of a model of development based on an extractive economy. Inherent to such an economy is a type of accumulation based on an over-exploitation of – largely non-renewable – natural resources as well as the expansion of frontiers to territories formerly considered ‘unproductive’. This definition of an economy based on extraction is not limited to activities normally falling into this category (mining and oil), but also includes other sectors such as agribusiness or the production of bio fuels. This is due to the fact that they consolidate a model that tends to follow a monoculture, the destruction of biodiversity, a concentration of landownership and a destructive re-configuration of vast territories.

In addition, it includes the transport infrastructure projects (waterways, harbours, bi-oceanic corridors, and so on), energy projects (large hydro dams) and communication infrastructure projects planned by IIRSA, the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (*Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana*), a programme various South American governments agreed upon in the year 2000 with the central goal of facilitating the extraction and export of products to their destination points.

Another of the current extractive economic model’s traits – consolidated under the Commodities Consensus – is the large scale of the projects. This alone says a lot about the magnitude of capital investments (in fact these projects are more capital- than labour-intensive), the types of players involved (large transnational corporations) and the major impact and risks these projects pose for social, economic and environmental issues in the territories where they are executed.

On the other hand these projects usually lead to the consolidation of export enclaves with little or no connection to local chains of production. They create strong social and regional fragmentations and configure socio-productive spheres dependent on the international market and the volatility of the prices on this market (Gudynas 2009; Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011). Lastly, the large scale of such projects not only challenges the existing economic and social structures; it also curtails democracy in the

sense that the population has no say in the development of projects. This generates all kinds of social conflict, divisions in society and a spiral of criminalisation of resistance which will undoubtedly open the door to a new and dangerous chapter of human rights violations.

Furthermore, the advantage of appealing to a 'consensus' is that it does not just invoke an economic order. It also consolidates a system of domination different to that which existed in the 1990s because it refers less to the emergence of a single dominant discourse that downplays the role of ideologies or celebrates neoliberalism as the unrivalled goal of our times; rather, it points more to a series of ambivalences and paradoxes that mark the coexistence and interweaving of neoliberal ideology and new progressive development.

The Commodities Consensus can therefore be understood in terms of a series of ruptures as much as that of continuities from the prior period. As already occurred during the Washington Consensus phase, the Commodities Consensus also establishes rules that imply the acceptance of new asymmetric environmental and political relations and inequalities by Latin American countries in the new geopolitical order. It helps to stress the links between one period and the next, because the transformations suffered by the state and the policy of privatising public goods during the 1990s effectively established the normative and legal basis for the extractive economy. They guarantee 'legal security' for the invested capital and high profitability for companies that in general terms will persist – notwithstanding specific variations – in the commodities era.

Nevertheless, there are significant elements of differentiation and rupture. We must not forget that in the 1990s, the Washington Consensus put finance at the top of the agenda, bringing with it a policy of important structural adjustments and privatisations that ended up redefining the state as simply a mediating, regulatory agent. The system also brought about a homogenisation of politics in the region, characterised by the identification with or great proximity to neoliberal models. At present, the Commodities Consensus focuses on the implementation of large-scale, export-oriented extractive projects by establishing the role of the state and its relation to society in various ways. This enables the establishment and co-existence of progressive governments that question the neoliberal consensus and other governments that continue to delve into a conservative political agenda

within the neoliberal framework. Whereas the former show evidence of a change in political language and ways of intervening in society, while following heterodox economic policies (Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil and others), the countries in the latter group continue along an orthodox economic route (Mexico, Colombia, Peru).

Consequently, from a political perspective, the Commodities Consensus is a sphere of changing power constellations that allows for a kind of dialectical progress that combines the aforementioned continuities and ruptures in a new 'post-neoliberal' context; however, this does not mean that it supersedes so-called neoliberalism. As a result, this context confronts us with a series of new theoretical and practical challenges. These encompass various spheres, which are at once economic, social, and ecological while also political and civilisational.

2. Progressive governments and fractures in critical thinking

One of the characteristic traits of the Commodities Consensus is that it is accompanied by an explosion of socio-environmental conflicts linked to the disputes over land and common goods. It is therefore no coincidence that Latin America has experienced innumerable struggles spurred by socio-environmental conflicts that involve new and interesting political and theoretical challenges and also create strong tensions and ruptures within critical Latin American thinking.

What Enrique Leff (2006) referred to as the 'process of environmentalisation of struggles', is now, without doubt, a central aspect that is creating new turns, junctions, demands for articulation and shifts in the field of Latin American intellectual thought. And this in turn within different disciplines and knowledge systems such as sociology and critical philosophy, political ecology, cultural studies, environmental studies, social economy, feminism, indigenous studies and new Latin American constitutionalism among others.

It is certainly important that such knowledge systems and critical disciplines gain nourishment not only from historically cosmopolitan traditions – feeding off and invoking the most varied schools and currents of critical western modernity – but that they also build on other, formerly under-

valued or epistemologically negated traditions, especially those related to local knowledge systems and the indigenous world view.

This recent 'ecology of knowledge systems' as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) has coined it, also includes the recovery of certain older themes and debates that extended across the history of social sciences and humanities in Latin America. As is well-known, these themes and debates have typically been characterised by a lack of articulation, which is a factor that worked against their recognition within the continent and internationally. In this sense the extractive economic model and the current socio-environmental struggles have helped resurface a set of nodal debates that cross critical Latin American thinking on concepts of progress, views on nature, the role of indigenous peoples in the construction of national and continental identities, as well as matters surrounding the persistence of national popular identities, debates that seem as belligerent and radical as perhaps never before.

These debates and shifts in positions have brought about a fracture within the field of critical thinking. Effectively, and in contrast to the 1990s, when the continent appeared re-formatted by the single neoliberal model, the new century is marked less by a unique discourse than by an ensemble of tensions and contradictions that are hard to integrate. The transition into the Commodities Consensus poses new problems and paradoxes with a tendency to reconfigure the horizon of critical thinking, confronting us with theoretical and political ruptures crystallising in a set of ideological positions that are, it appears, increasingly antagonistic.

Schematically and in general we could say that there are currently three discourses or positions on development. Firstly there is liberal neo-developmentalism, then progressive neo-developmentalism and lastly the post-developmental perspective. We will discuss these three positions in the following based on some national cases.

3. Liberal neo-developmentalism

Even though the Washington Consensus is being questioned, the liberal or neoliberal discourse is far from defeated. In essence, the basic orientations of this position have not changed, but faced with the Commo-

dities Consensus they have been updated to a certain degree. Two decades after it was ousted, we are therefore witnessing the strong return of developmentalism as the overarching homogenising discourse that resurfaces as a word and a concept full of promises related to growth, productivity and modernisation. However, this time it surfaces in relation to the development of 'mega' extractive projects and not to an ideology of industrialisation. In addition, the neoliberal discourse continues to equally emphasise the idea of a state subordinate to the market and above all to the now supra-national regulatory institutions (that is, a *meta regulatory state*). Finally, nature, in spite of the new ecological framework established by the environmental criticisms of the last two decades, continues to be seen as a 'resource' or as inexhaustible 'capital'.

However, a new element of the Commodities Consensus is the combination of elements of neoliberal discourse and issues from the global agenda that seek to neutralise the potential for criticism of certain ideas or concepts. By this we mean for example the concept of sustainable development that appears in this discourse but associated with a 'diluted' idea of sustainability (Gudynas 2011) that implies shifting the limits proposed by environmentalists. This 'diluted' vision promotes an eco-efficient position towards sustainability that confirms the idea of nature as capital (linked now to over-exploitation and the expansion of areas where such exploitation takes place) whilst looking for 'clean' solutions – supposedly through new technologies – to any 'problems' (Martinez Alier 2005).

Secondly, another axis of the neoliberal discourse is the concept of corporate social responsibility. The concept was promoted by the large transnational corporations and achieved institutional status under the Global Compact in 2000. It is based on the recognition of two factors: firstly that corporations are the primary subjects of the globalised economies and secondly that they themselves must deal with the conflicts with local populations relating to the social, economic and ecological impacts and risks created by their economic activities. Corporate social responsibility is connected to the concept of governance as a micro-political conflict resolution device with multiple actors in the mark of a consciously complex society (Svampa 2008, 2011a). Not only does this framework promote the belief of a symmetrical relation between those involved, but it also presents the different levels of the state as another participant. Added to this are

other players – specialists, journalists and symbolic mediators among others – that contribute to a thickening in the process of ‘social discursive production’ (Antonelli 2009) aimed at gaining ‘social permission’ by convincing and disrupting communities. In short, the combination of the three axes – sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and governance – configures the shared framework of the dominant discourse which aims to legitimise the extractive economic projects. At the same time it develops their local acceptance through a powerful mechanism of bio-political control of the population.

Of course, from a political point of view, the neoliberal vision can be very brutal and direct, as happens in countries with a strongly militarised or war-faring neoliberalism (Seoane et al. 2006) such as Peru, Colombia and increasingly also, Mexico. In Peru’s case this position was illustrated by former President Alan García, who in October 2007 published an article in the conservative newspaper *El Comercio* of Lima with the title *The syndrome of the gardener’s dog* (*El síndrome del perro del hortelano*) that crudely and brutally anticipated his policies for the Amazonas region and the resources to be found there. “There are millions of idle hectares for forestry, further millions of hectares not farmed by the communities and that will never be farmed, furthermore hundreds of mineral deposits that cannot be exploited and millions of hectares of ocean that will never be used for mariculture and production. The rivers flowing down both sides of the Andean mountains are worth a fortune but are draining into the sea without producing electric energy” (García 2007: n.pag, translation TJ). The idea of the gardener’s dog began to materialise in December 2007 when Congress granted Alan García legislative powers to establish norms with powers equal to laws that would ‘facilitate’ the implementation of the free trade agreement with the United States. In June 2008, the executive passed around 100 legislative decrees, among them the 11 laws that affected the Peruvian Amazon region. These legislative decrees, baptised ‘the law of the jungle’ by indigenous groups and environmental NGOs, were criticised as unconstitutional from various sides.

Finally, the repression in Bagua in June 2009 cost the lives of over 30 people from the Amazonas region, as well as 10 police officers and resulted in the disappearance of an unknown number of people. This, combined with the protests that ensued, forced García’s government not only to repeal

the decrees that directly affected the people’s right to be consulted, but also enabled the discovery of the peoples of the Amazonas region who historically had been excluded. The Peruvian Amazon is home to 11% of the Peruvian population and 66 different peoples, 14 of which have no contact with western culture. Most recently, in 2011, and in spite of the expectations generated by the election of Ollanta Humala as President of Peru, the government has again turned to militarist solutions to the conflicts in the Cajamarca region where people are resisting a mega mining project. This confirms the tendency to return to the classical approach of ‘order and investments’ associated with this neoliberal project.

4. The blind spots of progressive neo-developmentalism

Neo-developmental progressivism and neo-developmental liberalism overlap and share a common framework in certain areas but there are also important differences, especially with regard to the role of the state and spheres of democratisation. One must stress that, concerning the differences, the rise of progressive and left-wing governments is intrinsically linked to the cycle of anti-neoliberal struggles in recent decades. The protagonists of these struggles were different social movements and peasant-indigenous organisations. The era that began at the very beginning of the 21st century offers a new framework for deciphering the relationship between society, politics and the economy, a new public agenda and politics related to the expansion of rights and the need to reduce poverty.

In countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador concepts such as decolonisation, the plurinational state, autonomy, the ‘good life’ (*el buen vivir*) and the ‘rights of nature’ marked the new constitutional agenda within the framework of strong participatory processes. At the same time they set the foundations for the ecological and territorial turn of today’s social and environmental struggles (Svampa 2011b). Still, over the last 10 years and with the consolidation of these regimes, other concerns have become more central. Even though the platforms for political action of many progressive or centre-left governments appear to be marked equally by an epic discourse as well as by actions leading to tensions and antagonisms (frequently in a nationalistic and popular tone) and that stress and exaggerate the diver-

sion from the neoliberal model, these governments nonetheless promote an optimistic concept of nature and nature's 'comparative benefits', a concept today nurtured by the high prices of commodities.

Without doubt this vision is connected to what the Bolivian sociologist René Zavaletta called the 'myth of profit' nearly 25 years ago. Zavaletta (2009 [1986]: 29-46) argued that this myth was based on the idea that the subcontinent is "the locus par excellence of natural resources". By this, the Bolivian author made reference to the myth of El Dorado, "that every Latin American bears in his soul" with the idea of a sudden discovery (of a resource or natural good) which without doubt creates a profit, but a profit which is "magical" and "which in most cases has not been used in a balanced fashion." This is as much as should be mentioned about Zavaletta because after all it is clear that the author's magical profits are of little relevance to today's environmental concerns. What is of significance here is that the author's obsession referred to the control of this profit (its conversion into "material for the state").

Nevertheless, to think about the current return of this original, founding and long-standing myth of magical profit in the guise of a new developmental illusion related to the abundance of natural resources, it seems legitimate to return to Zavaletta. The theme of abundance has been developed by several Latin American authors, among them Fernando Coronil (2002) who wrote about *The magical state* (*El estado mágico*) in Venezuela, linking it to the profit mentality and the 'culture of the miracle'. In the same vein, Alberto Acosta and Jürgen Schuldt (referring to what is known as the 'Dutch disease') also reflected on the 'curse of abundance': There are countries which "are poor because they are rich in natural resources" these two authors confirmed (Schuldt/Acosta 2009: 11, translation TJ; Acosta 2009), and then went on to analyse the connection between the paradigm of the extractive economy and the population's increasing poverty, rising inequality, the distortion of the productive structure and the depredation of natural resources.

Consequently, in the framework of a new cycle of accumulation, progressive governments seem to have regained resurrected this founding and rudimentary myth, which in today's context nurtures the *developmental illusion*, expressed in the idea that, thanks to current economic opportunities (the rise of prices for raw materials and increasing demand, especially from Asia), catching up with industrialised countries can be achieved *fast*,

as can the promised but never realised development of these societies. In a shorter term the developmental illusion is related to the experience of crisis, that is, the neoliberal legacy of the 1990s associated with the rise of inequalities and poverty and the possibility to now escape the consequences of the international crisis thanks to comparative advantages. The fiscal surplus and the high annual growth rates of Latin American countries are to a large extent based on the export of primary products and form the foundations for a triumphalist discourse of a 'specifically Latin American pathway' that alludes to political, social and economic ruptures. For example, the end of the 'long neoliberal night' (as the Ecuadorian President Raphael Correa put it) has its political and economic correlate, which is linked to the great crisis at the turn of the 21st century (unemployment, fewer opportunities, migration). This theme has also been commonplace in the discourse of the Kirchners in Argentina, who look to oppose today's economic and social indicators with the figures of the neoliberal years (the 1990s neoliberal cycle under Carlos Menem) and of course with the figures during the great crisis in Argentina from 2001 to 2002, when the system that pegged the Peso to the Dollar broke.

In this sense the case of Bolivia is one of the most emblematic and at the same time most paradoxical Latin American scenarios for the developmental illusion. In fact, the extraordinary rise in prices of commodities, to the extent that the nationalisation of companies translated into a multiplication of the income linked to the export of raw materials, created enormous expectations. At the beginning of the President's second term there was an opening of the economy up to new exploitive projects. After a phase of struggle for hegemony (which ended with the defeat of the so-called half-moon oligarchy in 2008), a new phase, characterised by the consolidation of a new hegemonic project (2010), began. Consequently, the Bolivian government has now intensified its pro-industrialisation discourse (the 'great industrial leap' as Vice-President Alvaro García Lineras n/y called it), which focusses on a series of strategic megaprojects that are in reality based on the expansion of extractive industries: participation in the first steps of Lithium exploitation, expansion of mega open-pit mining operations of large multinational corporations, construction of roads and large hydro-electric dams in the context of IIRSA, and other projects.

In more general terms this developmental illusion so deeply rooted in the Latin American political imaginary, appears related to the actions of

the state (as the producer and as far as globalisation allows, as a regulator) and to a whole set of social policies geared towards the most vulnerable sectors of society and financed through the profits from extractive projects. It is undoubtedly true that in a context where neoliberalism is no longer seen as natural, but called into question, and this questioning is nurtured by the emerging new progressive governments, the nation state has recovered institutional tools and options by becoming an economically relevant player and, in certain cases, an agent of redistribution. Nonetheless, in the framework of critical state theories the tendency is clearly against the state becoming a 'mega player' again. As mentioned previously, the return to the regulatory state takes place within a sphere of variable geometries, that is, in a setting of multiple stakeholders (increasing complexity of civil society illustrated by social movements, NGOs and other stakeholders), yet closely linked to private multinational capitals, the importance of which for each of the national economies is becoming ever greater.

On the other hand, one must not forget that the state's regained distributive functions are rooted in a new social fabric (a worker and peasant matrix with strong plebeian elements), itself a product of the transformations of the neoliberal years and frequently – openly or secretly – of a continuity with those compensatory social policies applied in the 1990s through the models of the World Bank. Lastly, and beyond the official industrialist rhetoric of the governments, the ongoing economic changes have aimed, in contrast to other times, at delving into the extractive model. There were undoubtedly several simultaneous variations of developmentalism as an 'ideology' and an 'economic model' between the 1950s and the end of the 1980s (the populist and the nationalistic-developmental model). However, at that time it alluded to the strengthening of an industrial-productivist approach and the intervention of the state as the primary player or 'mega player' (see Brieva et al. 2002).

In intellectual terms it is necessary to remember that, maybe more than in other regions, the left in Latin America – whether in its anti-capitalist or its national-populist guise – has strongly resisted ecological currents arising out of the criticism of the productivist paradigm. Indeed, not only did such criticisms question some of the pillars of Marxist theory, a clear heir of modernity, but the ecological problem was also seen by a large part of the Latin American left (with a few notable exceptions) as a concern imported

from the agendas of rich countries that helped reaffirm the inequalities between industrialised countries and those on the road to (or aspiring to) industrial development.

From this perspective Latin American progressivism, rooted in the developmental tradition, today shares a common platform with neoliberal discourse concerning the advantages of the Commodities Consensus, which, for the most extreme cases, resumes and promotes the productive 'Development/Corporate Social Responsibility/Governance' triad as the dynamic axis of neo-developmental discourse. Furthermore, both positions underline the link between extractive mega projects and employment, thereby creating hopes for employment among the population that are hardly ever fulfilled because in reality these projects are typically capital- and not labour-intensive, as large-scale open pit mining projects emblematically show. "Large-scale mining projects are among the most capital-intensive economic activities. For every million dollars invested only 0.5 to 2 direct jobs are created. The more capital-intensive an activity is, the fewer employment opportunities it will create and the lower the share of the total added value created by workers through their work they receive in the form of salaries: the largest profit goes to capital. The metal mining industry directly employs 2.75 million people globally, which is 0.09% of the total number of jobs globally. Small-scale mining employs about 13 million people. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), one third of miners in the 25 most important mining countries lost their jobs between 1995 and 2000. This is mainly due to technology replacing people" (Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011: 27; translation TJJ). Moreover, both positions share the idea of the inexorable 'destiny' of Latin America as 'nature-exporting societies' (Coronil 2002) within the framework of the new international division of labour and in the name of comparative advantages.

