Latin American Development: Perspectives and Debates

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The Latin American scene

One of the recurring topics in Latin American debates refers to the dynamics of accumulation and the current models of development. Critical categories such as Extractivism or Neo-extractivism, as well as pro-positive ones like *Buen Vivir*, Common Goods, Rights of Nature, Post-extractivism, among others, traverse social struggles and debates, and are generating a new political grammar that questions the sustainability of the current development models and poses different relationships among society, economy and nature.

These discussions originated mainly in Ecuador and Bolivia, two countries where the anti-neoliberal social movements of the late 20th century and the early 21st were accompanied not only by the emergence of new governments (progressive or popular), but also by constituent processes explicitly aimed at re-thinking or re-establishing the social pact. It was in this period of radical openness when categories such as those of the Plurinational State, Nature Rights and *Buen Vivir* ceased to be concepts exclusively associated to theoretical schools of thought and entered the field of political dispute.

Over the years, however, and in a context of consolidation of the progressive governments, the debates became increasingly complex. On the one hand, given the comparative advantages derived from the commodities boom, the Latin American progressive governments gradually reinforced a view of development linked to the growth of exports, based on primary products. On the other hand, in the heat of the territorial and environmental conflicts, and of the proliferation of projects to exploit natural resources for exportation, there was a growing criticism/objections of Extractivism or Neo-extractivism.

Finally, over the decade, quite a few of the Latin American governments considered to be "progressive" or "popular" have developed strong populist traits. These governments have been reinforcing a dynamic grounded on strong personal leadership, on the subordination of social and political organizations to that leadership, on the strengthening of the state's capacities (as compared to the neoliberal times) associated to fiscal enhancement, to the policy of social expenditure (social policies or bonds addressed to the most vulnerable sectors) and to the consumption subsidy. An additional factor is that in Latin America, more than elsewhere, the Left, whether in its anti-capitalist or its national-popular matrix, has maintained a strong developmental standpoint, tending to emphasize a reading of history that exalts the expansion of the productive forces within the framework of an industrialist or laborer-centered model.

In this paper, we propose an approach to the debates about development and the intensification of the extractive model, in terms of political economy, at four different instances.

-First, we present two general concepts that are a framework for our proposal:
Commodities Consensus and Extractivism

[1] This is a draft. We request not to circulate.

-Secondly, we describe a recursive, dynamic approach to the different *phases* of the Commodities Consensus

-In the third place, we explore the different *conflicting narratives and perspectives on development* in the current phase of accumulation

-Finally, we discuss the progressive shift towards *new forms of dependency*, especially in relation with China.

1-Framework concepts

Latin America has recently undergone a passage from the Washington consensus, based on financial valorization, to the commodities consensus, based on the large-scale exportation of raw materials, such as hydrocarbons (gas and petroleum), metals and minerals (copper, gold, silver, tin, bauxite, zinc, etc.), agricultural products (corn, soy, and wheat) and biofuels.

The commodities consensus is a complex, fast-paced, recursive process, which must be read from multiple perspectives. From the economic point of view, it has involved a process of “reprimarization” of Latin American economies, emphasizing their reorientation toward mainly extractive or rent-based activities, with little added value. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2011 agricultural, mineral and commodity raw materials represented 76% of Unasur (Union of South American Nations) exports, compared to only 34% for the world as a whole. The manufacture of advanced technology, in comparison, represented 7% and 25% respectively (UNCTAD 2014). The situation is compounded by the entry of China, a country that is quickly imposing itself as an unequal partner in respect to commercial exchange with different countries of the region (Rodriguez 2014).

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

A key feature of neo-extractivism is the immense scale of the projects, which tells us about the size of the investment: they are capital-intensive, not labor-intensive, activities. For example, in the case of large-scale mining, for every one million dollars invested, between 0.5 and 2 jobs are directly created (Colectivo Voces de Alerta 2011).In Peru, mining employs a mere 2% of the economically active population, compared to 23% in agriculture, 15% in retail and almost 10% in manufacturing (Permanent Working Group on Alternatives to Development 2013a).

