

## **Nature and Politics: Patagonia's Temperate Forests under Siege**

### **Notes for a framework of regional analysis**

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*The Venerable Buddhādāsa Bhikku, a famous Siamese Buddhist monk, once remarked that the word 'development' in its Pali or Sanskrit equivalent means 'disorderliness' or 'confusion', and in Buddhism 'development' refers either to progress or regress.*

*In a similar vein, Ivan Illich once told me that the Latin word 'progressio', which is the root idea of 'development', can mean 'madness' also.*

*Sulak Sivaraksa<sup>1</sup>*

### **Local Conditions, Universal Assumptions**

A narrow strip in the Andean region of southern Argentina, from the province of Neuquen to Tierra del Fuego, concentrates its only temperate forests, glaciers and lakes: the headwaters of the Atlantic –in some cases the Pacific- basin. The region is exponentially eroding and becoming a desert, and the pressures and strategies to “develop” the remaining fertile areas are grounded in a series of assumptions and practices that claim universality but have not been exposed to a contextual spatial analysis.

At the same time, the expansion of transnational capitalism in this region, under the specific circumstances of a highly centralized and financially entangled national state, is simultaneously shaped by industrialist assumptions, with its predominant practices of plundering resources,<sup>2</sup> as by new forms of flexible accumulation and symbolic consumption (Harvey, 1989; Zukin, 1990). To maintain profit, the former branch has to accelerate the pace and quantities of what is extracted. But also the “information-based,”

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<sup>1</sup> In Mallmann, C. & Nudler, O. (1986).

<sup>2</sup> Plunder economy, we are reminded by Martinez Alier, is a translation from the German “*Raubwirtschaft*”, first introduced by Ernst Friedrich last century, a concept that wasn't very popular during the colonialist era, which instead preferred the more social-Darwinistic “*Lebensraum*” –or “life space”- defining spaces for “survival” (of the fittest) among competing colonial states (Martinez Alier, 1990:47).

service, and cultural-symbolic side, of the economy has discovered the region. The accelerated search for new market niches is connected to the (re)discovery of “Nature” as a staple (Wallace and Shields, 1997:387) e.g. by eco-tourism and the re-organization of modes of consumption (McLaren, 1998, Shaw & Williams, 1994, Zukin, 1990, Harvey, 1989) and renovated arguments to carry out centrally managed conservation and biodiversity programs (Guha, 1997, Sachs, 1995; Shiva, 1993). Indeed, 12 of the 23 National Parks or Argentina are in Patagonia, and 11 new areas have been designated in the last two years in this region. Both expressions (the extractive and the symbolic), although interconnected in various dimensions, have found two major limits. On one hand, it becomes more difficult to conceal the devastation of extensive areas of ancient forests (logging, transportation infrastructure, intensive uses by tourism), soil erosion (accelerated by inappropriate agricultural practices), decreasing water quality (mining, inadequate sewage and industrial or urban waste treatment in general, pesticides), floods and droughts, and associated consequences and conflicts. On the other, the rise of a new leisure system and gentrified tourist areas<sup>3</sup>, exclusive real estate, and related service-based activities, generates new sites of local contradiction because of its uneven character, social displacements, changes of local production and consumption habits, necessity of competition and exclusions. Both forms of capital accumulation and flow, while coexisting with other less competitive local modes of production, may operate in the same areas, arranging, however, convenient boundaries for their activities depending on the background and power of the opponent. A mining or an oil company, for instance, would most probably have some troubles to share a place with international golf, adventure trekking-, rafting- or horseback riding operators. Such disputes will eventually be settled through negotiations done in the common language of business. But, as another and more prevalent case in point shows, the use of indigenous communities’ common land by the MEGA project (a merger of Dow Chemical, the Brazilian Petrobras, and the recently privatized Argentine YPF, now REPSOL, oil companies) was decided, after a short period of some basic PR and “conflict resolution” tactics. A federal court ruled in accordance with recent investment-protection laws, and the Kaxipayiñ community must allow the construction of a huge gas plant in their territory. The conflict is snowballing because the community is peacefully resisting. Several human rights organizations, churches, and labor unions have joined the protest.

At a first glance, any description of transnational corporations’ activities in Patagonia does not reveal consistent differences from what seems to be a homogeneous and global expansion of late capitalism. However, as Harvey argues, what appears to be a disorganized stage is nothing else but a new form of accumulation in which capitalism is becoming ever more tightly organized *through* dispersal, geographical mobility, and flexible responses in labour markets, labour processes, and consumer markets, all accompanied by hefty doses of institutional, product, and technological innovation (Harvey, 1989:159, *emph. in original*)

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of gentrification, as for instance described by Raymond Williams in *The City and the Country* (1973), transcends the more common application to the revaluation process of urban properties. For example, Sharon Zukin’s definition of gentrification in relation to “the displacement of lower-income, often ethnic and racial minority residents from newly-desirable centre-city locations” (1990:37) could as well be applied to similar processes taking place in the countryside or remote areas.