Lastly, both progressive and neoliberal language also share the orientation towards an economy that adapts to the different cycles of accumulation. This confirmation of an 'adaptive economy' is one of the unresolved continuities at the core of both the Washington Consensus and the Commodities Consensus, in spite of the emphatic discursive rhetoric of progressive governments that demand economic autonomy and postulate the establishment of a political Latin American sphere. As mentioned previously, the Commodities Consensus develops a more flexible field of action

than the Washington Consensus but still establishes clear restrictions on the actions of the state (which already is no longer seen as a major player) and an inexorable restriction on the calls for democratisation of communities and villages affected by the large extractive projects.

5. Post-developmentalism and criticisms of extractivism

A third discourse and position opposes the Commodities Consensus, both in its neo-developmental as well as in its neoliberal guise.

We must not forget that in recent decades the crisis of the idea of development, in its hegemonic form, led to the revision of the paradigm of modernisation. Particularly important in this sense is the ecological position that began to become part of the global agenda after the Meadows report *The Limits to Growth* (1972) was published. As a consequence of this, the ecological position helped question the ruling model for developmentalism whilst sending the countries of the global south clear signals that the model of industrial development followed by the countries of the global north was far from being a universal blueprint (Mealla 2006). Furthermore, since the 1980s, many Latin American authors who criticise the macro-social, planning and centralist vision of development highlighted the importance of an inclusive and participatory concept of development, defined at a more local level by the respect for peasants and indigenous cultures, as well as by the strengthening of local and regional economies (Unceta Satrustegui 2009).

The notion of 'sustainable development', which would go on to install itself in the political-ideological debate, was born at that time too. Besides its complexity, it is important to point out that there are two very different sides to the definition and limits of this concept. On the one hand there is a strong position that sees growth as a means and not an end in itself and is basically centred on the idea of responsibility (to today's and future generations), and aims to respect the integrity of the natural systems that make life on the planet possible (political ecology, economic ecology, deep ecology and other paradigms). On the other hand there is the diluted position that believes in sustainable development based on technological progress and the efficient use of such. Whilst the strong position is currently

upheld by different social organisations, ecologists and critical intellectuals, the diluted position is part of the rhetoric of corporations and is used by government officials from a range of different countries.

Lastly, towards the 1990s, the Colombian author Arturo Escobar (2005) coined the notion of 'post-development', which aims to dismantle the modern category of development as a discourse of those in power, the goal being to reveal the principal mechanisms of domination (the division between development/underdevelopment; the professionalisation of the problem – i.e. by means of 'experts' – and its institutionalisation in a network of regional, national and international organisations), as well as the concealing of other local experiences and local knowledge and practices (the idea of epistemicide as Boaventura de Sousa Santos 2007 would later call it).

Before continuing, it is worth adding that during the 1990s, under the Washington Consensus, the category of development as an overarching narrative associated with the state as a mega player disappeared. Now, under the Commodities Consensus we are witnessing its strong return, as much on the political as on the academic agenda, although, as we have seen, this cannot easily be compared to that which existed in other times.² In fact, this return shows that this is a very dynamic and changing category that reappears after successive shifts (diluted versions of sustainable development in combination with other concepts like ecological modernisation, corporate social responsibility and governance). This resilience is highly problematic for transformation proposals which need to think the complexities to transform production and consumption.

Within the context of a resurgence of the concept of development as an overarching narrative and in line with indigenous currents, critical thought is re-considering the notion of 'post-development' and further elements of the strong sustainability position. The post-development perspective formulates a radical critique of the hegemonic version of development as it was reformulated by neoliberalism and progressivism. It also criticises their vision of nature and promotes, as Gudynas (2011) states, a different valuation of nature based on alternative registers and world views (such as indigenous world views, ecological perspectives, eco-communitarian views, eco-feminist positions, anti-colonial positions and the approaches by eco-territorial movements). As a matter of fact, such positions demand a diffe-

rent type of ecological rationality as a utopian vantage point from which to rethink the relationship between peoples/societies and nature in the context of the crisis of civilisation.

Still, as we have already pointed out, one of the fundamental critical categories of this position is the notion of the extractive economy. This is a privileged category for assessing the different crises in their complexity and how they affect each other because it broadly highlights the important problems faced by societies today. In a recent article, the Marxist economist Bob Jessop (2011) proposes the interaction of four processes to understand the crisis. Firstly, he suggests the global ecological crisis (oil, food and water); secondly, the decline of the United States, the return to a multi-polar world and the rise of China; thirdly, the crisis of the global economy in the shadow of neoliberalism and the contradictions and struggles inherent to capitalism; and lastly, the crisis of a system of accumulation led by financial capitalism and its contagious effects.

Extractivism is a privileged position from which to read the multiple crises, because it warns us about the global ecological crisis and the increasing risks of this form of appropriation of nature and the modalities of consumption. Secondly, it warns us about the decline of the United States and the incorporation of new global players, visible in the emergence of new extractive powers such as China and India and also in the consolidation of kinds of regional sub-imperialist states such as Brazil. It also warns us about the global economic crisis, to the extent that the current extractive economic model arose from the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, the normative and legislative framework of which remains in place; and lastly, it is associated with financial capitalism in as far as this defines the prices of commodities.

Furthermore, and as we have already pointed out, the extractive economic model reminds us that a new cycle of abuse of ecological and collective human rights is beginning, even though these rights are protected by national and international norms that also include the rights of indigenous peoples (ILO Convention 169). It is no coincidence then that one of the contested issues is the application of the ILO's Convention 169 that demands the right for indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent. This norm has become an important tool to control/regain territories threatened by the current model of development. Such develop-

ment is visible not only in the Andean countries such as Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, but also in Argentina. In fact, such abuse affects so-called first generation rights such as freedom of speech and the right to petition. This has led to a dangerous spiral of the criminalisation of and litigation against social demands. From this perspective, the outlook for democracy in Latin America is beginning to look very bleak (and worrying). Finally, the extractive economic model highlights the crisis of modernity, or, as Arturo Escobar (2005) and Edgardo Lander (see this issue) put it, it shows the need to think of alternatives to modernity, or, more specifically, to think from the perspective of colonial difference.

In this sense the extraction-based economy is a very potent category. It has a strong mobilising character and can easily be used to denounce situations whilst also possessing descriptive and explicatory potential. To the extent that it defines a certain type of developmental policy and points to the deepening of a logic working on different levels, its particular feature is that it highlights a whole set of defining dimensions of the current crisis. In this regard it is a heavily political concept, because it eloquently 'tells' us about the disputes at stake and, beyond the existing asymmetries, points to a set of shared responsibilities between the north and the south, the centres and the peripheries. Still, we believe that excessive use of this category to denounce certain situations conspires against its descriptive potential and explicatory scope. The extraction-based economy is a useful critical category but we risk turning it into a kind of demonising concept, applicable to any situation related to the exploitation of natural goods. This would thus disqualify other potential agents of transformation (like unionised urban populations). Rigorous use should help us to deactivate current myths and commonplaces related to development as well as assist us in building bridges to other sectors of society.

Coming back to the aforementioned critique of development, the post-developmental perspective reveals strong criticism of neo-developmental progressivist positions. These tend to block the nodal characteristic of the aspect of extraction in the current model of accumulation, simplifying the fields of resistance. In reality, neo-developmental progressivism tends to minimise the scope of the idea of dispossession. This idea forms the basis of criticisms of the current model of development of many social movements and intellectual currents. Only their ecological criticism is seen (therefore

they are disqualified as ‘environmental fundamentalists’), negating other – political, economic, social and civilisational – dimensions that this problem implies, as we described above.

There are still many countries where, without regard to the current discussions on the risks of the extraction-based economic model and an increasing dynamic of dispossession, the production-oriented vision remains dominant. In this sense, as has been pointed out on numerous occasions, it was the Andean countries that started this debate. Ecuador is without doubt the Latin American country where these issues are discussed most seriously. Within the context of a new ecological institutional setting, the theme of a good life for all is postulated as an alternative to conventional development. By way of example, it should not be forgotten that the new constitution (2008) proclaims the rights of nature, describing nature as a subject with a right to be restored and defended. In the same vein, through the National Secretary of Planning and Development SENPLADES (Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo), the government prepared the Plan for Good Living 2009–2013 (Plan del Buen Vivir, 2009–2013) that proposes, in addition to a ‘return of the state’, a change in the regime of accumulation from that of an exporter of primary products towards a more local development, centred on life and based on the use of biodiversity, knowledge and tourism. However, the government of Rafael Correa has taken a clearly neo-developmental path, for example with regard to mega mining projects that meet with considerable resistance in the country. Another noteworthy element is the current criminalisation of social and environmental struggles as ‘sabotage and terrorism’. Around 170 people are affected by this, most of them in connection with social and environmental struggles. Correa’s declarations on the ‘childish environmentalism’ of organisations have not helped establish a dialogue in an atmosphere of open conflict between grassroots organisations and the government. This division is reproduced within critical thinking, and the unity that existed during the constituent process of Montecristi (2008) has been lost. We should not forget that when Rafael Correa took office, his cabinet had a developmental and an ecological wing. One of the representatives of the ecological wing was the economist Alberto Acosta, who was president of the Constituent Assembly in Montecristi but who is currently one of the intellectuals most critical of the extractive economic regime.

In Bolivia the situation is equally controversial. Obviously, due to the conflict between the government and regional oligarchs, internal differences basically played no role during Evo Morales’ first term. However, during the last two years, internal differences have surfaced with the re-consolidation of the national state. With this consolidation, several strategic laws were passed that limit the right to be consulted and the territorial autonomy of indigenous territories. This is aimed at facilitating extractive projects that include everything from lithium mining to mega open-pit metal mining projects. In this mood of tension, certain indigenous organisations such as CIDOB, the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia (Coordinadora de Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano) and in some cases CONAMAQ, the National Council of Ayllus and Marcas of the Qollasuyo (Confederación Nacional de Ayllus y Marcas del Qollasuyo) have demanded their right to be consulted as established in the ILO convention 169 and have called for respect for their own political structures (as well as the installation of parallel indigenous authorities and the rejection of elections) as well as coherence between the discourse of the defence of Mother Earth and the practised extractive regime (Svampa 2011a, translation TJ).

One of the turning points that put the extractive model on the agenda was the counter summit on climate change in Cochabamba in April 2010. At the famous table 18 it brought together (without government authorisation) those organisations that wanted to discuss environmental problems.

Another key moment was perhaps the year 2011. TIPNIS, the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécure (*Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure*) turned into a conflict zone between its inhabitants and the government because of plans to build a road. TIPNIS is a very isolated and protected zone whose autonomy was recognised in the 1990s. The conflict surrounding TIPNIS is of multiple dimensions. The government defended the construction of the road, alleging it would help with the integration of the different communities and would grant them access to healthcare and education and help them market their products. However, it was also true that the road would open the door to numerous extractive projects with negative social and environmental consequences (backed by Brazil and other partners) and that on the other hand the government was looking to curb the region’s autonomy without

consulting the affected indigenous population. In this sense, the blindness of the government after the *Gasolinazo* (December 2010) means we are faced with a process of construction of hegemony that is hardly pluralistic. Social organisations are not consulted and when they are, the government tries to patronise them. After a demonstration by indigenous inhabitants of TIPNIS to La Paz that was supported by several indigenous and environmental organisations and after an obscure repression, the administration of Evo Morales backed away from its plans, even though the final outcome of the conflict is still unclear. Nevertheless, what occurred in TIPNIS had the merit of restarting the discussion on the construction of hegemony in the more pluralistic framework of 'leading by obeying', which was one of the founding principles of Evo Morales' government. Finally, at the end of 2011, what happened in TIPNIS was to mark a before and an after because this conflict revealed the contradictions between an eco-communitarian discourse, protective of nature and in favour of protecting Mother Earth (*Pachamama*) and the reality of the extraction-based political practice of Evo Morales' government. At the same time, it showed revealed the strong dispute over how one was going to define decolonisation in Bolivia, creating tensions between the strong position of the state and that of the attempted construction of a plurinational state. The fact that various intellectuals and important civil servants, who had been part of this project of change, left Evo Morales' government, shows the fracture within critical thinking in Bolivia as well. In July 2012 several intellectuals who had been government civil servants published the *Manifiesto for the Renewal of the Process of Change* (*Manifiesto por la Reconducción del proceso de cambio*, see Coordinadora Plurinacional de la Reconducción 2011), albeit with a more nationalistic than environmental tone. Vice-president Alvaro García Linera (n/y) quickly answered this manifesto, calling his former colleagues resentful (among other epithets). In the end, the conflict surrounding TIPNIS helped to clarify criticisms of the model for development.

Argentina, with the governments under the Kirchners (Néstor Kirchner 2003–2007, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner 2007–2011, 2011 until today), is firmly on the traditional developmental track, with a discourse that, unlike Andean countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia, leaves little room for other ideas. Of course, there have been several conflicts that have put the environmental problem on the public agenda, sometimes directly, as

was the case in the conflict with Uruguay surrounding the building of a paper mill (leading to a long-standing blockade of the international bridge between the two countries by local activists from the *Asamblea Ambiental de Gualaguaychú* movement between 2005 and 2010). Another such issue was the contamination of the Riachuelo basin and the discussion in Congress regarding a national law for the protection of the glaciers in 2010. Further conflicts, such as the one between agrarian corporations and the federal government on applicable variable export taxes in 2008, showed in more detail the process of dispossession of peasants and indigenous peoples in areas today called marginal, especially in the northern provinces and associated with the production of soy. This latter conflict updated the binary schematic of Argentinean politics and helped align a set of intellectuals with the central government, today connected in a group called *Carta Abierta*.

In the context of a strongly polarised political climate tending to impoverish any debate, intellectuals and the new political youth linked to Kirchnerism tend to use an 'armour-plated' discourse when faced with complex problems such as the models to follow for mining, agro-business and the policy of concentration of agricultural land. They deny the central government's adherence to the logic of dispossession which is characteristic of certain state policies, underlining, in contrast, the results of social policies and the revitalisation of labour institutions such as collective bargaining.

Currently, criticism of the extractive model is a primary issue for a set of territorial (not only social-environmental) and intellectual movements³ linked to autonomy and the independent left. To a lesser degree it is also an issue for the classical left that centres its most important arguments on the dynamic of increasing precariousness inherent to the model of labour relations.

In conclusion, with or without its popular-nationalist side, progressivism continues to understand the problem in developmental terms linked to the ideas of economic growth, modernisation and the expansion of productive forces. In certain cases it does grant, although to a limited degree due to the pressure and mobilisation of social organisations, the opening of a political and theoretical debate on the different dimensions and criticisms of development, as has happened in Ecuador and recently in

Bolivia, in light of what occurred with TIPNIS. However, progressivism's practice and policies correspond to a conventional and hegemonic idea of development based on the idea of infinite progress and supposedly inexhaustible natural resources.

6. Theorising transition and its challenges

We mentioned that post-developmental positions unite a large number of currents with ambitions of decolonisation that aim, through a series of categories and concepts, to dismantle and deactivate arrangements of power, myths and imaginaries which form the basis of the current model of development. Simultaneously they aim to create new concepts for the future and recuperate others from the tradition of critical Latin American thinking, without renouncing either their *mestizo* consciousness or their indigenous past and present. This in turn demands, as so many Latin American intellectuals underline, the inclusion of critical thinking within a regional and global dimension of current processes (see Lander 2000, and others).

There are multiple perspectives that all share the idea of decolonisation. For example, there is an integral environmental perspective that emphasises the idea of a good life; an indigenous, communitarian perspective; an eco-feminist perspective with a focus on the care economy and the struggle against patriarchy; and an eco-territorial position linked to the social movements that have developed a political grammar based on the ideas of environmental justice, common goods, territory, food sovereignty and the good life. Within this framework a discussion surrounding the rights of nature has recently begun and these rights have become part of the Ecuadorian constitution. Categories such as decolonisation, anti-patriarchy, the plurinational state, interculturalism and the good life are general notions and concepts under construction which form the backbone of new Latin American thinking in the 21st century. Still however, and in spite of the advances and discussions, especially in Bolivia and Ecuador, mapping a wide space into which the different transformative ideas are inscribed, a search for multidimensional strategies and concrete actions to further these general principles and ideas seems urgent.

In this vein, discussions have begun in many Latin American countries on alternatives to the extractive model and the need to work out ideas for a

transition from a matrix of multidimensional intervention scenarios. Due to the scale of the extractive model, a basic agreement would require examining responses on a larger scale. We believe that one of the most interesting and thorough proposals has been developed by the Latin American Centre for Social Ecology (CLAES) directed by Eduardo Gudynas (2011) from Uruguay. According to this proposal, the transition will need a set of public policies that will make it possible to consider the link between social and environmental concerns in a different light. It also considers that, faced with the extractive model, a set of 'alternatives' within the framework of conventional development would be insufficient, and that therefore it is necessary to think of and draw up 'alternatives to development'. Lastly, it stresses that this discussion must be analysed at a regional level and within a strategic horizon of change, or in what indigenous peoples term 'the good living'.

Although these debates have resonated more strongly in Ecuador, it was in Peru that a group of organisations and members of RedGE, the Peruvian network for a balanced Globalisation (*Red peruana por una Globalización con Equidad*), made a breakthrough. Shortly before the presidential elections in 2011, they presented the main political parties with a declaration that had a strong impact. In this declaration they drew up a possible transition to a post-extractive economy through measures that aim at a sustainable use of land, the strengthening of tools for environmental management, changes to the regulatory framework, the application of the right to be consulted and other important issues. Maybe this idea lacks the radicality it has in other countries such as Bolivia or Ecuador because there is no talk of 'the good life' or the 'plurinational state', but it at least shows the need to think of less pessimistic scenarios, a discussion still lacking in countries like Argentina, which are nonetheless considered more 'progressive' (see RedGE 2011). As the economists Vicente Sotelo and Pedro Francke (2011) showed in their recent book, it is possible to envision a transition through public policy, that is, a scenario that combines economic and ecological reforms. The book presents several possible scenarios and shows that two measures in particular enable a viable transition to a post-extractive economy: firstly, a tax reform for greater revenue collection (higher taxes for extractive projects or a super-tax for particularly high profits) and a moratorium for mining, oil and gas projects that began between 2007 and 2011.

On the other hand it is necessary to analyse successful experiences of development from below at a local and regional level, but not with the idea of mechanically reproducing them, or in terms of simply aggregating them; instead, one should analyse the diversity of these experiences and what makes them different to others. In reality, the Latin American social, communitarian and solidarity-based economy offers a whole range of possibilities that must be explored in order to diversify the existing dominant capitalist economy. This would undoubtedly require the appreciation of the value of other types of economies that in turn demands strategic planning directed at strengthening alternative, local economies (agro-ecology and social economy amongst others) scattered throughout the continent. It is not unusual for governments to aim to hide the possibilities and alternative modes of production in the region through public policies that aggravate the 'crisis' and prepare the start of extractive projects to which scarcely trustworthy studies of environmental impact that claim to minimise the effects of this activity on the local economy are then added (Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011). In addition, it not only requires the greater participation of ordinary people but also the greater intervention of the state (see Coraggio 2011).