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

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

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

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

Whether in the crude language of dispossession (liberal neo-developmentalism) or in pointing to the state's control of the surplus (progressive neo-developmentalism), the current development model is based on an extractivist paradigm. It draws from the idea of "economic opportunities" or "comparative advantage" provided by the commodities consensus and deploys social imaginaries (the vision of El Dorado) that overstep the political-ideological borders constructed in the 1990s. These positions reflect the tendency to consolidate a model of appropriation and exploitation of the commons, which advances on populations through a top-down logic, threatening the improvements in the field of participatory democracy and inaugurating a new cycle of criminalization and violation of human rights.

On the other hand, neo-extractivism presents a specific territorial dynamic that tends towards the intensive occupation of the territory through ways related to monoculture or mono-production, which lead to the displacement of other forms of production (local/regional economies). The advance over the territory, in most cases, combines the dynamics of the enclave or territorial fragmentation (low production of relevant endogenous chaining that could benefit a model of territorial and regional integration), with the dynamics of displacement (dislocation of traditional local economies and expulsion of populations). This tends to cast big companies, which have a global outreach, in the role of absolute social actors within the local societies. At the same time, these processes have an impact on the condition of citizenship and the violation of human rights.

Thus defined, neo-extractivism encompasses more than the activities traditionally considered as extractive. In addition to open pit mega-mining, to the expansion of the petroleum and energy frontier (through the exploitation of non-conventional gas and oil using the questionable methodology of hydraulic fracturing or *fracking*), and to the construction of large hydroelectric dams (usually at the service of the extractive production), it also includes the expansion of the fishing and forest frontier, as well as the generalization of the agribusiness model (transgenic crops such as soy and biofuels).

2-Phases of the Commodities Consensus and conflicts around development

The expansion of neo-extractivism and the high level of conflict associated with it, during the Commodities Consensus, present various phases or moments. Thus, it is necessary to approach the Commodities Consensus as a process, in view of the consolidation of the progressive governments (second turn in office) and the emergence of a developmental hegemony with an extractive basis.

We must remember that, in political and ideological terms, towards the year 2000 Latin America underwent a time of change, upheld by an intense social mobilization that led to denaturing and questioning the Washington Consensus. The subsequent emergence of different popular or progressive governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina, among other countries, pointed to the gradual recovery of the institutional capacities of the national state, so it could become a major economic actor and, in some cases, an agent of redistribution. This process of transformation of the state, which was accompanied by an important integrationist (inward) and Latin Americanist (for the region) narrative, gave rise to high expectations regarding the extension of rights and forms of popular participation (constituent assemblies and new constitutions in Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador). Over the years, however, this widening of the bounds of rights (environmental, collective rights) found severe limitations in the expansion of capital’s frontiers. Far from the "creative tension" proposed by Vice-President Garcia Linera for the Bolivian case, it seems that Latin America has entered a period of intense socio-territorial conflicts and colliding narratives of emancipation.

Since 2003, due to the boom in international prices of raw materials, the different governments were faced with a very favorable economic situation: a new cycle based on the massive exportation of commodities, which coupled high profits and comparative economic advantages. In this new scene, regardless of the nationalist rhetoric in vogue, the state came to occupy a space of variable geometry, where one of the key factors would be its association with multinational private capitals whose weight on the national economies, far from diminishing, became heavier as the extractive activities expanded and multiplied. A new developmentalism, more pragmatic and extractivism-prone, not necessarily linked to the forms of statism that prevailed from the 50s through the 70s, appeared as a central feature of the dominant practice, configuring what some authors have called *developmental hegemony* (Feliz, 2012).

This first phase of the Commodities Consensus, a period of economic growth, of reformulation of the role of the state, but also of non-recognition of the conflicts associated with the extractive dynamics, lasted until about 2008-2010. During this period, the different progressive governments, with consolidated administrations (many having renewed their presidential terms), began to admit and affirm an explicitly extractive matrix, due to the increased hostility of certain territorial and environmental conflicts. The increase of conflicts linked to extractive activities (mega-mining, mega-dams, petroleum, and to a lesser extent, agribusiness) revealed both the dimensions and alliances of the hegemonic developmentalism, and the limits imposed to the processes of citizen participation. It also opened the door to scenarios of conflict criminalization.

