



Group Assembly Process (GAP) - Stirring Paper

Resources & Extraction

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Any strategy towards a more just, democratic and sustainable society needs to consider the globally excessive and regionally uneven extraction and use of natural resources.

For instance, mining – and especially open-pit mining – is a major and very damaging form of resource extraction. It takes place in particular regions and is organized around strategies of private capital and the state. Many countries like Australia, Canada, Chile or increasingly Mexico are so heavily dependent on mining and the export of products, that the elites, workers and the state in the countries are very interested in the maintenance or even deepening of the model. Negatively affected people are not listened to or actively silenced, environmental damages are considered a second priority to be dealt with.

In order to better understand the current problem of resources and mining and to develop alternatives, it is necessary to put the economic activities related to resources into a broader context.

1. *The global constellation*

Mining and other resource extractivist activities are part of a global constellation that Maristella Svampa from Argentina calls a “commodity consensus”. Despite a strong politicization of climate change and environmental problems it seems to be attractive for the elites of resource-rich countries to maintain or even deepen the model.

Some reasons are:

- high prices for mineral, fossil, forest and agrarian commodities;
- demand from the “traditional” capitalist centers and countries like China;
- political strategies to maintain the flow of resources; e.g. EU strategy for raw materials, agrofuels and renewables;
- the financialisation of nature due to the financial crisis and over-accumulated capital, i.e. increasing investment in elements of nature (land or green grabbing, emission trading, infrastructure for the mobilization of natural resources);
- the intensification of the imperial mode of living in the global North (in principle, unlimited access to cheap resources and labour from other countries via the world market);
- the increase of the imperial mode of living in the global South, i.e. elites and middle

classes there;

- a narrow-minded and powerfully backed assumption and strategy that economic growth might be the only viable solution out of the crisis and for “development”;
 - alternative voices are silenced.
2. **National constellations: the example of countries with progressive governments in Latin America**

However, the model of resource extractivism is also deeply inscribed into the political, economic and cultural systems of the resource extractivist countries. I give the example of Latin American countries with progressive governments because here the problem becomes especially obvious. Moreover, those governments (like that in Bolivia or Ecuador, in parts Brazil or Argentina) claim to construct a different economic model based on equity and sustainability. Some brief arguments:

- developmentalism through extractivism; there is a re-primarization of the economy since the 1980s which is not really countered but enhanced;
- there is still a strong developmental & growth orientation: for export and for internal production with respective energy needs (Brazil: hydro-electrical power);
- progressive governments are mainly results of intense struggles. So are policies and even new constitutions searching for an improved financial basis of state and more sustainable societal nature relations;
- there are enormous expectations of large parts of the population towards redistributive politics; also for another economic model (but usually the latter is less important than the urgency of distribution);
- despite differences (Brazil, Bolivia): it is very difficult for progressive governments to change societal power relations as well as the economic basis of society and the state;
- the problem is not only capital strategies but also the strong orientation of middle- and upper-classes towards a „Western way“ of life, i.e. imperial mode of living;
- progressive governments are looking for South-South cooperation on the basis of a resource intensive development model: Venezuela's 28 bn. \$ credit from China is to be paid back in oil;
- resistance seems even more difficult.

3. **Alternatives**

In Latin America

- a necessary re-politicization of neoliberal imperialism: from indigenous peoples, rural farmers ... then urban movements, intellectuals ... but also a critique based on the solidarity of progressive governments;
- there are many concrete ways to defend forms of living which are non-capitalist and/or critical of capitalism, orientation of concrete buen vivir, other forms of interaction and knowledge;
- not necessarily another capitalist growth model but a questioning of the concepts

and practices of progress and modernization; e.g. solidarity economy, a strong, democratic and transparent public sector;

- linked to debates about the crisis of civilization; de-colonization
- priority of a careful internal industrialization (close to agro, resources);
- fulfillment of the re-constitution of the state: new constitutions, broader tax base than out of resources
- recent concept: *post-extractivism*

global

- to take pressure from countries and leave space for other, more democratic, just and sustainable societies; i.e. less influence of imperial and free-trade international politics and transnational corporations
- political regulation of world market
- to link our debates about beyond growth with post-extractivism

in global North

- support of struggles in global South against mining and resource extractivism; e.g. campaigns, information, put pressure on governments;
- to criticize those actors who promote unsustainable modes of production and consumption and who gain from mining and resource extractivist activities;
- to criticize concepts and discourse like that of the “Green Economy”
- socio-ecological transformation: to change the imperial mode of production and consumption via manifold alternatives;
- to finish austerity politics because this restricts any debate about alternatives;
- to enhance efficiency, consistency and sufficiency.