Another large problem we face is the development of an idea of transformation that configures a 'horizon of desirability' in terms of lifestyles and quality of life. The resilience of the notion of development is largely due to the fact that the patterns of consumption related to the hegemonic model of development permeate the whole population. By this we refer to the cultural imaginary that builds on the conventional idea of development and on what is generally understood as 'quality of life'. The definition of 'a better life' is usually associated with consumption, which for the poorer parts of the population and after so many crises, is becoming possible in the context of the commodities consensus.

On the other hand we must ask ourselves whether we should perhaps change the focus of the discussion. Before asking about the direction we wish to go in, we should perhaps develop a theory of human needs based on certain fundamental questions. For example, we should ask ourselves, what the minimum requirements are for a decent, and with regard to future generations, reasonably sustainable life. How can we satisfy these needs without hurting ourselves and without damaging our ecosystem? How can

we decolonise social needs that translate into new forms of slavery, auto-aggression and aggression against the environment? How can we construct a decolonised sensitivity that then becomes a political power for change?

In this sense, and to conclude this article, we would like to mention three approaches that might help us re-consider a theory of requirements. A fundamental approach is the one developed by the economist Manfred Max-Neef. Traditionally, he says, it has been believed that human needs tend to be infinite and that they constantly change, from one era to the next and from one culture to the next. However, this is not true. The mistake lies in not differentiating clearly between the requirements and the means to satisfy those requirements. "Basic human needs are the same, in all cultures and throughout every historic period. What changes over time and from one culture to the next, is how or by which means these needs are met" (Max-Neef 1993: 50-1, translation TJ).

According to this author, every economic, social and political system adopts its specific forms to satisfy the same fundamental human needs. One of the defining aspects of a culture is its selection of (always culturally constructed) means to meet those needs. Goods are the means by which the individual strengthens the elements required to meet his or her needs. When these goods become an end in themselves, life is at the service of these goods (instead of the other way around). Therefore, in light of the current crisis of civilisation, "the construction of a humanistic economy calls us to rethink the dialectic relation between needs and the means to satisfy those needs and goods" (ibid.).

Secondly, in Latin America and the global south there are numerous examples of social and solidarity-based economies whose social subjects of reference belong to the most excluded sectors (women, indigenous, young people, workers and peasants). We might note here an interesting contribution by Franz Hinkelammert, who has developed criteria for the construction of a reproductive rationality of life that neither substitutes nor eliminates the rationality between means and ends but subordinates them, thereby offering elements for the creation of alternatives and the construction of what he calls 'an economy for life' (Hinkelammert/Mora 2005, translation TJ). From the perspective of the economy for life the purpose of human work is the production of use values or means for life. The systems of the organisation and social division of work are only considered rational

if they allow for the reproduction of life over time. “The most important aspect is the human being as a being with needs and the necessary reproduction of the material conditions for life” (ibid.). When examining the reproduction of external nature and of the human being, it is important to consider “the non-use values, which also condition existence and the possibility to reproduce the system of life. Our perspective must no longer centre on work value, instead we should focus on life value” (ibid.; see also the review of Hinkelammert’s book by Vargas Soler 2008).

Hinkelammert’s interpretation is very close to another perspective, the *ethic of care* advocated by eco-feminists. “By ‘caring work’ we refer to tasks related to human reproduction such as bringing up children, satisfying basic needs, promoting health, emotional support and facilitating participation in society” (Pascual/Yayo Herrero 2010: 3; see also León 2009). This is important, not only because of its criticism of essentialisms, but also because the new variants of eco-feminism can provide a view of the needs, not from the perspective of deficiencies or human suffering, but instead from one of retrieving a culture of care as a central inspiration for a social and ecologically sustainable society through values such as reciprocity, cooperation and complementarity.

In conclusion, Latin American thinking in the 21st century needs to create a new epistemic system and re-consider existing contributions to develop a theory of human and social needs, not only as a basis for strong sustainability but also as a basis for strong interculturality that incorporates and recognises the traditionally subalternated subjects of our societies.

Translation by Tim Jack

- 1 This article is based on the discussions during 2011 of the Permanent Working Group for Alternatives to Development (Grupo Permanente de Trabajo sobre Alternativas al Desarrollo 2011) supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Within this framework an initial version of this text was presented for collective discussion in Quito and Brussels in June and July 2011 respectively. Furthermore, a later version was presented during the Latin American Seminar Derechos de la Naturaleza y Alternativas al extractivismo (Rights of Nature and Alternatives to the Extractive Economy) that we, as the Collective of Warning Voices (Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011) jointly organised with CLAES, Jóvenes por la Igualdad (Youth for Equality) and CEPPAS in Buenos Aires in November 2011.

- 2 Certainly towards the 1990s, development as an overarching narrative temporarily disappeared off the political and academic agenda, not only in Latin America but in other parts of the world too. This abatement was related to the fact that, within the context of a crisis amongst the left and neoliberalism at its peak, Latin American social sciences – and in particular (political) economy and (political) sociology – which had led social thought for decades reached a significant political and epistemological turning point.
- 3 This is also the basis for UAC, the Union of Citizen Councils (Unión de Asambleas Ciudadanas), consisting of different grassroots organisations against mega mining projects and organisations that question the agro-business model, of the Frente Darío Santillán as well as human rights organisations like the Peace and Justice Service Serpaj (Servicio de Paz y Justicia) directed by Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, and the Colectivo Voces de Alerta that several authors in this publication are members of.

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Abstracts

Latin America presents a very polarised scenario. Currently, one of the most remarkable patterns is the passage from the *Washington Consensus*, based on financial valorization, to the *Commodity Consensus*, based on the large-scale extraction and exportation of natural goods. The article attempts to characterise the current situation and, at the same time, aims at a presentation of different political and intellectual tendencies: liberal neo-developmentalism, progressive neo-developmentalism and post-developmental thinking. The text analyses some links between these perspectives, especially between liberal neo-developmentalism and progressive neo-developmentalism, because both imply a return to the classical understanding of *development* in the strong sense, that is, associated with a productivist vision and inaccurate industrialist rhetoric. Finally and against his background, it presents some general lines of contemporary post-developmental thinking.

In Lateinamerika erleben wir ein kontrastreiches Szenario. Eines der bemerkenswertesten Muster ist der Übergang vom *Washington Consensus*, der auf finanzieller Inwertsetzung basierte, zum *Commodity Consensus*, bei dem es um die Extraktion und den Export von Naturgütern in großem Umfang geht. Der Artikel versucht, die aktuelle Situation zu charakterisieren und präsentiert unterschiedliche politische und intellektuelle Tendenzen: liberalen Neo-Developmentalismus, progressiven Neo-Developmentalismus und ein Denken in Kategorien des Post-Development. Es

werden einige Verbindungen zwischen den Tendenzen analysiert, insbesondere zwischen liberalem und progressivem Neo-Developmentalismus, die beide zum klassischen Entwicklungsbegriff im starken Sinne zurückkehren, nämlich einer produktivistischen Vision und einer falschen industrialistischen Rhetorik. Am Ende werden vor diesem Hintergrund einige allgemeine Denklinien des Post-Development präsentiert.

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**The State in the Current Processes of Change in Latin America:
Complementary and Conflicting Transformation Projects in
Heterogeneous Societies**

During the decades of neoliberalism, the weakening of nation states (especially those of the global South, but most recently also of the North), has been a fundamental neoliberal strategy geared at making societies less democratic and thereby more vulnerable and helpless in the face of global markets. Under these conditions, in many of the debates of the Latin American left in recent years, the recovery of the state has been considered as a necessity for strengthening national sovereignty, for the recovery of the public good, and for the very possibility of any process of significant societal change. Without the material, symbolic, and institutional state resources, any attempt at societal change could be more easily halted and/or defeated by privileged national/international interests that would be adversely impacted. However, this leads to severe contradictions, given that these very institutional state frameworks have historically operated, in a fundamental sense, as instruments and structures for the reproduction of the existing relationships of colonial domination and exploitation.

In his classical formulation, James O'Connor (1973) stated that the liberal capitalist state is inherently penetrated by tensions and contradictions. It operates not only as an instrument of capital accumulation, but also has to guarantee the legitimization of capitalist society. This state complexity becomes even greater in the peripheral countries of the world system. Latin American states have been, and fundamentally continue to be, *monocultural colonial states* in heterogeneous and pluricultural societies.¹ To this historical heritage has been added decades of neoliberal policies geared towards the dismantling of the state. By giving full priority to the demands of accumulation over democratic legitimacy, these states were

largely privatised and placed directly at the service of capital. Additionally, to different degrees, these states have been characterised as being inefficient, clientelistic, infiltrated with corruption, and, even in the best of cases, as having weak representative democracies that have excluded large proportions of the population. This raises important questions in relation to the role these states could play in enabling social change in Latin American societies. Are these states simply obstacles to change, or can they in some way (partially) further a transformative agenda?

In this text, these contradictions and tensions will be explored in the context of the current processes of change in the three South American countries with the most radical agendas for societal change, countries that have in recent years carried out ambitious constitutional transformations, namely Venezuela (1999), Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009).

1. The state in multiple and heterogeneous processes of change

The state's actions in the current processes of change in the continent are affected by strong and distinct tensions. The reflections made in this text about these tensions relate to three fundamental areas: (a) to the complex historical structural heterogeneity² of these societies; (b) to the heterogeneity and *internal* contradictions of states that do not constitute unitary bodies, but rather complex territories in dispute; and (c) to the co-presence of various transformation logics and partially complementary, partially contradictory projects for change that are being simultaneously played out in these political processes. All this must be seen in the context of profound transformations in global patterns of accumulation and hegemonic structures.

Revolutionary transformational projects identified with socialism over the past two centuries were supported by theories of progress, by faith in the ascending linearity of historical development, and the claim that it was possible to guide the whole of society in one direction, towards a predefined horizon, the general attributes of which were considered to be known. The necessity of a vanguard capable of foreshadowing future society was a part of the same idea of revolution. Although the capitalist societies that were being confronted were recognised as complex and heterogeneous, the

notion of a principal contradiction (capital/labour or bourgeoisie/proletariat) led to an attempt to articulate all the contradictions of society and the direction of their processes of transformation around a single main axis. Moreover, these projects on the whole operated within the pattern of Western civilisation and of unlimited confidence in progress.

The current worldwide processes of social transformation face radically different historical contexts. The dominant logic of modern politics has suffered an implosion as a result of the crisis of Western monocultural modernity and its idea of progress. This has become particularly visible in South American politics over the last decades and is increasingly evident both in the impossibility of endless growth on a planet whose limited carrying capacity has been exceeded, and by the strong presence of other societal options that radically deny the 'end of history' and reject the belief in liberal capitalist society as the only possible historical option, as the inevitable destiny of all humankind.

Today's processes, projects, and imaginaries of change cannot be reduced to any single unitary logic. These are processes, trends, and projects of social transformation that operate simultaneously, sometimes complementarily and at other times in conflict and even with significant contradictions.

This internal heterogeneity of the processes of change has been conceptualised in many ways. According to Arturo Escobar: "the current conjuncture can be said to be defined by two processes: the crisis of the neoliberal model of the past three decades; and the crisis of the project of bringing about modernity in the continent since the Conquest" (Escobar 2010: 3). According to this view, the contemporary transformations move beyond the left-right continuum in which the politics of the Western world have operated in the last two centuries. Escobar considers that the proposal by Walter Dignolo is a more apt formulation of these political forms. Dignolo speaks of "the left, the right, and the decolonial", opening up the political spectrum beyond Eurocentric frameworks. The transformations involve not only a turn to the left, but a decolonial turn" (Escobar 2010: 6).

According to Raúl Zibechi, in Latin America today, "political and social reality is not only shaped by a single scenario but by three of them": the struggle to overcome the dominance of the United States, to overcome capitalism, and to overcome development (Zibechi 2010, translation AN/SN).

This involves the simultaneous presence of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist tendencies and the search for alternatives to development. It would make sense to add at least a fourth scenario or direction for societal change. This would refer to national-popular projects that give priority to industrialisation, democratisation, inclusion, and redistribution, which could together be characterised as the pending tasks of the project of establishing national democratic states, an aspiration that is still operative in these societies. It is not a question of fully complementary or necessarily mutually exclusive historical alternatives or future projects, but of tendencies and imaginaries that are closely intertwined in the reality of the current political confrontations.

As Escobar indicates, the terms used for the current processes of change illustrate this extraordinary complexity: "Socialismo del siglo XXI [21st century socialism], plurinationality, interculturality, direct and substantive democracy, *revolucion ciudadana*, [citizens revolution] endogenous development centered on the *buen vivir* [good life] of the people, territorial and cultural autonomy, and decolonial projects towards post-liberal societies" (Escobar 2010: 2, emphasis orig.).

These different projects condition the tensions and confrontations of these processes of change, shaping different central themes that in different ways express the current conflicts of their societies and the positioning of subjects and social organisations within these. These different projects for change are simultaneously present in public discourses and are in some ways articulated in the government proposals of these countries. However, at different junctures, one or another of these central axes may acquire special relevance or urgency. The effect of this is that at times certain processes and confrontations relating to the other dimensions are put on a back burner, and can thus lose visibility either in the public debate or in governmental priorities.

A major focus of the current political strife is built around the conflicts between the popular democratic processes, on the one hand, and the interests of privileged national and transnational sectors, on the other. These confrontations may be understood in the context of the classical opposition between left and right, or of popular national struggles against an exclusive social order. These agendas often appear associated with socialist horizons. In this national-popular logic the priorities are national sovereignty,

democratisation and the redistribution of wealth. This is associated with the idea of development, with a demand for a stronger state, and with key issues such as national control of the commons as well as struggles for land distribution and the pursuit of greater levels of equality.

In the decolonial logic the main priorities are plurinationality, the recognition of diversity, the sovereignty of indigenous people over their own territories, autonomy of peoples, communities and movements, judicial pluralism, the rejection of the developmental state and extractivism, as well as the recognition of the rights of Mother Earth. The struggle for decolonisation points towards a deep social transformation that questions not only capitalism but the dominant Western patterns of production and knowledge. This is best captured in the ideas of *vivir bien* or *buen vivir* (good living or living well) (Mamani 2010).

The future of these processes of change depends on whether these different logics of social transformation manage (or not) to articulate, retro-feed, or supplement each other. The political projects associated with the idea of socialism are not easily compatible with the historical projects of decolonisation: they correspond to different histories, theories, socio-political subjects, as well as different notions about a desirable future. On the part of those who defend the validity of a form of socialism, this requires a penetrating criticism of the experience of 20th century socialism and of the struggles of the Latin American left of the last century, in particular its limited confrontation with patriarchy, its monocultural or colonial character components, and its developmentalist, predatory conception of a better future. These different heritages can become complementary parts of the same heterogeneous, non-linear, plural and democratic process of social transformation only through complex negotiations, difficult processes of dialogue, alliance building, but above all, dynamics of reciprocal learning and reflexive self-questioning within each of these political/cultural traditions. The inevitable conflicts derived from this confrontation of priorities have to be dealt with by non-violent means.

If these various transformative logics (popular-national, socialist, decolonial) are politically constructed as contradictory or antagonistic, the result can only lead to the defeat of these projects of change, to the consolidation or strengthening of the historical forms of capitalistic domination, and to an accelerated deepening of the environmental crisis of the planet.

What does not seem probable is that, under the current conditions of the fracturing within the popular sectors, with their profound political and cultural heterogeneity, one of these projects might achieve hegemony over the whole of society.

The tensions between these logics or projects of change outlined above (popular-national, socialist, decolonial) are also present within the state itself, in the ideas and actions of those politicians leading these processes of change and in the claims and demands made of the government by the most diverse sectors of society. Likewise, these are tensions and perspectives which exist in different expressions in the popular classes. These diverse logics of transformation even operate within the same subjects and/or movements, giving priority to some dimensions over others, depending on the situation. These multiple demands addressed to the state cannot be realised simultaneously. They constitute sources of permanent tensions and conflicts and require constant negotiations. Thus, there are calls to recover the state, strengthen the state, democratise the state, decolonise the state, make the state an instrument of transformation, maintain the autonomy of the movements and organisations with regard to the state, ensure sovereign control of the commons and their use for the collective benefit, and confront extractivism an economy based on the export of unprocessed commodities.

2. Extractivism and modes of insertion in the global market

One of the issues around which these tensions have become more evident since the new constitutional texts have come into force has been that of extractivism and the modes of primary export insertion of these countries in the global economy. Throughout Latin America today many of the main popular struggles are related to the defence of territories against oil exploitation, fast expansion of single-crop farming (monocultures), and large-scale open-pit mining. These issues are particularly crucial in Ecuador and Bolivia, where the organised struggles of indigenous people and movements have played such a crucial role and where the constitutional texts or the laws that followed established the rights of nature, or Mother Earth, for the first time in history. Given the limits of the planet and the global envi-

ronmental crisis threatening the conditions for the reproduction of life, at least human life, it is evident that there is no possibility of any significant social transformation if alternatives to the predatory order of unlimited economic growth are not assumed as a central component.

As was pointed out at the beginning, the current processes of change in Latin America have occurred after decades of neoliberal policies, notably through privatisations, the reduction of the public sphere and the opening of economies to global markets. It was precisely the popular struggles against neoliberalism and their consequences (mobilisation against FTAA [ALCA] and other free trade agreements, overthrowing neoliberal presidents etc.), and the accumulated political capacity made possible by these disputes, that made the electoral victories of the current so-called 'progressive' or left-wing governments possible. However, this did not imply that the deep economic, political, and cultural transformations caused by neoliberalism ceased to be felt. These effects included more unequal societies, less solidarity, and less democracy; more unstable countries; more open economies and the weakening of productive processes directed at the internal market. This reinforced both the economic and political roles of the entrepreneurial sectors connected with primary export activities, finance, and, in general, the groups more directly associated with the external sector of these economies.

'Progressive' or left-wing governments are likewise in a very different global economic and geopolitical context from the years when CEPAL used to defend the need for import substitution. The political and economic tools available to them now are much more limited. New conditions have been created by neoliberal globalisation. Given the opening of the markets created by the new global institutions, such as the WTO and the multilateral and bilateral international free trade agreements, as well as the vast differences both in salaries and in the existing productivity in the world today (especially *vis-a-vis* China), the obstacles confronting any intent attempt to boost industrial politics, in particular in small countries with limited internal markets, are extraordinary. The steps taken towards productive regional integration have been hitherto clearly insufficient and tend to benefit large economies, especially Brazil.

The new accumulation patterns of capital have stressed the colonial forms of the international division of labour and the international divi-

sion of so-called 'nature'. In this model of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2004), the roles of Africa and Latin America have been reaffirmed as suppliers of primary goods, of farm, energy, and mining *commodities*. The tendencies towards the deepening of extractivism present in the whole region have to be regarded within the context of these structural conditions of global capitalism that can be properly characterised as processes of re-colonising the planet.