The second stage is a period of officialization of the Commodities Consensus and of open conflict in the territories. The progressive governments doubled their bet by greatly increasing extractive projects while, paradoxically, using an industrialist discourse. In the case of Brazil, the *Growth Acceleration Plan* is a project to build a great number of dams in the Amazonia. In Bolivia, there is the promise of a *Big Industrial Leap,* a formula launched by the Bolivian Vice-President in 2010, fostering the multiplication of extractive projects (gas, lithium, iron, agribusiness, among others). In the case of Ecuador, the situation involves not only the advance of mega-mining but also the end of the moratorium of Yasuni project (2013). Venezuela, in turn, formulated in 2012 the *Strategic Plan for the Production of Petroleum,* which implies pushing forward the boundary for exploitation in the Orinoco belt, where there are reservoirs of extra-heavy (non-conventional) crude oil. Argentina launched the 2010-2020 *Agrifood Strategic Plan*, that projects a 60% increase in grain production, and is also moving forward in the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons through fracking.

In this phase, there were numerous socio-environmental and territorial conflicts that come out of their local enclosures and gained nationwide visibility: the conflict around the project of building a road crossing the Tipnis area (Bolivia); the construction of a mega-dam in Belo Monte (Brazil); the revolt in Famatina and the resistance movements against mega-mining (Argentina), the end of moratorium of the Yasuni Proposal (Ecuador) and the unrest caused by the Aratirí mega-mining project in Uruguay.

In addition to these emblematic conflicts, there were similar ones in countries with neoliberal or conservative governments: the conflict around the Conga mine, under the administration of Ollanta Humala in Peru, where 25 people were killed by repressive forces; the opposition to the La Colosa mining megaproject in Colombia; the suspension of the bi-national mining project of Pascua-Lama as a result of legal actions brought before the Chilean justice, among others.

The response to these conflicts frequently given by different progressive governments has been to stigmatize environmental protests and attribute them a conspiratorial nature. In fact, wherever there is an environmental and territorial conflict, publicized and politicized, which exposes the blind spots of progressive governments regarding the dynamics of dispossession, the reaction is usually the same. It has happened in Ecuador since 2009, especially in reference with mega-mining; in Brazil, with the conflict of Belo Monte, and in Bolivia concerning the TIPNIS. In all three cases, the governments chose to emphasize the nationalistic discourse and overlook the issue, denying the legitimacy of the claim and attributing it either to “infantile environmentalism" (Ecuador), to the interested actions of foreign NGOs (Brazil and Bolivia), or even to "colonial environmentalism" (Bolivia).

Much of the same has been happening in Argentina, though without major debates: the term “neoextractivism” itself is far from the government’s rhetorical horizon. This is illustrated by the revolt against mega-mining in Famatina. The subsequent realignment between the national political power and the economic power (mining corporations) ended up by clearing, this time explicitly and in the voice of President Cristina F. Kirchner, mega-mining as a legitimate and integral part of the official project.

In turn, the ECLAC.is now upholding the extractivist pact through the UNASUR. The report on natural resources in Latin America presented in Caracas in June 2013 constituted a sort of cleaning-up or officialization of the Commodities Consensus. Thus, the regional agenda is being updated so as to consider the issue of strategic natural resources from a developmental viewpoint. As Antonelli pointed out, "This process has two key points accepted by the members in 2013, namely, the water governance, that is, the management of water resources for extractive models, and the regional government’s control of mining conflicts. The "infinite wealth" is directly related to the "new technologies" (fracking) for non-conventional extractions (mining, gas, petroleum), and agreements are made with regional universities and scientific-technological systems to "inventory" the wealth that is still unknown to us (Antonelli, 2014)

At present, unlike in the first phase, the Commodities Consensus is no longer a tacit agreement that shamefully links neoliberal and conservative governments with progressive ones. The matching between discourses and practices, as well as the strong stigmatization of environmental criticism that occurs even in those countries with the highest expectations of political change –like Bolivia and Ecuador-, illustrate the evolution of progressive governments towards more traditional models of domination, linked to the classical national-popular or national-developmentalist model, and makes it necessary to recognize the disturbing entry into a phase characterized by the retraction of the threshold of democracy.