All of this has acquired the shape of a new geoculture of the planet. The cultural patterns and social beliefs characteristic of a globalised individualist and consumer culture ('possessive individualism') spread by the global corporate culture industry, in particular from the United States, are a fundamental part of this logic of re-colonisation and have likewise become serious obstacles in the search for alternatives.

Any process of significant change in these societies necessarily requires profound ruptures with these forms of insertion in the world market, the consequences of which are not only economic. Without these ruptures the current colonial insertions will consolidate, strengthening the internal economic, political and cultural bases – as well as state structures – of this pattern of accumulation, creating even greater obstacles for anti-capitalism, and for progressive alternatives to development, as well as to the very possibility of decolonial transformations.

Several years after these governments were elected, (more than a decade in the case of Venezuela), it seems clear that there is a continuous reinforcing of extractivism and of the primary export logic. In this sense, there are no significant differences between the so-called 'progressive' or left-wing governments and the neoliberal governments. In almost all countries of Latin America, the share of primary goods in the total value of exports has increased in the last decade, in most cases significantly. With regard to the whole continent, the proportion of primary products in the total value of exports grew from 41.1% in 2002, to 52.9% in 2009 (CEPAL 2010: 105). This tendency has been evident even in Brazil, the most industrialised country in the continent, where the percentage of primary goods relative to the total value of exports increased from 47.4% in 2002 to 60.9% in 2009 (*ibid.*: 105).

The export of primary goods has become a direct source of relatively abundant public income, which could not be obtained through other means. The increasingly significant role of China in global geopolitics is contribu-

ting to the consolidation of this mode of insertion in the world market (Bridges 2009). Among other paradoxes concerning these South American political processes is the way in which an anti-imperialist discourse (i.e. that of the United States or the EU) is used to justify steps that tend to consolidate the subordination to another global capitalist power: China.

Trade between Latin America and China depends even more on primary products than trade with the United States and Europe: “Exports from Latin America to China are almost exclusively based on extraction and intensive use of natural resources. These are exported with very low or no processing as in the case of soya, fishmeal, grapes, sugar and copper. This tendency implies strong pressure on ecosystems, vacating natural resources of Latin American territory (farmland, biodiversity, water, fish resources and energy resources) and deteriorating the sovereignty of local communities over their natural resources and their territories and the services they supply (food, water, etc.). This is particularly irreversible in the case of mining” (Larrain et al. 2005: 47, translation AN/SN).

In the three countries, there is an important and growing distance between the discourses and the legal texts referring to the rights of nature and the critique of development, on the one hand, and the content of some of the main political and economic decisions, on the other hand.

Obviously, it is impossible to demand from the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, or Bolivia that they close their wells, oil, and gas pipelines and stop exporting hydrocarbons overnight. However, if the target is to change the productive model based on extractivism, clear and effective decisions have to be taken today that are geared towards a *transition* to productive models that overcome extractivism. There have been very few signs in this respect so far. Furthermore, in all three countries the government discourse has taken an increasingly developmental and extractivist tone.

This distance between discourses, projects, norms, and laws, on the one hand, and some of the main political/economic decisions, on the other hand, has caused important confrontations in these three countries. A notorious example was the opposition in Bolivia to the opening of large extensions of the Amazon region for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons (Morales Ayma 2010), a decision which was taken almost simultaneously with the introduction of the *Law of Rights of Nature* in the

legislative assembly. The subsequent decisions of the Bolivian government, with regard to the construction of the motorway through the indigenous territory of Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure (TIPNIS), in spite of the firm opposition of its indigenous inhabitants, have been even more conflictual. This project has produced deep divisions in Bolivian society, a very controversial national debate, and conflicting positions between popular movements and organisations with different visions in relation to what is at stake (Prada Alcoreza 2010a, 2010b; 2010c; Arkonada 2011; Toer/Montero 2012; Mamani Ramírez 2012).

In Ecuador the Mining Law, portrayed by indigenous and environmental organisations as directly breaching the spirit and the text of a constitution that grants rights to ‘nature’ for the first time in history (CONAIE 2009), is only one of many disputes that have occurred between the government of President Rafael Correa and indigenous and environmental organisations within the context of the pro-developmental policies which have characterised that government. In spite of the fact that Correa’s government had kept high levels of backing in opinion polls, there has been a deep break with the major indigenous and environmental organisations. Evidence of the extremity that this confrontation has reached is the *Manifesto of the Conference of Ecuador’s Social Movements for Democracy and Life* in August 2011, signed by a large number of indigenous, peasant, trade-union and women’s organisations of the whole country, in which it is alleged that “Correa’s project represents an authoritative and corrupt model of capitalist modernisation” (ABONG 2011).

Of all these countries, anti-developmental and decolonial disputes have less public presence in Venezuela. Accentuating the country’s century-old oil dependency, this product accounted for 95% of the total value of exports in the year 2010 (Banco Central de Venezuela 2011). This phenomenon is not just the result of the inevitable inertia caused by this historic centrality of oil in the economy, the political system, and the Venezuelan State, nor can it be explained as a result of a temporary statistical distortion caused by the high oil prices in the international market. It also corresponds to the productive model proposed as an indispensable condition to make 21st century socialism possible.

During the last decade, a sustained policy of investments and partnerships with international – state-owned and private – companies, both in

gas and oil, was carried out with the aim of considerably increasing production. According to official statistics of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Venezuela has 296 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, the largest in the world. Those reserves represent a quarter of the total reserves of the member countries of OPEC and 20% of the oil reserves of the whole planet (OPEC 2011: 11, 22). Furthermore, Venezuela also has two thirds of the total gas reserves in the whole of Latin America (ibid.: 23). The major parts part of these reserves are found in the Orinoco oil belt. According to Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA 2010: 92, translation AN/SN): “[T]he Orinoco oil belt is situated in the southern part of the Guárico, Anzoátegui and Monagas regions; forming a huge reservoir with a geographical area of approximately 55,000 sq.k, with superficial hydrocarbon-bearing sand covering about 12,000 sq.k. It contains accumulations of heavy crude and extra-heavy crude oil with an average gravity of 8.6° API.”

Agreements were entered into for the quantification and certification of the reserves of the Orinoco belt (ibid.: 93) with 28 companies from 21 countries, including Russia, China, the United States, France, Japan, Brazil, Spain, Iran, India, Norway, and South Africa. In the Strategic Plans for Gas Development, apart from investments by US corporations, there were investments by corporations from Italy (ENI) and Norway (STATOIL) (see PDVSA n/y).

Official announcements with regard to the level of production foreseen for the future have changed over time. According to President Hugo Chávez, Venezuela will double its production between 2011 and 2021 and will be able to produce six million barrels of crude oil a day. “We estimate a daily production of six million 120 thousand barrels a day by 2021 [...] The price of this barrel will be about 200 dollars,” which will be used for the purpose of sustaining “the development of a world power, namely, the Venezuela motherland” (RNV 2011, translation AN/SN). In January 2012, the president declared that a daily production of 10 million barrels would be achieved by “around 2030” (Durand 2012). In order to accomplish this increase in production, a large proportion of the national territory has been opened for oil and gas exploitation, including huge extensions of the territorial sea (Red Alerta Petrolera-Orinoco Oilwatch 2005). Bearing in mind the extraordinary magnitude of reserves, the planned increase in the scale

of production, and the complex technology required to extract these heavy-crude and extra-heavy oils and oil from the hydrocarbon-bearing sands of the Orinoco belt, massive investments by transnational corporations from all over the world have been planned in the form of joint ventures with the state owned PDVSA. The characteristics of these crude oils inevitably imply that their exploitation will have a greater environmental and socio-cultural impact than that involved in the exploitation of traditional lighter crude oils.

The centrality given to hydrocarbon in the production model of the country is expressly found in the first national plan for development, conceived as a project leading to socialism: the *Simón Bolívar National Project* (República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Presidencia 2007). One of the seven central themes or targets defining this development project is to make Venezuela a “world energy power”. According to this project: “[O]il will continue to be decisive in gaining financial resources from abroad, in generating productive internal investments, in meeting the country’s own needs for energy, and in consolidating the Socialist Productive Model” (ibid.).

The politics relating to the internal market are an expression of the fundamental continuity in the development model and energy pattern based on oil. A litre of ‘ecological’ gasoline with the highest octane level is sold in Venezuela at a price of between two and three cents (US\$). This massive subsidy has inevitably promoted a sustained increase in the consumption of hydrocarbon in the country, thus reinforcing energy waste and a rentist culture.

The most significant foreign investments of recent years have been Chinese. In response to the unquenchable thirst of the Chinese economy for a reliable and ever increasing supply of hydrocarbons, Rafael Ramírez, the Minister of Energy and Petroleum, announced that the Venezuelan government had signed contracts in the sum of US\$ 32 billion, backed-up by future oil transfers until the credit is cancelled (Aporrea 2011).

In September 2010 the law authorising the most important of these contracts was published. It is a credit line for 10 years from China to Venezuela for a total of US\$ 20 billion, half of which would be in Chinese yuans renmimbi. Venezuela agreed to supply China with no less than 200,000 and 250,000 barrels of oil every day for the first two years and thereafter with no less than 300,000 barrels daily until the loan has been paid. Neither

the price of the oil barrel nor the interest rate of the loan are specified in the contract. The latter “will be jointly determined by the lender and the borrower, based on direct negotiations and market principles” (Asamblea Nacional de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela 2010, translation AN/SN). These futures sales used to finance current expenses or investments not only consolidate a long term dependency on oil, but also generate structural demands for increased levels of production over time, if only to keep the same levels of fiscal income.

President Hugo Chávez talks about this relationship with China in the following terms: “I think that China is showing to the world that it will be the first world power. This is good for the world because it is becoming a great world power without knocking down, invading or blocking anybody, without knocking down peoples or imposing leonine conditions: without breaching the sovereignty of the peoples. With modesty, we say, all the oil that China will need for its growth and consolidation as a great world power and to continue to improve the living conditions of its people, is here, not only crude oil but also iron” (Venezolana de Televisión 2010).

3. Processes of change in democracy

One of the fundamental challenges of the current processes of change consists of the demands for deep cultural transformations and the establishment of new state forms and institutions that can articulate these plural societies within the current national territorial limits. These frontiers, which completely ignore previous history and the entire socio-cultural reality that existed before the arrival of the colonisers, have been assumed as fixed by the governments of these three countries. The integrity of these national territories has only been questioned by right wing opposition movements when they have found it convenient to use separatist threats as a political weapon. This implies that the processes of change have to operate within the deep *historical structural heterogeneity*² existing within these national territories. This is what the ideas of plurinationality, interculturalism, and decolonialism point to (Walsh 2008).

These new/other political-cultural forms will be possible only if built democratically. This is so both for pragmatic political reasons and for much

more fundamental reasons, related to the type of future society desired. The current processes of change in the continent have been carried out by means of elections. This implies that the continuity of these governments is only possible through the preservation of political legitimacy and majority electoral support (unless a decision is made to interrupt the current constitutional frameworks, something that seems not to be on the agenda). In this context, public policies face the challenge of contributing to the transformation of the beliefs and shared common sense of majorities without distancing themselves a great deal from that shared common sense, since that would lead to electoral defeats.

However, beyond electoral support, history has taught us what happens when a state tries to impose by force, against the will of large sectors of the population, political transformations and radical reorganisations of society. Well known are the dramatic impacts of the authoritarian imposition of the utopian collectivisation of the Soviet farms or of the Cultural Revolution in China. These not only had extraordinarily high human costs but contributed to the loss of legitimacy of the revolutionary projects, through which the possibility of continuing the processes of transformation towards a post-capitalist society was severely undermined. There are severe limits to the actions that can be undertaken by the state in its quest to transform society. Pretending to substitute the complex and necessarily slow transformations and intercultural negotiations of deeply heterogeneous societies with the raw use of state power has well known results. Perhaps, this is one of the fundamental lessons of the revolutionary processes of the last century. The state, assumed as the subject or principal agent of transformation, finally imposes authoritarianism, thereby undermining the possibilities for building a democratic society.

4. An exceptional historic situation

Latin America is at an extraordinary and hardly repeatable historic juncture. The so-called ‘progressive’ and left governments were elected as a result of prolonged processes of broad-based struggles and popular mobilisations for democracy and against neoliberalism, struggles in which indigenous organisations played a key role. These are not right-wing govern-

ments, in spite of the existing continuity in some areas of public policies (in particular in the economic model of exporting unprocessed commodities) and in spite of the less than democratic intolerance in which they reply to their critics. But above all, and beyond the extraordinary importance that the head of state has in each of these cases, they are not monolithic governments. They are governments and states in dispute. Owing to their own origin and composition, they are governments crossed by tensions, contradictions, and a multiplicity of tendencies. The popular, peasant, and indigenous organisations – that contributed through their mobilizations to the election of these governments and are now disappointed with their policies – are now challenged to identify these tendencies and to look for allies in order to strengthen the transforming trends and to stop those that boost monocultural developmentalism. However, total confrontation with these governments, as if they were nothing more than a continuation of the policies and basic orientations of previous governments, can only contribute to reducing the capacity to influence their policies.

Today, the obstacles confronted in the struggle for the rights of the indigenous peoples and the rights of nature are not only found in governments and in public policies. As argued in this text, the culture of these societies is deeply heterogeneous. In spite of the results of the referenda approving the new constitution, the ideas of *sumak kawsay* and *suma qamaña* (with all their potential as an alternative civilization) cannot be assumed today to express a common understanding shared by the majority of the inhabitants of these countries. Five centuries of colonialism and three decades of neoliberalism have left deep footprints. The corporate media continues to play a fundamental role in the reproduction of possessive individualism, identifying good living with US patterns of material consumption. Many sectors of the excluded population, without access to the basic material conditions necessary for a dignified life, demand development, employment, public health programmes, education, and social security from these governments. Nor are the contradictions between the aspirations of indigenous people and government policies clear-cut and simple. This is particularly the case when the social programmes of these governments reach the bases of the indigenous organizations, improving their everyday lives, and contribute to creating a split between the base and the more politicised and demanding leadership of these organizations in terms

of how they view the government. These contradictions and tensions also take place within indigenous peoples and communities. These are also heterogeneous and have been deeply impacted by colonial history. If the leadership of the organisations does not identify these tensions within their own ranks, the door is open for the welfare politics of the governments (even in the case of Venezuela, where these are expressly modernising and colonising policies) to undermine the bases of such organisations.

There are some severe shortcomings, limitations, and even serious setbacks in these processes of change that can be attributed to the inertia of State institutions, bureaucratic and political resistance taking place within the State, as well as to the limited capacity (and at times, lack of political will) of the leaders of these processes in the difficult tasks of exploring and linking the complex relationships between immediate administrative and social demands, on the one hand, and the necessity of taking steps in the direction of productive models beyond extractivism and development, on the other.

However, the challenges faced are not only found in the need to build political and social consensus, in the lack of political will of the government, or in the structural limitations that the dominant pattern of accumulation imposes. Severe shortcomings both theoretical and in terms of the type of political and social organisations and instruments of democratic, collective public administration appropriate for the desired transformations, are being confronted. There is much more clarity over what needs to be rejected than there is in relation to the characteristics of the alternative society.

The criticism of development – as an attempt to reorganise and transform peripheral societies in the capitalist-colonial-world-system along the path taken by metropolitan societies – has been made with rigour and depth (Escobar 2007). There are multiple community, local and regional experiences that illustrate that there are ways to live and produce and relate to ‘nature’ that are ‘really existing’ alternatives to development. However, there is little experience or theoretical and conceptual elaboration at hand with regard to the public policies required to deal with the contradictions faced in the process of building alternatives to developmentalism and extractivism. There is a lack of concrete policy proposals of transition that are politically feasible in the short term, and which are capable of leading

these societies from development/extractivism to ‘beyond development’. These cannot be invented. They can only arise from multiple, diverse, collective experiences. The Ministries of economics, finance, planning, and the and the so-called ‘development plans’, even if they are called ‘good life plans’ (SENPLADES 2009), do not constitute the most appropriate instruments for these novel requirements. These planning and governing tools are not neutral. They are the product of a type of state conceived after the end of the Second World War as being an instrument for the ‘development’ of the then called Third World, according to the monocultural patterns of the West. It is not possible to centrally ‘plan’ what necessarily would have to be an open process of plural and democratic experimentation based on the acknowledgement of the structural heterogeneity of these societies and on the fact that the old assurances about the characteristics of the society of the future have ceased to exist. The alternative society cannot be technocratically designed or budgeted.

There is much at stake in these processes, not only for Latin America, but in terms of the possibility of advancing alternatives to the predatory logic that is undermining the foundations of life in the planet. In spite of their profound contradictions, these Latin American processes³ are where it is possible to find the most vigorous alternatives to the civilisation pattern in crisis. The reversal of these processes would constitute a serious regression for anti-capitalist struggles throughout the world.

Translation by Aida Nelson and Stuart E. Nelson

- 1 When I speak of monocultural colonial states, I mean the Latin American states that both during colonial and republican times have colonised these profoundly heterogeneous societies (different peoples, languages, modes of relating to ‘nature’, etc.). These have – with varying levels of success – attempted to impose a colonial monoculture: one valid form of knowledge, one language, unique forms of property, a unitary legal system, an official religion, a single way of belonging, inclusion and participation (unique model of citizenship).
- 2 The concept of historical structural heterogeneity was formulated by Aníbal Quijano as part of his critique of Eurocentric and colonial patterns of knowledge that remain hegemonic in contemporary social sciences. With this category, he intends to dismantle the binary categories that presuppose a certain internal homogeneity of each of the parts: primitive/civilised; traditional/modern; oriental/western. According to Quijano, historical, structural heterogeneity is a feature of “all the realms of social existence”. There are no homogeneous societies. “That

which is really notable in the whole of societal structure is that elements, experiences and products, historically interrupted, varying, distant and heterogeneous, are able to join together in spite of their inconsistencies and their conflicts, in the common framework that binds them in a joint structure.” Given its colonial historical experience, it is impossible to understand Latin American societies without a recognition of this historical structural heterogeneity, especially those countries in which the indigenous presence and slavery have been more pronounced (Quijano 2000, translation AN/SN).

- 3 Throughout the text, references to the ‘processes of change’ in the three cases analysed always refer to the societal processes of transformation, not only to the government’s project. Thus the continuation and/or deepening of the processes of transformation does not necessarily mean the continuation of the current heads of state or even of their political parties.

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Abstracts

This paper explores the main tensions and contradictions within the current processes of change in three South American countries: Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela. These tensions are seen as a consequence of: (a) the complex historical structural heterogeneity of these societies; (b) contradictions within the government and the state, which cannot be seen as homogeneous, but as fields of struggle, and (c) the co-presence, in a partially contradictory and partially complementary form of diverse projects of social transformation. These projects are mainly, but not only, 21st Century Socialism, decolonial projects (the indigenous notion of the good life), and national-popular projects. The current political confron-

tations these governments face, not from the right wing opposition but from social movements and organisations that were previously part of their supporters, have to be seen as internal contradictions within the processes of political change, and as an expression of the conflicting and sometimes contradictory visions of the future and current demands of different popular sectors of these heterogeneous societies.

Dieser Beitrag untersucht die zentralen Spannungen und Widersprüche in den aktuellen Transformationsprozessen der drei lateinamerikanischen Länder Bolivien, Ecuador und Venezuela. Diese Spannungen werden interpretiert als Konsequenz (a) der komplexen historisch-strukturellen Heterogenität dieser Gesellschaften; (b) der Widersprüche innerhalb der Regierungen und Staatsapparate, die nicht als homogen angesehen werden können, sondern als Terrain von sozialen Kämpfen; und (c) der Koexistenz von teilweise widersprüchlichen und teilweise sich ergänzenden unterschiedlichen Projekten sozialer Transformation. Bei diesen Projekten handelt es sich vor allem, aber nicht ausschließlich, um Projekte eines Sozialismus des 21. Jahrhunderts, um dekolonisierende Projekte (die indigene Vorstellung des Guten Lebens) und um national-populäre Projekte. Widerstand erfahren diese Regierungen derzeit nicht von rechtsgerichteten Gruppierungen, sondern von denjenigen sozialen Bewegungen und Organisationen, von denen sie vormalig unterstützt wurden. Diese Konflikte werden als innere Widersprüche des politischen Transformationsprozesses sowie als Ausdruck von unterschiedlichen Zukunftsvisionen und aktuellen Forderungen von unterschiedlichen Gesellschaftsgruppierungen innerhalb einer heterogenen Gesellschaft interpretiert.

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OSCAR VEGA CAMACHO

Paths for Good Living: The Bolivian Constitutional Process¹

We, the Bolivian people, of plural composition, inspired by the struggles of the past since the depth of history, by the anti-colonial indigenous uprising, and in independence, by the popular struggles of liberation, by the indigenous, social and labor marches, by the water and October wars, by the struggles for land and territory, construct a new State in memory of our martyrs.

(Preamble of the Political Constitution of the State of Bolivia, 2009)

To be happy is to be able to build your own house;
plant, look after, harvest and prepare your own food;
decide what you want to wear,
heal yourself,
be able to determine whether to be happy or sad,
and learn from your mistakes;
What you are will always depend on your work,
on the ability and clumsiness of your hands and minds.
(Wankar Reynaga 1981)

1. An invitation

Bolivia is in the news. Events in Bolivia are over and over again targeted by the international press: the strength of social movements and their ability to shake the governments in power at the time, the scandals of political and entrepreneurial corruption, the extreme poverty and precariousness of the majority of its inhabitants, the huge diversity of ecosystems in the heart of South America, the living capabilities of indigenous cultures², the expectations concerning the vast reservoirs of raw materials

and the conflictive antagonism of the social and economic roles with which they have to comply. This news impresses, sets out images of a country evolving or succumbing, a country that will become or will break, could be or will not be. It is not the first time that a marginalised or peripheral country in the world economic system, trying to define and establish itself, is treated this way. This is probably a pre-set image of a country insisting on being founded again, as an incomplete task or recommence.

I suggest to think of building a State, as Wankar Reynaga (1981) describes it, as depending on the amount of our work, on the ability and clumsiness of our hands and minds. In any event, this would involve a subversion coming 'from the bottom upwards', the plebs' potency within the existing colonial power structures, the emancipatory ability of defending natural resources, and the strength of the indigenous movement to impinge with proposing alternatives, by making of politics a tool of life and for life. As they usually say: a path towards 'good living'. Moving slowly, bearing the lessons of those who did not give up to the imposed speed of growth, development and prosperity, of those who have always been declared to be the enemies of modernisation and ignorant of the road to progress. Moving slowly, because they are obliged to know the disjunctions, options and alternatives before continuing on different routes, always taking care that the conditions for a collective movement and for collectivity are kept. Knowing that we shelter multiple temporalities, which have to be debated and knotted so that they form a complex and densely woven fabric.

In other words, the current conceptual frameworks and theoretical models are being tested by those who have been viewed as their objects, and had consequently been instrumentalised by dispositives and frauds to be known, disciplined and controlled. The forms of knowledge have been subverted from the margins and edges of thinking, or at least from those people who were pretended not to have own thoughts or were unable to think (Prada 2008a). Sparks of hope for the promise of another world, 'the world in which many worlds fit', as the Zapatistas say (Ceceña 2008).

The invitation to start thinking in another way is an invitation to move along the indigenous peoples' and nations' paths where they are transiting while the global order is going through instabilities and malfunctions, which put at risk the planet and its inhabitants. Such instabilities and malfunctions include ecological and climatic disruptions, scarcity of energy

and of food, the widening of the gap of poverty and inequality between the living conditions of North and South. Related phenomenon are: the new megacities disseminated in the display of globalisation, the intensification of the internal wars and the declaration of rogue states by the US military hegemony, the massive migrations and the condemnation of migrants for not having a citizenship, the financial crisis and the rescue of large transnational corporations.

The world panorama at the beginning of the 21st century is not only discouraging but above all risky and frightening, this has also intensified the defensive and conservative positions of the existing order with the attitude of 'Better the devil you know than the devil you don't'. The 'wretched of the earth' in the southern hemisphere, the global south, do not even have this option. Perhaps for this same reason, they are the hope of another possible world, with the urgency and need of fighting to build another world; hoping that their path can contribute to building a possible global order, just and dignified for the people and the nations living in it (for the most recent contributions on geopolitical thinking see Sader 2009; Sousa Santos 2008a).

Edges and peripheries, knowledge and understanding, power structures and resistance and struggles, mastering and controlling life and searches for good living, are understood as a leap of the ways of thinking opened up by the dignity and justice of the indigenous peoples and nations. Undoubtedly, this is a scandal for the thinking of power. For the latter it is a scandal that the democratic lessons arise as subversion and liberation tools, that the potential of social struggles arises as liberation and self-determination, and that social movements emerge as organisation and participation of society.

The situation in Bolivia in general and the Bolivian constitutional process in particular currently constitute a benchmark necessary to debate the social, emancipatory capacity of actual movements and corresponding institutional transformations. In a democratic framework, these transformations imply democracy and decolonisation.

For this reason, the following questions arise: Why the demand for a Constitutional Assembly? Why the necessity of building a State? What relationship or aspiration is there between the peoples and the nations to establish a State order? In times where forms of the nation State are exhausted, why to stress a plurinational State and economic nationalisa-

tion? Is the constitutional process perhaps the best way to transform the State? But then, what happens to society and, above all, what happens to inequality, discrimination and injustice, those factors which the driving forces of the recent process?

It does not matter where we start the debate the Bolivian Constitutional process. We shall find more and more questions, as if the chosen path was planted with more questions and uncertainty than with certainties and guarantees. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos would say, this enables us to think in the mode of experimentation, or, as Toni Negri would insist, in the capacity of inventiveness and creativity. In one way or another, what is firmly established is that only in a collective way and with social support, institutional transformation and consequently the temporalities that they define can be begun and performed.

A possible way to clear the paths of good living in Bolivia is to consider interculturalism as a tool in the new political Constitution of the State, enacted by President Evo Morales on 7th February, 2009, in order to produce the plurinational State. In just this way, a constitutional framework would be made possible in order to dismantle and take apart the structures of colonial power, in order to guide and develop new forms of legality, political institutions and authority, complying with the demands of a complex and plural society organised in social movements.

2. Interculturalism as a tool

“Go to the other and return from the other is not an intellectual problem, but is a problem of the heart. Evidently, you can study the other. What is more, it is a duty to do so. However, understanding the other person is something different. Learning to know the life of the peoples, and posing the necessary question to be led to knowledge, is not the result of scientific knowledge, but it comes from the heart of your brother or sister. Only in this way, is it possible that people can step out of their world and enter into other worlds. Otherwise, it is possible that they go and come back, but without understanding, treading on the plants that give life, because they think that they are weeds, desecrating the earth because they see it as business and violating the water with their indifference. You will be able to go to many worlds, but if your heart is not prepared, you will not be able to see anything.” (Abadio Green 1998)

The above cited words by Abadio Green are a flare to lead us through the rough, winding paths of intercultural debate. Superseding the idea of liberal pluralism consists in the passage from multiculturalism to pluriculturalism, as in the Bolivian constitutional debate. This means going beyond one culture understanding others, because there is no one singular culture, if we are talking about building strategies for equality of cultures – which is what is meant by intercultural debate in this text. Indeed, Abadio Green practises interculturalism and is committed to it. On the other hand, the vision of the indigenous movements demands exercising equally multiple perspectives in order to build common opportunities for dialogue, interchange and life.

What can we learn from this? First of all, let us not find the name of Abadio Green confusing because he is a Kuna wise man and an anthropologist at the University of Antioquia in Colombia and, as all Kunas remaining between Panama and Colombia, they have their own names descending from the first names and surnames of the corsairs and pirates, who ruled in their territories during colonialism. Secondly, he lives and constantly walks the paths of the Kuna jungle and attends Medellin University, the two areas where he has committed himself to work. His rhythm of life is marked by and dedicated to interculturalism. Finally, his words reflect the difficulties and challenges involved in talking about the matters of others with people who are not familiar with these matters. For this reason, he has to appeal, above all, to the heart, in order to prepare the listeners, the observers or the searchers – knowing that without the heart being involved, the knowledge remains instrumental and with the aspiration to control its object. On the other hand, knowledge from the heart is a never-ending, shared knowledge. We could say it is boundless, because it transforms those who know or are working to know each other.

For this reason, interculturalism is above all learning rather than teaching. A person is not taught to be intercultural. In reality, a person learns to be intercultural. This step between learning and teaching is decisive in the cultural ambit, because it presupposes the radical modification of the idea of knowledge and of its structure of power. If we start asking what is knowledge, who knows, and what is known, we know that others will probably call us philosophers or thinkers; but if we also ask how something will be transmitted, what is it used for, why this and not

the other – this certainly will convert into worries of wise men and scientists; and if we continue questioning, who knows whom, how we define or delimit knowledge, why there is authority in knowledge and what is the power of knowledge, then people will say ‘there is something political about this, this sounds very much like politics’. And they are not wrong.

The quarrel about culture has to be explained in order to deal with interculturalism, because the idea of what we understand by the term culture, how we practise, value and take care of it, is precisely what is at stake. Culture has to be disarmed to start learning about interculturalism, because there is by no means one unique and singular culture, excluding the possibility of others.

On the one hand, there have always been convivial or conflictive cultures in plurality; despite the fact that they are taught an official or dominant culture. On the other hand, cultures open up and develop with time. A living culture is necessarily and constantly changing, transforming and re-inventing itself. Therefore, we have to get out of our minds the idea of a culture being unique and static, and instead understand the underlying plurality and temporality of cultures (see Viaña 2009). As a consequence of this concept, culture remains in all that is supplementary, intangible and unproductive. This idea, which works wonderfully in the contemporary society, is extremely functional for multiculturalism, because it precisely blurs the existing pluralism, and puts it down to a specialised matter, specifically ‘a lesser evil to work on’ in social life. It is especially an excellent excuse for re-introducing the topic of culture to the great shop window of consumption, as if it were one more tradable good: today we offer Cuban music, Colombian coffee, Bolivian coca, German sausages, Yankee beer, etc.

The dispute about culture, this process of dismantling culture in order to learn from interculturalism, is a struggle to dignify and support the materiality of really existing cultures, because otherwise they will be easy prey to transnational industries, since not only are consumers being produced, but we are also the object of consumption by industries. For this reason, to talk about the materiality of the culture is a subject of the heart, as Abadio Green says, and of the power of knowledge, namely the capacity to affect the relationship between teaching and learning, in which we are living daily with others who live with us and it is a subject of the forms of knowledge that are brought up.

The path trodden by the peoples and nations to recognise the importance of intercultural practices for life started many decades ago in Bolivia: For example, through the educational proposal of Warisata in the 1930s,³ the claims for land and citizenship in 1940 which led to the agrarian reform within the National Revolution of 1952, the political and cultural claims brought up by the *Kataristas* in the 1970s and the multicultural and plurilingual demands in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, from the beginning of the 21st century on, the announcement of a Constitutional Assembly has been the principal objective in order to refound the country by means of a new Political Constitution of the State. Indeed, it could be argued that the March for Life in 1990, started by the peoples and nations of the low lands, which reflected the huge rainbow of cultures forming Bolivia and its desired aim of defending all forms of life, is the symbolic political act for the origin of the demand for a new Constitution.⁴

3. The Bolivian constitutional process

In order to understand completely the historical dimension of the times we are living in, it is necessary to locate these times within a procedural perspective of a path that opens up as you pass through it. There are no landmarks or a map or an established destination on this path; it is rather marked by that fundamental aspect of life, which is continuously searching, producing, procreating and planting in order to restart the productive cycle of generations and the renewal of what is alive. It is innovative and always open.

We should then not only talk of pre-constitutional, constitutional (via the Constitutional Assembly) and post-constitutional periods, but also, above all, of the constitutional capacity, of what is already constituted, instituted, of what constitutes and is constituting societal change. In other words, these periods deal with a time composed of a flow of numerous things ending, others being transformed or changed and others being created. A time that must shelter many different temporalities to shape new rhythms of life, some call it a time of transition. Perhaps then, the new Constitution could be viewed as a Constitution in transition (Prada 2008b).

For the first time in the republican history of Bolivia, i.e. from its foundation in 1825, all the citizens forming part of it were able to participate in the election, deliberation and proposal for the establishment of a new Constitution. The diverse, heterogeneous and pluricultural society of Bolivia was able for the first time to express and participate in building the general will and to constitute itself as the sovereign people of Bolivia (Prada 2006).

From the proposal and the election of the representatives to the Constitutional Assembly in 2006 up to the difficult and complex sessions for approving the rules of procedure of the Assembly – such as the continuous attacks and disapprovals, culminating in racist riots that impeded that meetings were held in Sucre, which were instead transferred to Oruro – there was the feeling of being on the edge of an abyss and this was the atmosphere transmitted by communication media and fuelled by social rumours.

The urgent need was to establish minimal agreements to be able to fulfil the mandate of the peoples to have a new constitutional text, which would then be subject to approval by the citizens. Due to this urgency, the search for other political spaces and scenarios begun, which would make the constituent process feasible: Political parties, members of parliament, civil governors, mayors, international observers and mediators. It took almost a year of initiatives and failures, until finally two events obliged the parties to agree upon a project of a new Constitution and an agenda for the citizens to consult and have general and municipal elections: The results of a referendum for revocation or continuity to the elected authorities in 2008 and the subsequent massacre of Pando.

It is crucial to elucidate the process of producing the draft text that would later become the new Constitution in order to make the very conditions of its elaboration and the actors involved in it understandable. Furthermore, this sheds light on the existing correlations of the political forces at stake and the implications for the articulation of a common project.

Therefore, in order to understand the multi-dimensionality at stake and the demand for an effective pluralism, it must be emphasised that it is not the work of a person, a team, a party or an organisation having the duty of writing the text. Neither is it the result of a single edition. If we go back in time, to the previous Bolivian Constitutions, it is possible to trace back the authors or people responsible, commissioned expressly with such

an objective; to take a case in point, the first political Constitution of the State of 1825 was expressly requested from Simón Bolívar.

In the case of the new Constitution, the text has been commonly produced and collectively elaborated in its structure, components and categories – which was finally the condition for creating any possible text. However, due to its own political features and the social demand in which the new Constitution was requested, it must be fully explained; there is a duty to set out the sources and conditions of its elaboration, deliberation and approval.

It must be pointed out at least, that when the Assembly was started, about 80 initiatives of different types were received. However, two documents have to be emphasised, namely the one presented by the *Pacto de Unidad Indígena Originario Campesino* (Unity Pact of the Indigenous, Native and Peasant Peoples; see Asamblea Nacional de Organizaciones Indígenas, Originarias, Campesinas y de Colonizadores de Bolivia 2006), which was going to serve as the backbone of the so-called ‘Re-foundation of Bolivia’, and the 10 fundamental issues presented by the governing party MAS-IPSP⁵. Likewise, each political party and citizen group had a proposal, or, at least, some foundations and guidelines (REPAC 2007a). The Assembly carried out territorial consultations in eight regions of the country in order to collect initiatives and discuss with the citizens and the organisations. Thereafter, the work was given to 22 committees, which prepared reports by minority and majority in order to be able to start the edition of the preliminary text. Based on those reports, the same text was to be given for consideration and approval in plenary sessions of the Assembly (REPAC 2007b).

Holding these plenary sessions presented such difficulties and obstacles, that political agreements with the authorities and the civic services of the regions and, later on, with the parliamentary political powers – the so-called *Comisión Política Supra-partidaria* – were required. Important consensus and agreements on conflicting issues were achieved, but the conditions to sign and countersign them were not given. Even so, they were incorporated into the preliminary text of the report by majority vote, which started to be considered as the draft of the project of the new Constitution. It is worth clarifying that the opposition and minority forces never significantly or decisively presented a text in the Assembly, neither did they intent

to prepare a basic text based on their own minority reports. In other words, they had no interest in this Assembly fulfilling its mandate.

Added to that, the date stipulated by the law for the Assembly to finish was fast approaching. Sucre, in its demand to be the capital city, did not allow meetings to be held there. The regions, which opted for regional autonomy in the 2006 referendum, carried out their public consultations for the approval of their statutes and for boosting de facto autonomies, thus violating the Constitution in force, and opposing the Assembly, which was already considering a text with a basic framework for the autonomies. The urgency to end the Assembly with an approved text by the fixed dates was reflected in the text approved in Oruro on 14th December, 2007.

Almost the entire year of 2008 was needed to make the constitutional process feasible (Chávez Reyes et al. 2008; Bohrt et al. 2008). The oppositional positions were not only against the approved text, but also against the process itself, and thus induced a referendum undertaken for the purpose of revoking or continuing with the principal national and regional authorities. The final results of that election⁶ and a series of events supported by the authorities and civic services of the regions ended up in attacks on public installations and finally in the tragic massacre of Pando, with more than 19 deaths, 53 injured people and an undefined number of missing persons. This gave rise again to a search for a political agreement in order to make the constitutional process feasible, making possible new meetings between the national and regional authorities based on a minimal political agenda, even though the agreements were again not signed. The parliamentary political powers took up these initiatives and established the *Comisión Especial de Concertación del Congreso Nacional* (Special Committee for Agreement of the National Congress), which completed the last agreement and presented a revised text in November, 2008 (Romero et al. 2009). This is the project of a new Constitution, which was given for consideration to the citizens for approval or rejection in a referendum on 25th January, 2009.

4. The State as object of transformation by society

From the 19th century on, starting with the fights for independence, and throughout the whole of the 20th century, all the efforts and modern initiatives to force a national destiny with development and growth could be characterised as the continuous and relentless work on society itself. The foundation of this vision is that in order to fulfil the conditions of the possibility of modernisation, an intervention in the social area must take place for society itself to be produced. In other words, society itself has to be resolved, modified, planned, controlled, ruled and disciplined. The State is the subject appointed for this work and society is its object. It matters not if it is by means of reforms or revolutions, but the State will have to take the legal steps and the institutional devices for shaping a new society, able to assume and modify the signum for a modern time.