3-Narratives of development and colliding views

Among the principal narratives about development underlying the Commodities Consensus we find the neoliberal or orthodox; the neo-structuralist, and the socio-environmental ones. We must remember that the notion of development was one of the cornerstones of Latin American thinking. For the ECLAC, the issue of development was connected to the economic structure and the international division of labor. Therefore, Latin America had to reject the formulations of classical economy that subjected the subcontinent to economic specialization by country (the "comparative advantages" of primary export-production), and aim to build up its “own” way towards industrialization. “Developmentalism" was the result of this innovative proposal, which generated intense theoretical debates about the limits and the possibilities of industrialization in the capitalist periphery.

In recent decades, however, the crisis of the idea of modernization and, therefore, the criticism of development as a powerful homogenizer narrative, gave new space to other political and philosophical perspectives. The objections to the productivist view (that identifies development with economic growth) called for new elaborations, which began to consolidate in the 90s. One of them is the category of "sustainable development", introduced in the international agenda following the publication of the document "Our Common Future" in 1987, and the Summit in Rio, in 1992.

Despite its obvious complexity, the notion of sustainable development has two very distinct senses: on one hand, there is a strong version of it by which growth is seen as a means and not as an end, thus emphasizing the commitment with present and future generations as well as the respect for the integrity of the natural systems that support life on the planet (political ecology, ecological economics, deep ecology, among others); on the other hand, there is a weak version that doesn’t challenge the classical idea of development and regards sustainability based on the advancement and efficient use of technology. While the strong version is held by different social organizations and environmental sectors, the weak version is often expressed in the discourse of corporations and high-level officials of various governments.

Accordingly, by the 90s the view of development as a "grand narrative", that is to say, both as an organizing framework and a promise of emancipation, disappeared for a while from the political and academic agenda, both in Latin America and elsewhere. But this eclipse of the development category was transitory, because today we are witnessing its forceful comeback to the agenda, although, of course, with a different sense than it had before. In this new phase of asymmetric globalization, the idea of development appears linked to the extractivist paradigm, which was strongly questioned by developmentalists in former times, and has also incorporated some misleading notions, of widespread repercussion, such as those of sustainable development (in its weak version), corporate social responsibility (CSR) and governance.

The orthodox or neoliberal view

The basic guidelines of the neoliberal standpoint turned out to be updated by the Commodities Consensus. In this framework, the central concepts of the neoliberal narrative are:

-The vision of a state that is subordinated to the market and, mainly, to the present supranational instances of regulation (that is to say, a "meta-regulating state"). Natural common goods are seen as commodities: as primary products or products of low added value, the price of which is determined by market forces.

-The notion of *corporate social responsibility*. This key idea of the neoliberal narrative, promoted by large corporations and national states, is based on two principles: first, that corporations are the quintessential actor of globalized economies; second, that they must confront conflicts with local populations relating to the (social, economic, environmental) impact and risks generated by their economic activities. CSR comes together with the concept of governance, as a micro-political conflict resolution device of a multi-actor nature. Moreover, there are other actors involved –specialists, journalists, symbolic mediators, among others- that contribute to thicken the plot in the process of "socio-discursive production", with the purpose of gaining the communities’ acceptance and "social license".

Finally, this vision favors a weak view of the idea of sustainable development, much criticized by various social organizations (Saguier: 2014). Such "weak" view implies an obliteration of the very idea of sustainability, by promoting an efficiency-oriented outlook that confirms the notion of nature as capital (now linked to over-exploitation and to the expansion of the boundaries of exploitation), while leaning on a "clean" solution to each "problem" supposedly provided by new technologies (Martinez Allier, 2004). Recently, the paradigm of the Green Economy, presented in the Summit of Rio+20, has been embraced.