An unprecedented process for this modern trajectory was started in Bolivia as a threshold that allowed building alternatives and projections from diverse visions of life, rights and productive capacities outside of its borders. Indeed, the debate is not about society, even though it is a burning and necessary subject, but about the State as a social relation that expresses itself through legality and institutions, and through the multiple strategies and diversity of processes that respond to an unequal, diverse and pluricultural society. That is to say, the formula above described has to be turned around, since the object to be worked on is the State and the subject of this work is society. This also requires understanding the State and society not as two separate entities, but as interwoven and in a constant process of engagement or tension. Therefore, the demand and the necessity of establishing legality and political institutions in accordance with social reality, and as a consequence pluriculturally, are even higher (Negri et al. 2008).

The constitutional debate about the State is modifying the way we perceive, understand and participate in the State. That is to say, the classic binary definitions of State and civil society, public and private sector, and State and market no longer have the operational capacity and efficacy to designate the magnitude of the economic, cultural and ecological processes that our countries go through, and above all, they no longer have the ability to answer and propose alternatives (Sousa Santos 2008b, 2009). Thus, it is quite difficult and strange for a modernising vision that the main demands

of the social and indigenous movements are nationalisation and plurinationalism; because according to a modernising vision, these demands are nationalist and statist and could destroy the nation and the State. However, today, hardly any social actor in Bolivia opposes hydrocarbons being nationalised, even though there are discussions about their administration, execution and planning, but hardly anyone criticises the act of nationalisation that allowed the State role to be substantially modified in this strategic sector, even those opposing sectors of the regions, which finally depend on the distribution of this income provided by hydrocarbons.

5. Decolonisation: from multiculturalism to plurinationalism

The intense current debate on the State is founded on the memory and experience of the indigenous struggles and organisations that have elaborated the proposals to start a true constitutional process. They are the basis of the strength and force of the initiatives and, at the same time, the cause of the resistance and violence practiced by those opposing the constitutional process. For this reason, it is vitally important to understand the constitutional process, the transformation of the State and the pluralism in all its sectors as part of a vision committed to decolonisation.

Provided that the perspective from which one speaks is understood, it seems to be nonsense to talk about decolonisation when the colony ended with the political independence period of 1825 and the republic was founded. This is because nobody can deny the uneven, unequal and discriminatory conditions persisting in the country, which have become abysmal gaps while continuing with the current order of things.

First of all, decolonisation is to assume all the consequences implied in the multicultural and plurilinguistic character of the country, which the country finally accepted and respected, after 169 years of republicanism, with the Reform of the Constitution in 1994. Nevertheless, the form of the nation State founded during that Constitution worked in a monocultural and monolingual way and was politically effective for the groups of traditional power. Therefore, the process of decolonisation needs to be understood and started according to a plural, diverse and multi-dimensional

society. The ability to democratise the State and society arises from there, understanding democratisation as the simplest form, as the ability to have equal opportunities and facilities for everybody (Patzzi 2009).

Decolonisation, based on this democratising, constitutional process, has a direct effect on how to perceive oneself within the world economic system, the regional and world geopolitics, which is directly related to the ability to understand the multiple historical determinations and which allow the building of the initiative and decision of self-determination as a country and State relating to others (Tapia 2010).

Consequently, it can be stressed that the constitutional process is the step from multiculturalism to plurinationalism, because the idea that a dialogue of cultures can take place only from a single notion of culture, is thereby removed and disassembled. This is because even by recognising cultural diversity from a multiculturalist perspective, the process will start from a single civilisational matrix and thus, an asymmetrical, unequal and discriminatory matrix. The step to plurinationalism is to recover and make possible the material character of the culture and to fully assume the incommensurability and dimensionality borne and practised by each culture. The State needs to start by establishing the legal, institutional and civil bases in order for its potential ability, performance and efficacy to be of benefit to society. The plurinational State is the response to tackle the deep and accelerated mechanisms of economic and industrial globalisation, a response based on indigenous memories, experiences and lessons that propose to cultivate life and take care of the multiple hearts that nourish our societies (Walsh 2009).

Being indigenous today is the same as being plural, diverse and multiple, the same as democracy or proletariat have been for modern societies, because there is no one indigenous group of people that may say that it speaks or answers for all indigenous matters, even though it is assumed that there is a common destiny at stake in every group of people. This is because its subsistence and power is based on a jointly built project and common sense. Is it not the most democratic and dignified programme for all the forms and organisations of the living to appeal to a common sense and joint building project? Perhaps at this time, it is the only way with horizons for a future.

6. Good living

The expression 'good living' has become a symbol of the capacity of joining different ideas and practices that seek a joint project, keeping with the intercultural practices mentioned above. It might be opposed to those ideas, which are regarded as imposed models and recipes for development and progress, and which are applied while ignoring the abilities, potentials and forms of organisation and administration existing in territories. The expression 'good living' names those initiatives and proposals generated from the specific particularities and necessities of different peoples, who search for specific solutions and alternatives within the context of a common scope.

'Good living' is the demand of public politics from and towards direct beneficiaries, redefining the forms of administration and public management, and the methods of designing, executing and evaluating the programmes. For that matter it also involves the processes of work, the responsibilities, the actors and the actions of politics being enriched and improved by the citizens and the local, communal and cultural organisations. Following the pluralism of the forms of life in order to express and build, thus produce, the common things that give us life, allow us to live and preserve the living. This is to make a State from society and culture, from those who are at the bottom, those who are normally discriminated against, displaced from the spheres of decision and management. The idea of government and authority is modified, because to govern and to be an authority works in line with the community and society; as the Zapatista slogan says, 'lead by obeying' or 'rule by obeying'. This runs opposite to the forms of discipline and domination of a vertical and authoritarian structure. One has to govern, control and discipline.

Therefore, the constitutional process, the duties of State transformation and of realising interculturalism have to be thought of in all sectors, as a part of a vision engaged with decolonisation and with the search for good living. Based on these considerations, the challenges of building State politics, suitable forms of government, authority, institutions and profile of public servants, social and public policies, participation and social control, information and transparency of the public administration and other sectors have a decisive relevance and significance in the near future.⁷

7. A path on the basis of interculturalism

The paths for good living were achieved by means of the constitutional process with the struggle and social mobilisation from 2000 and with the conclusive electoral victory of Evo Morales in 2005. A transition time is being developed in order to carry out the necessary State transformations and there is a new constitutional framework today with the enactment of the new Constitution of the plurinational State. Some of the most important tasks which have to be carried out forming new orientations of the public creation of the common are pointed out below.

7.1 Citizenship and rights

The condition for boosting full citizenship in a plurinational State is based on cultural equality and equity of the peoples and the nations forming part of it; that is to say, based on political, cultural and linguistic diversity, a legal framework is established to guarantee the pluralism of structures, forms and expressions. And for that matter, the institutions of the State must be designed and managed on the basis of these principles of pluralism.

Full citizenship is a multicultural citizenship, which respects, recognises and takes part in every cultural experience and memory, borne by the peoples and nations forming part of a plurinational State (Rojas Tudela 2007). The significance of producing and becoming an entity is being redesigned, based on pluralism in all its regional, cultural and linguistic range, with a horizon for finding and realising the common core, namely to create a common world.

Consequently, compared with previous Constitutions, the Chapter of Rights in the Constitution is quite broad and extremely careful with regard to pointing out the diversity of cases and situations. Not only is the generation of diverse universal, individual and social rights compiled but they are also expanded with the rights of indigenous peoples, expressed in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples approved by the UN in September 2007,⁸ and those rights relating to the basic needs of life, such as water, communication, etc. This is because a Magna Carta reshaping the multicultural citizenship necessarily has to be seen in relation with the rights recognised for all inhabitants on the territory, because there is no citizenship without rights; and these rights furthermore target exactly the objectives and duties of the State institutions.

7.2 Institutions and authorities

This implies that these institutions must work with the languages relevant to the communities and regions where they are operating. In other words, paperwork, administrative treatment, procedures, forms and other documentation for the appropriate performance of state policies must be carried out in the language of its inhabitants and citizens, recognised as official languages. The forms and characteristics of the institutional structure must be adjusted and converted to an expression of the organisations and authorities of the communities and regions, where they operate.

The importance of the rights of the citizens in a plurinational State commensurates with the importance of the ability of the peoples and nations to execute them; and both contribute to mainstreaming the principles of pluralism in the entire State structure and in the forms of government.

7.3 Justice and judicial systems

From a perspective of equality and freedom of multicultural citizens' rights, justice demands a permanent work of judicial pluralism. This recognises a new right which consists of the formal inclusion of the daily practices of multiple normative structures of different indigenous peoples and nations, popular segments and the new collective subjects, which comprise the contemporaneous society in movement (Noguera Fernández 2008).

It is crucial to understand that justice is executed, applied and empowered based on different jurisdictions, and in a specific procedural way for each singular case. Thus, it is not an automated and blind machine that must be operated literally without understanding or contextualising each of the cases, without needing tribunals, lawyers, proceedings and defence actions. Thus, interpretative work regarding the laws and standards needs to be applied in each case. Finally, the force of law is the ability to exercise justice, to reset and compensate damage or an offence caused to a third party, an individual or collective subject, or an official institution or tangible or intangible patrimony. Justice is in that sense the ability to revise and reorder the forms of the right and its applicability and exercise in social and communitarian life.

7.4 Economy and productivity

There is no doubt about the importance of the material basis of production and labour to define the characteristics of a society, even though the complexity of societies with different cultural and civilising matrices demands a definition, or at least a problematisation according to its complexity and diversity. To recognise the existence of different economic models in Bolivian society – private business, associations and co-operatives, families, communities and state enterprises – demands a common and plural handling and planning (García Linera 2008).

Therefore, there is an urgency and a concern to establish conditions – equal and symmetrical in their performance and productivity – and, at the same time, to safeguard the forms of complementarity and reciprocity of the different economies, which are not calculated in terms of profit or assets. Likewise, there is also the definition of the common or public interest, which is above or beyond marketing and privatising services and goods (Morales Olivera et al. 2008).

8. Post-Scriptum in May 2012

This text was written shortly after the enactment of the Political Constitution of the State on 9th February, 2009. After three years have passed, it is necessary to warn about the conditions of the transition to the transformation of the State in Bolivia: especially the building of the plurinational State. The forms of change have adopted tendencies and tonalities, which could be assumed as being obstacles and contradictions to the plurinational state building and even being regarded as conservative tendencies. How is it possible that this takes place in an emancipatory project? With similar social support and a programme of transformation? With a popular, progressive government and an indigenous president?

Different responses are being tried out, starting with the hypothetical character of betrayal claimed by the government, up to the predictable effect of power and its maintenance at all costs, being expressed to the government. While some in the scenario demand deep decolonisation, the answers and questions of others are symptomatically linked to those polit-

ical ideas that Bolivia's own constitutional process removed and aimed to decolonise. Perhaps the answers are not entirely evident, but what came to the fore is that the new cognitive frameworks are at stake within the current processes. Thus, the current political phenomena must be treated and understood on the basis of their own difficulties of interculturalism and of the uncertainties created by decolonisation.

The dilemmas and tensions generated by the transformation of the State do not have and could not have answers and definitive and guaranteed solutions, because, first of all, there is no formula that we must achieve, but rather a movement to be jointly built. Secondly, the problems are not national but regional, and thirdly, we are framed in a multiple and general crisis of capitalism. Therefore, these places of transformation precisely constitute the site and opportunity for a political decision. Thus, the potentialities of who, how and why have to be examined, because they are the disputes for democracy and the effects of decolonisation, which are opened up and questioned within this transformation.

Undoubtedly, these are difficult and uncertain times, because in this short period, we have seen social and indigenous movements bursting with a new character, such as the protests of December 2010, sparked by a rise in fuel prices, the Indigenous March through the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) in 2011 or currently the second march through the TIPNIS. These movements are based on highly debatable governmental decisions and on procedures without the participation of a society organised in social movements and civil society groups. However, the controversial, anti-constitutional organic laws of the legislative body in 2010 cannot be ruled out, as well as other actions of the executive body, which have no compliance or proportionality with the constitutional mandates of the territorial and economic structure of the State.

Perhaps, what is at stake in these controversies of reading and interpreting the Bolivian process is again the issue of the perspectives of what is to be changed and who makes the change: either we focus on or treat this as a governmental prerogative and of its actors, or we instead expand the times for deliberation and decision and, consequently, we transform the instances and subjects of decision, giving potentiality to the plural society and strengthening common achievements. Therefore, this is a matter of scales

and temporalities, being incumbent on different levels of management and on times for decision, which may modify and expand the character of the will and action of the State.

This is because the consolidation of the plurinational State is finally that ability of the society organised in social movements to embody and crystallise itself in political institutions, legality and structures of authority that may answer and take care of the cultural, social and economic changes with justice and dignity; and in addition take care of the good living demanded by the indigenous and peasant peoples and nations. The scales and temporalities are those factors and opportunities including 'moments of definition and decision' that cannot be replaced or alienated by virtue of the represented power or of knowing better what is appropriate for other people; in other words, these are one's own chimeras of thinking and believing that there would be a head to the constitutional process, or that the president and the executive members together are the expression of the transformation of the State.

The eruption of social and indigenous movements with a new character is currently the visible and manifest side of a vigorous and vital collective capacity to retake the course of the process of transformation. The risk is to be tempted immediately and by the situations, in wanting to settle the current debate with a dispute of electoral forces, or to rehearse a resolution of conflicts with the calculations and arithmetic of electoral politics. Faced with the current temptations of electoral politics, we can only answer with constitutional politics, that is to say, reading and putting into practice the Constitution as a political programme. Thus, decolonisation must take apart the structures of power and domination by means of the Constitution of a plural society organised in social movements and civil society groups. In addition, interculturalism is the political tool with which to create the conditions and capacities of the subaltern perspectives, the emancipation of the dispossessed. Where are we; at what time are we living? I think we are only starting to know each other, to know each other vaguely.

Translation by Aida Nelson, Stuart E. Nelson; final editing by Ulrich Brand

- 1 I would like to thank Isabella Radhuber, Bettina Köhler and Ulrich Brand for their collaboration for the English version of the text.
- 2 It is worth mentioning that indigenous cultures are not looked at from the point of view of being homogeneous at all, but in terms of their plural condition, which is developed in detail throughout the text.
- 3 The educational model of Warisata Escuela-Ayllu (1931–1940) is an important benchmark for the communitarian projects of integration and co-ordination of the principles of reciprocity, complementarity, harmony and solidarity.
- 4 The compilation of articles and papers before the election of Evo Morales and the announcement of a Constituent Assembly is maybe the most comprehensive and diverse publication on the importance and necessity for the demand of an Assembly (see Artículo Primero 2005).
- 5 Movement towards Socialism-Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples. The instrument was founded in 1995 and in 1999 adapted the abbreviation of MAS. It was legally registered in order to participate as a party in municipal elections (see REPAC 2006).
- 6 The votes for the President and Vice-president to continue amounted to 57.5% and 60.1% (Wikipedia n/y).
- 7 For a document developing approaches for good living see Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo de la República de Bolivia (2006). It would be interesting to undertake an analysis on the topic in dialogue with the Constitution that has been approved in the meanwhile.
- 8 Bolivia is the first country in the world to approve and constitutionalise the declaration.

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Abstracts

The article is devoted to examine the constitutional process in Bolivia and its transformational potential. Social and indigenous movements demanded and proposed a new foundation of the country and a State transformation through a Constitutional Assembly. This new Constitution was supposed to open the way for political, legal and institutional practices to foster decolonisation, interculturalism and a rights-based 'Good Living'. However and in the light of recent societal dynamics, there is a dispute

over the status of the State, i.e. about the forms of transition to achieve this State transformation as well as the ways to put forward developed constitutional rights. In its course, this generates ambiguities and turbulences which profoundly modify the correlations of forces and power and create intersections and bifurcations.

Der Beitrag untersucht den verfassungsgebenden Prozess in Bolivien und sein transformatorisches Potenzial. Soziale und indigene Bewegungen forderten und skizzierten selbst eine Neugründung des Landes und eine Staatstransformation durch eine Konstituierende Versammlung. Die neue Verfassung sollte den Weg für politische, rechtliche und institutionelle Praktiken öffnen, um Dekolonisierung, Interkulturalismus und ein auf Rechten basierendes „gutes Leben“ voranzubringen. Im Lichte jüngerer Entwicklungen entstand jedoch eine Debatte über den Status des Staates, das heißt über Formen der Transition, um eine Staatstransformation und auch die Ausweitung der entwickelten Verfassungsrechte zu erreichen. Im Verlauf der Debatte haben sich daraus Ambivalenzen und Turbulenzen entwickelt, die die Kräfte- und Machtverhältnisse grundlegend ändern sowie Knotenpunkte und Weggabelungen schaffen.

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**Green Economy and Green Capitalism:
Some Theoretical Considerations¹**

The terms transition and transformation are very much in vogue in current academic and socio-political debate, at least whenever the ecological crisis and socio-ecological change are discussed. In other areas however, such as financial markets or social policy, they are much less frequently encountered.

In political science research, 'transition' generally refers to a change of political regimes, such as the shift away from authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships to more or less liberal-democratic political systems, as instanced in southern Europe during the 1970s, subsequently in Africa and Latin America, and then in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Merkel 2010; O'Donnell et al. 2004). Transformation is often used to refer to the transition from the Eastern European socialist planned economy to a capitalist market economy.²

The German Federal Government's Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU), in a recent report entitled *World in Transition – A Social Contract for Sustainability*, refers to a 'Great Transformation' (WBGU 2011; see below for a discussion of the different titles of this report). The point of departure is, as in many other papers, the ecological crisis, particularly climate change, which motivates a new development path, to an energy system no longer based on fossil fuels. The term 'transformation' is used there normatively and heuristically (ibid.: 81), and approaches to further such a process are identified. One such approach, in the opinion of the Council, is the emerging global transformation of values towards a sensitisation to ecological questions (ibid.: 67ff). In order to promote and strengthen this transformation, the report states, a new "global social contract" (ibid.: 8, 276ff) is needed. Central to realising the Great Trans-

formation, along with the transformation of values, is the "proactive state" (ibid.: 203ff), one function of which is to promote the innovations which are seen as necessary. Innovation is indeed a keyword in the studies of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP): "Resource use reductions [...] are, ultimately, what really is needed most. However, the key factor that will determine whether this happens will be the degree of investment in innovations for more sustainable use of resources. A key driver here will be whether prices of critical resources rise in response to resource depletion" (UNEP 2011a: 51).

To cite another example, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN (UN DESA 2011) calls for a 'great green technological transformation' to provide a decisive impetus for a green economy based on a new development paradigm. And in the scientific discourse, a *transition research* and *transition management line* (Rotmans et al. 2001; Shovel/Walker 2007) is becoming established as a "novel mode of governance for sustainable development" (Loorbach/Rotmans 2010: 237).

It seems that an area of socio-political and academic debate has, within a very brief period, opened up around the terms transformation/transition, which, in my view, is closely *analytically* connected with the multiple crises of our time, particularly the ecological crisis, and *normatively* connected with a broadly shared sense that the material and energy resource foundations of society must be promptly and fundamentally changed. In the course of this transformation discourse, the analytical and normative dimensions keep getting mixed up.