The neo-structuralist vision

The neo-structuralist perspective is based on the recognition that accumulation is sustained in the growth of the exportation of commodities o primary products. In 2010, Bresser Pereira, from Brazil, wrote about neo-developmentalism, noting that "in the era of globalization, growth led by exports is the only sensible strategy available to developing countries" (Feliz, 2011: 158).

As we have pointed out, this position is held by the ECLAC and was officially presented within the UNASUR (June, 2013). Neo-structuralism thus appears as the conceptual basis of progressive governments with respect to their conception of development. This emphasizes the privileged conditions that Latin America offers in the present phase in terms of "natural capital" or strategic natural resources demanded by the international market, especially Asia.

Overall, neo-structuralism holds a conception of natural goods that creates an area of ambiguity between the notions of commodities and of strategic natural resources. While the development policy is oriented to the growth of exports and the partnership with big transnational corporations, it also aims to a greater control of the extractive revenue by the states, especially as concerns hydrocarbons and energy.

In spite of the increasingly “reprimarizing” scene, it has been proposed, as a policy, to industrialize the natural resources, which some believe could be carried out through the strategic relationship with China (Brukman, 2013). Some authors consider that since the early twenty-first century it is no longer possible to talk about the Deterioration of Trade Terms (as Prebisch did some decades ago, when he criticized the productive structure of Latin American countries and pointed at the asymmetrical commercial exchange relations with developed countries).

Also, like neo-liberalism, the neo-structuralist vision is based on the principle of "weak sustainability" and the notion of *corporate social responsibility*. There is little or no interest in establishing a diagnosis in terms of environmental crisis, even if mention is made of the need of having models of governance that allow "improving the public management of socio-environmental conflicts that arise in the development of the sectors where natural resources are exploited, in the context of public policies "(ECLAC, 2013).

To sum up, the progressive neo-developmentalism and the liberal neo-developmentalism have some topics and frameworks in common as regards the conception of development, even if they also show clear differences in relation to the role of the state and the areas of democratization.

The critical perspective on extraction

There are numerous critical views throughout Latin America nowadays regarding the current development models. For example, there is a comprehensive environmental perspective, with emphasis on the *buen vivir*; an indigenist perspective oriented to the community; an eco-feminist perspective that emphasizes the ethics of care and the criticism of patriarchy; an eco-territorial perspective linked to social movements that have been developing a political grammar focused on the notions of Environmental justice, Common Goods, Territoriality, Food Sovereignty and *Buen Vivir.*

In line with the objections voiced by the indigenist groups, this field of critical thinking upholds a "strong" concept of sustainability. It also shares the notion of "post-development" (introduced by Arturo Escobar), which promotes other assessments of Nature coming from different registers and worldviews (native peoples, environmental perspective, eco-community, eco-feminism, among others).

4-Towards a new phase: From the Commodities Consensus to the Beijing Consensus?

At present, Latin America seems to be heading towards a new phase in which not only extraction and commodities exports, but also the relationship with China, have acquired an irrevocable status and are referred to as “comparative advantages”.

Certainly, with its 1.3 billion people, China has been increasing its share in the global consumption of many basic products, including numerous metals, soy, petroleum and timber. Also, China has become the great factory of the world, and its commercial integration no longer depends on exports of low technology goods, but rather on products of a high technological level. In step with the growth of consumption, its increasingly technified industry is demanding more energy resources and basic inputs. For this reason, China has become the world's leading demander for the vast majority of commodities, with the effect of pushing prices upwards.

Far from its self-definition as a "developing country", China is today a major economic power, with a fast-paced rise and a diversified global presence. In the emerging multipolar world, therefore, China is one of the strongest candidates to become a hegemon in the modern world-system. According to the National Intelligence Council of the United States, by 2030 Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of overall power, based on GDP, population, military expenses and technological investment. China will have the largest economy, exceeding the United States a few years before 2030, which will imply a shift in hegemony.

In this context, in recent years trade between Latin America and China has noticeably intensified. It’s so much so that China is in the first place as a recipient of exports from countries such as Brazil, Chile and Peru; in the second place for Uruguay, Venezuela and Colombia and in the third for Argentina. It is also the main importer for Brazil and Paraguay and the second for Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Panama and Venezuela.