The key point in this ever more influential perspective seems to be that the problems are assumed to be given, that they are seen as problems of humankind which can be solved by humankind and the groups of actors which provide its structures, such as policy-makers, the business community, or the consumers; occasionally, civil society is also identified. If conflicts are identified, they are most likely to be those between the prosperous global North, with its overuse of resources and sinks, and the global South, which is dynamically developing its economy, with all that that implies for the use of resources and sinks.

In recent studies, the term 'problem' is being replaced by that of 'megatrend': the WBGU (2011: 35-65) speaks of "earth systems megatrends", on the one hand, and of "global economic and social megatrends" on the other

(while the report repeatedly refers to ‘problems’, that term has no explicit systematic position within the report).

Disruptive societal dynamics, particularly the globalisation of the Western mode of living, are noted, but not analysed as such. The dominant tone is a kind of naturalistic truth regime: the natural sciences describe the character of the crisis to us (prominently, Rockström et al. 2009). It is particularly the policy-makers who are to initiate and promote processes of transition and/or transformation. Options and potentials are primarily seen in terms of technology, particularly in the remarkable increase in efficiency, and innovations such as production methods and the strengthening of circular economies, or in such societal developments as the transformation of values towards post-material value systems, or in signs of self-limitation (efficiency). In transition research, the term ‘innovation’ is a key category. However, there is an increasing recognition of the fact that gains in efficiency alone, as the neo-classicists promise with their terms ‘substitution’ and ‘technological progress’, will not suffice (UNEP 2011a). This is true not only due to the so-called rebound effects, i.e. the fact that efficiency gains in the use of natural resources do not reduce resource use, since the products manufactured, such as automobiles or computer monitors, thus tend to become cheaper to produce, which gives rise to larger batches, for instance of autos or of monitors, to be consumed. An additional factor is the enormous dynamics of development in some regions of the world.

In the following, I would like to more precisely define the terms ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’. On this basis, the introduced distinction will be explained with reference to the current debates and possible developments in the context of a proposed ‘green economy’ and ‘green capitalism’.

1. Clarification of terminology

First of all, I would like to introduce what I see as an analytically and socio-politically helpful distinction, in order to operationalise it for a critical analytical perspective on transformation. Based on the distinction I have offered between the concepts ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’, I would first of all like to facilitate an assessment of the analytical range – or, as it were, the depth of intervention – of various diagnoses and proposals for handling the crisis.

The use of the terms ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’ is fairly fuzzy, the reasons for which are first of all etymological.³ The core meaning of *transire* is ‘to cross over’; that of *transformare* is ‘to reshape, change’. Unsurprisingly, these terms are often used synonymously. The WBGU (2011) report referred to above shows this in its title: the original German title is *Welt im Wandel – Gesellschaftsvertrag für eine Große Transformation*, while the English version of the report is called *World in Transition – A Social Contract for Sustainability*. To cite another example, Raskin et al. (2010) refer in their scenario analyses (see below) to ‘transition’ and to ‘transformation’ with no distinction whatever.

I would like to argue in favour of a terminological distinction, so as to highlight important differences: I see ‘transition’ as a process of politically intentional control, i.e. a planned intervention in development paths and logics, structures and relations of forces mediated by state policy, in order to steer dominant developments in a different direction. A large part of the studies on a green economy and on socio-ecological transformation argue along this line – even if they often refer to societal dimensions, such as a shift of values, or to technological developments which are already in progress.

In contrast, ‘transformation’ should be understood as a comprehensive socio-economic, political and socio-cultural process of change which incorporates controls and strategies, but is not reducible to them. The term is used analytically, and is not reducible to a normative, well-founded position of changes towards a sustainable society of solidarity.

In so doing, I am referring to the best-known use of the term to date, by Karl Polanyi, almost 70 years ago. In his work *The Great Transformation* (1990 [1944]), he described how emerging capitalism destroyed or threatened to destroy the existing feudalistic social relationships and the social and natural environments of people, and how violent this process of ‘disembedding’ was. On this point, he certainly showed parallels with the process of ‘primitive accumulation’ described by Marx (1887): the capitalist economy is not the result of any quasi-natural evolution or modernisation process, but rather one in which the organizational principles were established by force and implemented against manifold resistance. Starting in England in the 1830s, the Great Transformation was a process in which capitalism created new markets, and based itself on their unregulated character, including on the free markets of labour, soil and money, all

of which were treated as commodities. The latter are, according to Polanyi, 'fictitious commodities', i.e., their character as commodities has systemic limits; nonetheless, in liberal capitalism, or in the "self-regulating market system", they are treated as commodities. For several decades, price mechanisms and profit orientation operated unhampered; thus, during this unregulated phase, the creation of markets preceded unhampered by the state or any other force. Market processes had previously been comprehensively embedded in societal relationships; now, this relationship was reversed. This "utopian experiment", as Polanyi (1990: 60) called it, led to a "self-regulating market": "For once the economic system is organized in separate institutions, based on specific motives and conferring a special status, society must be shaped in such a manner as to allow that system to function according to its own laws." Polanyi emphasises that the separation of the political and economic spheres, and, at the same time, their continued reference to one another, is the essential characteristic for this breakthrough. "Economic history reveals that the emergence of national markets was in no way the result of the gradual and spontaneous emancipation of the economics sphere from governmental control. On the contrary, the market has been the result of a conscious and often violent intervention on the part of the government" (ibid.: 258).

This liberal capitalism of unleashed markets represented, however, a catastrophic series of events for most people, which robbed them of their own most basic foundations of life. From the 1860s, a number of 'counter-movements' and 'collectivist movements' in the form of workers' movements and factory and social laws, and of laws restricting commerce and imposing controls on money by the establishment of central banks, emerged in reaction to these destructive tendencies. Polanyi called these movements against the constantly expanding market, which were often expressed by means of the state and legislative measures, the "self-protection of society" (ibid.: 87). For this reason, he interprets the history of the 19th century as the result of a "dual movement": he saw, on the one hand, the expansion of market organisations in relation to true commodities, and on the other, restrictions on the fictitious commodities like labour, the soil and money. The dynamics in the process of the emergence of capitalism were to a great extent due to the "conflict between the market and the elementary requirements of an organized social life" (ibid.: 257).

We can learn from Polanyi that the analysis of transformation processes has something to do with a focus on societal forces, interests and relations of forces, and that the state and the political sphere do not per se solve societal, including global societal, problems, but rather, in accordance with their fundamental structure, implement and secure capitalist relations of production, until a societal counter-movement emerges. On the other hand, the economy is not above history, but is rather a historically specific relation of forces. Politics and economics constitute themselves mutually – I will return to that below.

2. Uses of the transition concept

The borders between the terms 'transition' and 'transformation' are blurred, and I am aware that I am attempting to fix a definition here. However, the assumptions and expressions are of enormous implications for addressing socio-ecological problems and crises. Let me clarify my argument by means of a few examples.

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) seeks, by means of the concept of *The Great Transformation* (NEF 2010), to contribute to the debate on the necessities and possibilities for a new type of economy. For this purpose, the NEF, with its Keynesian orientation, makes very complex and insightful proposals, such as a new evaluation of prosperity, an enhanced and progressive role for the state, or the expansion of local production. In addition to indications as to how each individual can act in a more ecologically sustainable manner in the private sphere, the study is clear in its insistence that governments must demonstrate insight into the problems, and steer a new course (ibid.: 97-99).

A second example is the concept of '*just transition*', which is increasingly being used by trade unions. For the unions, a central issue in the strategy of activating a just transition, along with education, the possibility of switching to new jobs, the participation of unions in change, and the distribution of the costs of reconstruction, is a "national framework or mechanism to ensure long-term planning and representative decision making on environmental transition" (TUC 2008: 5; similarly, CLC 2000) in order to achieve long-term and stable employment. The concept was introduced,

among others, by Argentinian, Canadian and British trade unionists, as well as environmental NGOs, as a development path toward a low-carbon economy, and was prominently mentioned at the official Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. In my view, that was no coincidence, since the political conceptions of international environmental policy, in which the ecological crisis is very much present, involve precisely an international redirection, or transition, via the creation of suitable politico-institutional frameworks and incentives (cf. on the term ‘sustainable development’, Brand 2010).

The OECD (2011) recently published its report *Towards Green Growth*. It considers appropriate basic conditions as decisive in order to move green growth and transition processes forward, and to correct the failures of the market. As it states: “Efficient resource use and management is a core goal of economic policy” (ibid.: 10). For this purpose, environmental and economic policies should reinforce each other. The strategy of green growth “takes into account the full value of natural capital as a factor of production and its role in growth. It focuses on cost-effective ways of attenuating environmental pressures to effect a transition towards new patterns of growth that will avoid crossing critical local, regional and global environmental thresholds. Innovation will play a key role” (ibid.). In addition to a suitable political framework and international cooperation and innovation, the OECD sees the substitution of destroyed, or depleted, natural capital by other capital as decisive to in achieving the de-linking of economic growth from the consumption of nature and the creation of new jobs. The distribution dimension should be taken into consideration. This is the familiar strategy of an innovation-driven ‘growth of the limits’, which would of course require the appropriate basic conditions.

Most of the above-mentioned contributions to the debate are based on a scenario which Raskin et al. (2010) call *policy reform*, which they see as one of four possible scenarios.⁴ It “assumes the emergence of a massive government-led effort to achieve sustainability without major changes in the state-centric international order, modern institutional structures, and consumerist values. Strong and harmonized policies are implemented that, by redirecting the world economy and promoting technological innovation, are able to achieve internationally recognized goals for poverty reduction, climate change stabilization, ecosystem preservation, freshwater protection,

and pollution control” (ibid.: 2629).⁵ These development patterns require “unprecedented political will for establishing the necessary regulatory, economic, social, technological, and legal mechanisms” (ibid.: 2630).

A key goal of a transition perspective is a changed political framework for societal actors, especially for companies, and processes, particularly as concerns innovations. The current best-known strategy for transition is that of the green economy, and, especially in Germany, the Green New Deal (see below). The latter, like the concept of ecological modernisation (overview in Huber 2011), goes back to the 1980s. The Green New Deal focuses on the changed basic conditions which would enable a green capitalism.

The transition perspective is an important component of the current academic and societal policy debate. However, it has systematic limits, in that it on the one hand reflects insufficiently on the structurally conditioned possibilities and limitations of the long-term capacity of society to take a new direction, and on the other on its metabolism with nature via political institutions and governance. A great capacity, particularly of the state, in cooperation with societal actors, to direct developments is assumed. Moreover, there is an assumption of rationality on the part of the state and/or societal actors regarding the operation of governance mechanisms which are to establish the necessary basic conditions, to the effect that these actors have sufficient knowledge as to what the problems are and how they are to be addressed. The reports currently being generated are designed to enhance governmental and intergovernmental knowledge.

The WBGU formulates the strong thesis that a kind of global societal consensus regarding the multiplicity of existing problems and also – as a result of political conflicts – of problem management could emerge by way of a global social contract. In a certain respect, this is a counterfactual claim, a statement which is to promote shifts in problem definition on the part of political and societal actors. In this way, political problem-solving would become possible once again. Here, the WBGU is particularly explicit, as it states apodictically: “It’s politics, stupid!” (WBGU 2011: 200).

This semantic jab at the neo-liberal mantra ‘it’s the economy, stupid!’ nonetheless remains stuck in the dichotomisation of politics/the state on the one hand and economics/the market on the other. The assumption of a common good embodied in the political sphere is not questioned, even and especially in the context of the ascertainment of powerful interests which

will, if necessary, stand in the way of necessary change. But this common good can only be secured by way of the 'Great Transformation'.

Locating the perspective of transition in the current social-scientific debate shows that it is primarily being utilised in the context of the concept of governance. In critical sustainability research, the problem of transition and Governance is accurately defined as the focus on a perspective of order or management, respectively. "Conventional approaches [to governance] may sustain a myth of a world manageable through neat state-civil society-international institutions and distinctions, through scientific expertise, and through uniform approaches to problem and risk assessment based on singular views of evidence. But the melee of real-life dynamics and interactions, and of everyday practice amongst citizens, bureaucrats, and people crossing public-private boundaries suggests a far more dynamic, complex and messy world in which knowledge and notions of the problem are contested. [...] While these myths may expediently sustain a sense of order and control, at least in the short term and at least for some, this is often a fragile, problematic and ultimately illusory order" (Leach et al. 2007: 24).

Corresponding to this overly simplified understanding of the state, or of governance structures, as the 'subject of steering' is a less than well-developed understanding of what needs to be changed. The horizon of socio-ecological transition/transformation is a matter of consensus in these numerous papers; indeed, the dangers associated with the overuse of resources and sinks, and with endangered ecosystems and natural reproduction cycles, are to be reduced by appropriate societal measures such as resource efficiency, recycling or reduced consumption, or else through an appropriate adaptation to expected negative impacts. One of the arguments used, in view of the enormous uncertainty regarding possible effects, for example with regard to climate change, is that of the precautionary principle.

The predominant mode of thought is a systemic one that opposes an endangered global and/or natural system to an endangered social system. However, society as such, its structures and driving forces, stabilising factors and crises, and its actors, with their conditions of existence and resources for action, or even various constellations of actors or relations of forces, are not explicitly conceptualised. Implicitly, assumptions of the functional differentiation of society tend to dominate. Any differing conception of

society and societal relationships with nature are masked by such terms as 'problems', 'megatrends', or 'humankind'.

To sum up, a critical analytical concept of transformation should take into account the capacity of social forms to steer societies in which the capitalist mode of production dominates. It would address the fact that dominant academic and social discourses do not consider the domination-shaped character of modern societies and would question their uncritical use of such terms as market, state, technology and innovation. Moreover, a critical analysis would focus on social conflicts, projects and societal relations of forces, exclusions and open violence; it would refer to the hegemonic elements of the existing mode of production and living.

3. Green economy as a transition strategy – green capitalism as a new form of regulation of societal nature relations

In the current multiple crises, there are many strategies (Brie 2009; Bullard 2011; Brand 2009; Candeias 2011) which are primarily driven by the need to deal with the financial and economic crisis, but also by the need to engage with the ecological crisis. In particular, the dominant forces in politics and the economy are primarily concerned with securing their own societal positions of power. Of course, not every strategy is part of a comprehensive societal project. Nonetheless, such projects can also emerge, and then become dominant or even hegemonic, if the economic, political and cultural forces which support them can formulate compromises and consensuses. Conceivable such comprehensive projects could include a neo-liberal business-as-usual approach, possibly connected with a politically and territorially authoritarian securing of conditions, as well as non-ecological Keynesian, eco-Keynesian, eco-authoritarian or even eco-fascist variations. And, naturally, there are also a large number of emancipatory strategies, which are articulated together with strategies for the development of a knowledge-based economy (Jessop 2013) as well as for financially driven accumulation (Sablowski 2009, 2012; McNally 2009), catch-up industrialisation in emerging countries, and resource extractivism in such industrialising countries as Brazil, or in substantially resource-income-based economies such as Russia, the oil states, Venezuela and Bolivia (Gudynas 2011).

With respect to an adequate diagnosis of future developments, which we cannot demonstrate here with the accuracy it deserves, there is one important distinction which, I believe, should be made at this point; on the one hand, there are such conceptualisations of a 'green economy' as a *transition strategy*, which have for some years now been developed by certain apparatuses of the internationalised state (UNEP, OECD, and recently the ILO), by European Green parties and by think tanks, in order to address, by various means, the economic, political and socio-ecological crises, or various ramifications of that crises. The primary purpose here is to develop suitable political framework conditions for the economy and society, so as to enable technological progress and product innovations (Brand 2012).

In a key document for the Rio + 20 Conference in June 2012, the UN Secretary-General (2010: 15f) summarised the political strategies toward a green economy in a manner that I think is exemplary:

- (a) "Getting prices right [...] in order to internalize externalities, support sustainable consumption and incentivize business choices [...];
- (b) Public procurement policies to promote greening of business and markets;
- (c) Ecological tax reforms [...];
- (d) Public investment in sustainable infrastructure and natural capital, to restore, maintain and, where possible, enhance the stock of natural capital [...];
- (e) Targeted public support for research and development on environmentally sound technologies [...];
- (f) Strategic investment through public sector development outlays [...];
- (g) Social policies to reconcile social goals with existing or proposed economic policies".

What should be distinguished from these political strategies are elements of a possibly emerging 'green capitalism' seen as complex *transformation processes*. Viewed in terms of Gramscian and regulation theory, 'green' elements are currently being developed as part of changing accumulation strategies, modes of living, consumption patterns etc. (the events have been identified by Kaufmann/Müller 2009; Wichterich 2011). The political strategies for a 'green economy' can be part of that, for example via the support for renewable energies or the establishment of emissions trading; however, transformation processes are more comprehensive. Whether and

how elements of green capitalism can be implemented, and what position strategies for a green economy will have in that process, cannot today be foretold. However, we can devote a certain level of attention to such obvious, albeit concealed, transformation potentials and real processes.

In my view, there is much to be said for the thesis that a strategy of a green economy or, in Germany, a Green New Deal (the proclaimed strategic objective of the European and especially German Greens, which is not a major topic in the current international debate) *will fail in terms of its own expectations*, namely those of getting a grip on the socio-ecological and economic crisis – what UNEP calls an economic paradigm which has become problematic (cf. UNEP 2011b; Brand 2012). Moreover, it is very questionable whether these strategies will be able to break open the neo-liberal mode of production and development, which Mario Candeias (2004) has seen as a combination of the increasingly highly technological organization of labour and of the division of labour, as a transnational financial capitalist accumulation regime, and as a competition and workfare-oriented mode of regulation under neo-liberal hegemony. Many papers on a 'green economy' have postulated the necessity for a new economic paradigm (UNEP 2011b), while others have remained more or less uncritical with regard to neo-liberal capitalism.

Nonetheless, strategies for a green economy could become powerfully effective, as here, elements are being formulated which could, in practice, contribute to the emergence of a green capitalism. This would inaugurate a new phase of the regulation of societal nature relations, which would not fundamentally stop the degradation. Like all societal relations under conditions of the capitalist mode of production, it would be selective, permitting many people to achieve more income and a higher material standard of living, while excluding other people and regions, or even destroying their material foundations of life.

The current dynamics involve a reinforced valorisation of nature, which will be intensified once again by the currently high and still increasing raw materials prices, geopolitical and geo-economic competition, and powerful financial market actors, e.g. by means of land purchase and infrastructural development.

A greening of the capitalist mode of development would necessarily be an exclusive development model for some regions. It would not abolish

competition and exclusion mechanisms, or dynamics of valorisation and land acquisition. The 'oligarchical mode of living' in the countries of the global North may be expandable, but it is not generalisable (see below).