Some examples will help us illustrate the presence of capitals of Chinese origin in Latin America. In the hydrocarbons sector, for instance, the four big Chinese companies (Sinopec, National China Petroleum Corporation –CNPC-, the China National Offshore Oil Company –CNOOC- and Sinochem) are present in the region. In Venezuela, the CNPC operates jointly with PDVSA. We must also mention the joint participation in exploitations of Sinopec with Repsol Brazil, and of Sinochem with Statoil Brazil (both of European origin), as well as the acquisition of 50% of the Bridas group (Argentina) by CNOOC. Bridas owns 40% of the shares of Pan American Energy (PAE) and operates the largest oilfield in Argentina, Cerro Dragon, in the province of Chubut. Chinese capitals are also present in Vaca Muerta, for the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons (fracking).

As regards mining and metals, we must note that mineral prices were the most affected by China’s demand. The main destination for mining investment has been Peru and, recently, Ecuador. China is also present in the sector of agriculture, fishing and forestry resources, especially in Peru. In recent months, Chinese capitals bought one of the largest multinational companies in grain production, Nidera, which has its headquarters in Argentina. In this country, a space station is being built in the province of Neuquén, ostensibly for "civilian purposes", but the agreement was approved by the legislators of that province without making public all the clauses they signed, which casts a cloud of suspicion about the its potential military use.

Summarizing, investments from China in Latin America and the Caribbean are destined mainly to extractive activities. In some cases, they are directed to the tertiary sector to support the former. In general, these are payments for the acquisition or license of exploitation of natural resources. When infrastructure works are required, they are commissioned to Chinese companies and the managerial staff is of that nationality. The arrival of huge Chinese Transnational Corporations also poses a threat to the clusters of small and medium-sized enterprises, either due to environmental contamination or to the possibility of directly exporting to China products that were previously transformed by local SMEs.

In conclusion, the kind of investment that Latin America receives from China does not tend to develop local capacity, nor intensive activities in terms of knowledge or productive chains. The location of the Chinese TNCs tends to enhance the extractive activities at the expense of those with a higher added value, which generates a re-primarizing effect in Latin American economies.

Despite the wishful expressions we can find in the ECLAC documents, or in some left-wing analysts (Brukman, Boron), we are far from attaining a relation of South-South cooperation. Rather, we are witnessing the emergence of new, fast-paced asymmetrical relations between Latin America and China.

By way of conclusion

Both in political-ideological and in social terms, the Commodities Consensus (2003-2014) has to be read as a process, and within the reference frame of a recursive dynamic. Thus, extractivism is inserted in Latin America in the context of a change of time that indicates the passage to a political-economic scenario where the main features are: firstly, the consolidation of the Commodities Consensus, based on the large-scale exportation of primary goods; secondly, the updating of the national popular matrix, expressed by the different progressive governments, and finally, the emergence of a new dependency in relation to China.

It is clear that the expansion of the boundary of rights (collective, territorial, environmental), met a limit in the growing expansion of the frontiers of capital exploitation in search for goods, lands and territories, and knocked down those narratives of emancipation that had raised high expectations, particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador. This collision between narratives about development was expressed in the outburst of environmental conflicts, several of which had high visibility in the public-political sphere (emblematic conflicts) and forced governments to "clear up" the extractive discourse, strongly condemned by territorial and socio-environmental mobilizations.

The criminalization and the stigmatization of environmental protest open up a dangerous and disturbing scenario in terms of democratization and respect for human rights. In turn, as a response to the objections raised by social movements against the extractive matrix, the progressive governments sought to regain the initiative in the discussion about development through the UNASUR, and with the (strategic) support of the ECLAC.

Finally, the emergence of a *new dependency*, with guidelines -in terms of juridical and economic order- and conditions of subordination (and development) that will probably be defined in the next few years, lends plausibility to the hypothesis of the passage from the Commodities Consensus to the Beijing Consensus (Slipak, 2014; Machado Araoz, 2014), which will entail new political, social, environmental and cultural consequences.

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