Particularly in such countries as Germany or Austria, green capitalist development models might be implemented in the medium term, if a range of different societal forces were to group together around such a project and were able to dominate the 'hegemonic block'. These could include green sectors of capital, parts of the service unions, and environmental and consumer associations, which could also articulate themselves through political parties, and establish a presence in the state apparatus. In the United States and China, state crisis policies indicate that there too, interest in ecological modernisation is becoming more significant. In Great Britain, the discussion of a green economy is closely tied to the financial sector and questions of financial services, for instance in the area of emissions trading. These strategies and the constellations of forces supporting them could 'become state', in the sense that concentrated power relationships under the leadership of certain economic and political groupings would initially push forward such a project and underpin it with the force of the state (Gramsci 1971: 245).

Green economic strategies are limited, when measured by the standards of their own objectives. Nonetheless, they could become a tool for handling a crisis of growth and accumulation. That would result in the creation of compromises, with the agreement of wage-dependent sectors and of the trade unions, under the conditions of industrial capitalist modernisation and its globalisation.

However, there are many problems associated with this which need to be analysed more closely: whether or not a project becomes feasible for a certain mode of development does not depend only upon technological or economic factors and economic policy, but also on the societal relations of forces, and on desired and experienced everyday practice, including forms of division of labour along multiple lines. A green capitalist project could be implemented in an authoritarian version, but could also – for instance in such countries as Germany or Austria – become effective in the form of a green corporatism, which would thus tie in major sectors of the wage-dependent population and their interest groups. People would be instructed that they should continue to primarily pursue their

own economic interests, such as generating profits, incomes and economic growth, and that 'green innovations' would bring growth, prosperity and jobs. Thus, subalternity and domination would be reproduced. A green capitalist mode of development would have to be associated with a more appropriate understanding of well-being, and with promises and experiences of progress.

Mechanisms to ensure the possibility of externalising negative aspects – such as the shifting of dirty industries to other countries, or the export of wastes to Eastern Europe and Africa – will have to become effective in order to secure the oligarchisation of global modes of living. With reference to the energy base, a point that should be explored is to what extent the dominance of fossil fuels should be retained, the expansion of solar energy promoted, or a 'return to biomass' undertaken.

Even if the strategies for a green economy postulate a fundamental restructuring of the economy and especially of its energy base, they will fail, due to the prevailing non-sustainable modes of production and living. At best, there will be partial changes; the real developments will remain controversial and mutually contradictory. Nonetheless, we can assume that, in the capitalist centres, a bourgeois mode of living has emerged which is broadly practiced and accepted, and consciously desired, and that it will continue to spread globally through the upper and middle classes of other countries. Markus Wissen and I have proposed the term 'imperial way of living', which, briefly, means the following: production and consumption patterns which become hegemonic in certain regions or countries can, by means of capillary processes, and with considerable lags in time and space, become globally and unevenly generalised. This is connected with concrete corporate strategies, trade, investment and geo-policies, but also with purchasing power and conceptions of a desirable mode of living in those societies into which production and consumption patterns diffuse via the world market. The imperial way of living is becoming generalised by means of spatially specific class and gender relationships, as well as along ethnic or ethnicised lines; it thus has a different appearance in different historical periods. 'Generalisation' does not mean that all people live a similar way, but rather that certain conceptions of the 'good life' and of societal development exist which are deeply rooted. In addition to spatial differences in the phenomenology of the imperial way of life, particularly between the global

South and the global North, there are also as a result considerable social differences (for greater detail, Brand/Wissen 2012a, 2012b).

In spite of all exceptions pointing towards greater sustainability, the state and the international political system tend to reinforce these conditions. The term ‘imperial way of living’ identifies a determining factor for why very little is happening politically, along with such other factors as one-sidedness in politics and the media, obvious power strategies, including repression of criticism and proposed alternatives, and political co-optation. At the same time, the fact that people remain politically passive opens up space for authoritarian, mostly right-wing political tendencies. Moreover, the fact that current crisis strategies are insufficient is becoming increasingly apparent.

Nonetheless, if the shifts within the power block become significant, green-capitalist strategies could become an integral part of state policy.

4. Perspectives

Theoretical work and analyses of current developments will never be able to reflect the manifold nature of social reality. They can, however, by means of plausible arguments, create awareness, and point to significant facts which are ignored in other social-scientific approaches. The goal of this paper has been to undertake a substantive, theoretically directed proposal to understand current dynamics by introducing the conceptual distinction between transition and transformation.

The analysis of current developments, i.e. strategies for moving towards a ‘green economy’ and the possible contours of a ‘green capitalism’, are analytically rife with questions and uncertainties in terms of real history. In this section, I would merely like to show that even strategies which fail in terms of their own formulated expectations – here, the fundamental restructuring of the energy and resource base – can nonetheless become historically effective.

According to this tendency, state policy will continue to be a policy for securing existing societal relations, or changing them in line with domination-shaped changes. The promise of the many political strategies, as reflected by the concept of transition developed herein, towards a green

economy is also a promise, in view of the multiple crises, to address the crisis of crisis management.

After all, consideration of analytical and normative perspectives of transformation – including processes of transition – involves consideration not solely of the democratic structuring of societal nature relations. This is an important research perspective and raises questions such as the following: what are the already existing democratic forms of resource control, which struggles have been and will be necessary in order to realise them, and how do they stabilise themselves institutionally? Which demands can be made, in a comprehensive sense, for the democratic structuring of society’s interaction with nature? To what extent do the concrete strategies of a green economy, or for a Green New Deal, have a supportive effect here, or are they, on the contrary, harmful?

What would ultimately be interesting would be a detailed examination of the socio-ecological content of the various protests, revolts and processes of change which are occurring worldwide, with the goal of determining the extent to which the ecological crisis and socio-ecological transformation perspectives are a factor in them. In some countries of Latin America, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, that is obvious. In Argentina, Brazil and probably also in North Africa, things look very different; there, a classical development consensus is dominant. This development consensus will have to be taken into account when considering the concrete forms of an emerging green capitalist mode of production and living.

Translation by Phil Hill (Berlin)

- 1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of JEP and Markus Wissen for their useful comments and Hanna Lichtenberger for editorial support.
- 2 Michael Brie (2004: 5-6) rightly criticises the fact that transformation research usually works with dichotomies, like ‘dictatorship and democracy’, or ‘plan and market’, which obscures concrete intermediate practices of political steering and economic (re-)production.
- 3 Alex Demirović pointed out this connection to me.
- 4 By contrast to predictions, scenarios are “intended as renderings of plausible possibilities, designed to stretch the imagination, stimulate debate, and, by warning of pitfalls ahead, prompt collective action” (Raskin et al. 2010: 2627). Their plausibility and internal consistency are marked by uncertainty.

- 5 The other three scenarios are Market Forces, which would involve a continuation of market-driven globalization; Fortress World, characterized by increasingly authoritarian measures against various global crises; and Great Transition, which would mean a 'fundamental transition' (here too, the two terms are used interchangeably).

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Abstracts

This article reviews some central elements of the current debate about the multiple crises and related politics of crisis management in which the terms ‘transition’ and ‘transformation’ gain importance (used as analytical

tools to understand actual dynamics; not so much in a normative sense, which is also part of the debate). A distinction between the two concepts is introduced to argue that transition focuses mainly on political steering whereas transformation points at more complex societal and economic processes. Analytical and political perspectives and proposals of transition are important but tend to underestimate societal power relations and hegemonic patterns of production and living. The current debate about a ‘green economy’ is located in the epistemic terrain of transition, i.e. political steering, whereas the term of transformation might indicate a more complex process towards a ‘green capitalism’.

Der Beitrag untersucht einige zentrale Elemente der aktuellen Debatte über die multiple Krise und Krisenpolitiken, in der die Begriffe „Transition“ und „Transformation“ an Bedeutung gewinnen (verwendet als analytische Instrumente, um aktuelle Dynamiken zu verstehen; weniger im normativen Sinn, der ebenso Teil der Debatte ist). Eine Unterscheidung zwischen den beiden Begriffen wird dahingehend eingeführt, dass Transition vor allem politische Steuerung fokussiert, während Transformation komplexere gesellschaftliche und ökonomische Prozesse in den Blick nimmt. Analytische und politische Perspektiven der Transition sind wichtig, aber sie tendieren dazu, gesellschaftliche Machtverhältnisse und hegemoniale Produktions- und Konsumweisen zu unterschätzen. Die aktuelle Debatte um eine „grüne Ökonomie“ ist im epistemischen Feld der Transition verortet, das heißt in der politischen Steuerung, während der Begriff der Transformation auf einen komplexeren Prozess hin zu einem „grünen Kapitalismus“ verweist.

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Ulrich Brand, Bettina Lösch, Benjamin Opratko, Stefan Thimmel (Hg.): ABC der Alternativen 2.0. Von Alltagskultur bis Zivilgesellschaft. Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2012, 347 Seiten, 15,00 Euro.

Ein *ABC der Alternativen* aus der Perspektive von oppositionellen politischen und sozialen Bewegungen hat sich aufge-drängt, seit sich im Zuge der weltweiten Bankenkrise – also seit 2007/08 – viele PolitikerInnen zum TINA-Prinzip der Baronin Thatcher bekennen. TINA steht für „There Is No Alternative“, und Angela Merkel etwa verkürzte den Slogan zur These, ihr rigides Spardiktat für europäische Staats-haushalte sei „alternativlos“. Die These ist ökonomisch kurzsichtig und politisch zynisch, denn sie verordnet denen, denen es wirtschaftlich schlecht geht, eine Abmagerungskur mit ungewissem Ausgang, während sie todsichere „Rettung“ mit Steuermitteln für Investoren, Spekulanten und Zockerbuden bringt.

Das „*ABC der Alternativen*“ enthält 161 Artikel in alphabetischer Reihenfolge von „Alltagskultur“ bis „Zivilgesellschaft“. Die

170 AutorInnen aus 14 Ländern und vier Kontinenten bündeln den alternativen, das heißt staats- und globalisierungskritischen Sachverstand übersichtlich. Den vier HerausgeberInnen – Ulrich Brand, Bettina Lösch, Benjamin Opratko und Stefan Thimmel – ist das Kunststück gelungen, alle 170 AutorInnen dazu zu bringen, ihren Artikel auf den Umfang von zwei Druckseiten zu komprimieren. Respekt.

Jeder Artikel ist mit zwei bis vier einschlägigen Titeln zur weiterführenden Literatur versehen. Auch dies macht das *ABC* zu einem informativen Handbuch, das über das TINA-Prinzip und die schlichte Entweder-Oder-Logik hinausweist auf das, was politisch denkbar, möglich und wünschenswert wäre, wenn sich entsprechend politische Kräfte mobilisieren ließen. Viele AutorInnen sind nicht nur theoretisch ausgewiesen, sondern engagieren sich auch in globalisierungskritischen, feministischen, sozial-ökologischen oder entwicklungspolitischen Gruppen und Netzwerken. Das bedeutet freilich nicht, dass das *ABC der Alternativen* kommode Haus- und Patentrezepte feilbietet. Bereits der erste Artikel über „Alltagskultur“ stellt

klar: „Es gibt keine Blaupause, es kann nur selbst-tätig und selbstständig, kollektiv und individuell herausgefunden werden“, was da oder dort, für diese oder jene Bevölkerungsgruppe politisch notwendig oder wünschenswert ist.

Das Buch bekennt sich zu einem weltoffenen, kritischen und für Differenzen aller Art sensiblen Pluralismus, ohne in die Falle postmoderner Beliebigkeit zu fallen. Insofern ist das *ABC der Alternativen* kein dogmatisches Schul- oder Lehrbuch, sondern ein Anstoß zum Nach- und Überdenken.

Inhaltlich lassen sich die Artikel gruppieren in solche, die traditionelle Kernbestände der sozialen Bewegungen abdecken („Kritik der politischen Ökonomie“, „Sozialismus“, „Menschenrechte“, „Pluralismus“, „Kapitalismuskritik“, „Rebellion“, „Klassenkämpfe“, „ziviler Ungehorsam“), und solche, die neue Probleme behandeln („Geschlechterdemokratie“, „Nachhaltigkeit“, „Mindestlöhne“, „Naturverhältnisse“, „Sozial-ökologische Transformation“, „Finanzmarktregulierung“).

Zu den Stärken des Handbuchs gehört, dass es herkömm-

liche Fragen mit aktuellen Problemlagen in verschiedenen Artikeln kombiniert darstellt. So werden Aspekte linker Bündnispolitik in den Artikeln „Freie Assoziation“, „Gewerkschaftliche Autonomie“, „Mosaiklinke“, „Gegenhegemonie“, „Care Revolution“, „Crossover“ behandelt. Sie bilden zusammen ein Mosaik, das den „Kern eines linken Gesellschaftskonzepts“ als „sozialen Lernprozess“ (Sonja Buckel/ Andrea Ypsilanti) begreifen lässt. Übergreifend gilt für diesen vielfältigen Prozess Marx' Einsicht, dass „die freie Entfaltung eines jeden die Bedingung für die Befreiung aller“ ist.

Viele Artikel belegen eindrücklich, was es heißt, eine andere Perspektive einzunehmen, einen alternativen Blick zu werfen. John Holloway sieht Rebellionen nicht als Ausnahmezustände der Geschichte, sondern als „Normalität“: „Eine repressive Gesellschaft bringt notwendigerweise eine rebellische Gesellschaft hervor. [...] Rebellion ist überall um uns herum.“ Diese zunächst überraschende Feststellung wird plausibler, wenn man bedenkt, worauf sie sich bezieht – auf die Theorie und Praxis der ZapatistInnen nämlich, die ihren

Alltag und sich selbst als Rebellion bzw. als Rebellen begreifen, weil sie nie aus den Augen verlieren, unter welchen Bedingungen sie leben und arbeiten müssen. Diese Bedingungen sind bis in die feinen sozialen Strukturen hinein von Repression geprägt. Und so wie Repression nie total sein kann, kann auch Rebellion nicht alles umfassen. Indem sich Menschen das bewusst machen, tun sie den ersten Schritt zur Rebellion, denn die beginnt immer damit, dass es auch anders sein oder werden könnte: Die „Welt umzukehren und das Normale als abnormal, das Abnormale als normal“ zu begreifen, ist der Anfang jeder Rebellion als ein permanenter Prozess.

Bei einem solchen Projekt fällt die Qualität der einzelnen Beiträge naturgemäß unterschiedlich aus. Im Großen und Ganzen sind die Artikel jedoch klar strukturiert und bewegen sich auf hohem Niveau. Ausreißer nach unten bilden einige Artikel, die von Anleihen an modische Trends in den postmodern-zeitgeistig aufgeblasenen Sozialwissenschaften leben. Derlei verweist nicht auf Alternativen, sondern versammelt nur erfahrungsresistente Spekulationen und Glau-

benssätze. Dem Nutzen des Lexikons insgesamt tut dies allerdings keinen Abbruch.

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Gefördert aus öffentlichen Mitteln der

Österreichische

Entwicklungszusammenarbeit



Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)

ISSN 0258-2384, Erscheinungsweise: vierteljährlich

Heft XXVIII, 3-2012, ISBN 978-3-85476-401-4

Preis des Einzelhefts: Euro 11,90

Preis des Jahresabonnements: Euro 42,00

Abonnementbezug über die Redaktion:

Journal für Entwicklungspolitik, Sensengasse 3, A-1090 Wien,

office@mattersburgerkreis.at, www.mattersburgerkreis.at/jep

Das Abonnement kann unter Einhaltung einer dreimonatigen Kündigungsfrist zum Jahresende gekündigt werden.

1. Auflage 2012

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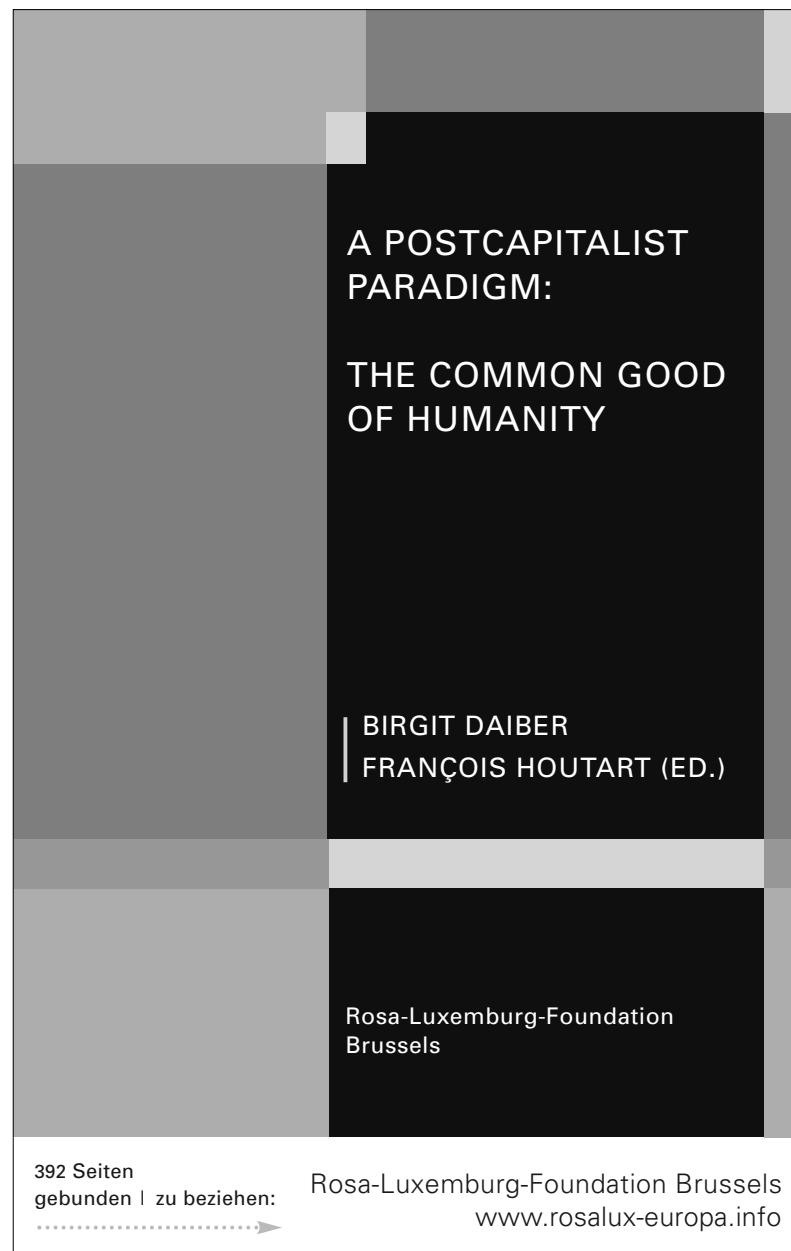
Satz: Weiderand Kommunikationsdesign, www.weiderand.net, Wien

Druck: Interpress, Budapest

Offenlegung nach § 25 Mediengesetz

Medieninhaber: Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den österreichischen Hochschulen, Sensengasse 3, A-1090 Wien

Grundlegende Richtung des JEP: Wissenschaftliche Analysen und Diskussionen von entwicklungspolitischen Fragestellungen und Berichte über die entwicklungspolitische Praxis. Verantwortlich für Inhalt und Korrekturen sind die AutorInnen bzw. die Redaktion.



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ISBN 978-3-85476-401-4
ISSN 0258-2384