The ongoing process of privatization in Argentina has also been escorted by an intensified involvement of the same transnational economic actors that operate in the region (oil, logging, pulp, mining, commercial fishing, infrastructure building) in the dynamic and converging field of telecommunication and information-based activities (i.e. Internet services, banking services, credit cards, flights and hotel reservations) and cultural production and distribution (cable companies associated with printed media and radio stations). Transnational conglomerates of the resource extraction, agribusiness and service sectors are also increasingly occupying –directly or through sponsorships- a particularly active role in the commodification of leisure activities and tourism and in selected educational activities, sports, performing arts, training and research agendas (Shaw and Williams, 1994). New forms of creative services can be found in a variety of activities (Zukin, 1990) that locally range from “typical” and juxtaposed “Swiss alpine” [sic] architecture in ski & mountain resorts (which may be combined with other fast-food or hotel chain architecture, but centrally designed and assembled constructions and styles) to advertisement and publishing through mergers, joint undertakings, vertical or horizontal integration.<sup>4</sup> As Harvey explains, it is only through growth that profits can be assured, regardless of social, geopolitical, or ecological consequences, and this implies growth in real values (Harvey, 1989:180), consummated in a scenario of competition, forced innovation (or “creative destruction”) and accelerated turnover time of capital (Harvey, 1989:299).

The above mentioned oligopolistic amalgamations take place in a complex interplay of fast growing and hyperactive economies of scale and scope with local cultural, political and economical conditions. This process should not be separated into disconnected parts because contradictions of transnational actors with local configurations, as Mosco argues, may indicate the existence of a diversity of identities and local resistance, “but they can also mark a more tightly organized capitalism which uses its control over technologies and expertise to give it the flexibility to tolerate, resist, absorb, commodify, or ignore these resistances” (Mosco, 1997:33).

One contention to the ways of presenting the so called information-based economy, as in many aspects correctly characterized by David Harvey (1989), Manuel Castells (1989) and others, is that the universal extension of flexible accumulation and speed of capital flow has by no means decreased the pace and rates of the extractive (plunder) activities but has on the contrary contributed to the price devaluation of this kind of extracted goods (as it has done with labour), mystifying or concealing more than ever the social and environmental consequences. In a deeper analysis, it has intensified

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<sup>4</sup> In the last few months, several regional cable, open TV and radio stations have been purchased by major companies: the (only and) private Channel 7 of the Neuquen province by CEI, a publishing and electronic media corporation with several links to oil and banking companies such as the Citicorp, and the public Channel 10 of the Rio Negro province by Clarin, the most important media and telecommunications giant in Latin America after Televisa in Mexico and O Globo in Brazil. For the latter operation, Clarin signed an agreement in which it promises to renew the existing equipment and to maintain a vaguely defined “regional content”, but is also dismissing 30% of the current personnel. Both channels cover most of the cities of the interior and rural areas in provinces in which mining, oil, natural gas, timber extraction and tourism are the major sources of income.

the disappearance or corraling of contending world views and knowledge systems (Galtung, 1996; Howard, 1994; Shiva, 1993), causing a loss of the historical perspective that would allow to enable and integrate these other systems. One way to execute such exclusions is to accelerate turn-over time of capital while reducing more organic face to-face time horizons of embedded and contextual decision-making (Harvey, 1989:229, Mires, 1990:41).

But time and space compression, however powerful as a mode of supremacy, does not necessarily mean a irreversible devaluation (through objectification of nature and labour) nor the disappearance of local autonomies. “Shaped by their commercial and geographical context, [the use of] these technologies facilitate the ongoing production of centres and margins, that is to say, spatially differentiated hierarchies of politico-economic power” (Berland, 1996:2). And margins, as places of conflict, constitute at the same time an axial element to understand the centres. In his early critique to knowledge monopolies, the Canadian scholar H. Innis defined oral culture as “a mode of resistance from the ‘margins’ to the expansionist monopolization of knowledge at the centre, with its now dangerous lack of self-reflexivity, cultural flexibility, or dialogue” (Berland, 1996:10).

### **Overcoming theoretical deficiencies: frameworks for regional analysis**

There are several reasons to propose a frame of analysis that specifically addresses the case of Patagonia’s forests:

1. Argentina, as any other country, is “ranked” and compared to others by international agencies by a standard procedures that rely on mathematical abstractions such as GNP, *per capita* income, growth percentages, willingness to adopt neo-liberal prescriptions, investment security, among other indicators. Such criteria do not reflect regional (intra-national) endo-colonialism, injustice, corruption, general failures in social policies, environmental devastation, or intergenerational consequences of the experiment.
2. National states and institutions have been either under-theorized in the neo-classical literature (Brohman, 1995) or theoretically generalized, e.g. in the *dependentista* and in the world system approach (Hettne, 1984, Schuurman, 1995).
3. A tendency to theoretical centralism can also be traced in the Argentine social sciences, routinely framing regional situations from a “national” hierarchy of priorities. With a few exceptions, the study of diverse local characteristics is subordinated to centrally administered research funds and criteria. A deeper view of the articulation of national conditions; the interplay of economic forces, institutions and civil society; and more specifically the ways in which the highly centralized Argentine state and institutions extend –and have extended in the past- its influence and reproduction over the region, is needed.
4. The “local” has gained a renewed international attention, but for different reasons: as a “firm centered” communitarianism; as a response to situations of anomie and retirement of the state; as a rejection of modern imperatives and technologies and search for alternative life styles or for combined forms in intra-regional development models, such as workers cooperatives in Porto Alegre, Brazil and Mondragon in the Basque region of Spain, among others (Amin, 1996; Arocena, 1996; Ekins, 1986). A positive inventory of the search for autonomy and alternative practices will require focused attention to this particular context and its history.

5. Within the last decade, the provincial states and municipalities have been “hollowed out”<sup>5</sup> in many senses, but are kept however with selective powers to ensure juridical security for investments (or international loans) guarantee access to common resources, and privatizing health, education, irrigation systems, banking, and other – previously publicly owned- basic services while minimizing their role to populist interventions, pushed to “create” mostly alienated , unskilled and inadequately paid jobs, and to increase police forces.
6. The universal, unavoidable and “natural” character of a depoliticized economy is widely assumed. Accordingly, it appears that there are few options left. Crisis is perceived either as a failure to integrate into the globalist project or as a “natural hazard” that should be managed by experts. Consequently, stock market speculative games and breakdowns are labeled following the fashion of meteorologists baptizing hurricanes, i.e., the Tequila, Samba, Vodka, or Rice “effect”). The sacred cows of modernity, *growth* and *progress*, are assumed to be inescapable and driven by “imperatives” of the market system, which in itself is perceived as synonymous with society and nature. These assumption, consequently, cannot be challenged unless it is by the aggregation of new *fuites en avant*, that is: increasing velocity and quantity of extractive activities and international tourism (and the expansion of infrastructure to go faster from A to B, including reduction of regulatory constraints and trade barriers), expanding risk production schemes (e.g., contract farming), promoting training instead of education, encouraging labour flexibilization and pragmatic policies directed towards string-attached “lending,” and, in general, concentrating all public and private efforts and resources in favor of an export-oriented development.
7. Nature, like society, often appears as a compartmentalized aggregation of abstract categories, depending on –or reflecting- particular institutional arrangements of the state (dividing the universe into ministries and regulatory bodies); discipline centered views such as “scientific” forestry, separating forestry from agriculture, as explained by Guha, 1993, 1997, and V. Shiva, 1993; simplified market schemes and neo-liberal prescriptions, or a combination of all three factors. Geographical regions are not understood as integrated social-cultural-environmental totalities in which, for instance, ancient forests play a crucial role in a number of material and non-material dimensions such as a sustainable source of income and self-reliance, control or reduction of risks and soil erosion, self sufficiency, identity, and sacred places;
8. Externalities, which imply physical consequences as well as subjective and cultural dimensions (Babe, 1995, 1996; Brohman, 1995; Galtung, 1986, 1996) are not socially assessed nor negotiated (to be compensated or simply stopped to prevent further destruction) because there are parallel ideological and structural conditions which disenfranchise other views, reduce spaces for political participation, or centralize knowledge through scientific management (Howard, 1994);
9. Micro-macro contradictions have been routinely assumed in predominant theories and methods. Ethnographies and small-scale analysis of local conditions and context have left out larger configurations and power relations. Conversely, structural analysis has overlooked human agency and how social movements struggle for autonomy and meaning.

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<sup>5</sup> A concept used to describe similar processes in Canada can be found in Salter and Salter, in Clement, 1997.

## **State, Margins, and Social Spaces**

*The physiognomy of a government can best be judged in its colonies, for there its characteristic traits usually appear larger and more distinct. When I wish to judge of the spirit and faults of the administration of Louis XIV, I must go to Canada. Its deformity is there seen as through a microscope*

*Alexis de Tocqueville, in Dorland (1996)*

To address local situations it is central to follow the history of a particular state formation and how its political, cultural and ideological circumstances shaped its institutions, social life and internal power relations. A first observation that can be made is that there are no neutral generalizations about the state. If the Western model of nation-state (since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648) as the political organization that exercises sovereign power over a specified geographical territory, is providing the terms of reference to which the “political formations of other societies are required to conform or approximate” (Lowe & Lloyd, 1997:8), then an interlocking of the state and its policies with neo-liberal prescriptions and agendas for development, as followed or promoted by industrialized countries, is an inevitable consequence. The western State model has fallen to its lowest historical point regarding its role as the vehicle for representative democracy, reducing Enlightenment ideals of emancipation and citizen’s involvement to consumer choice and lately, closer to pragmatism and exclusionary practices, to narrowed “stakeholder” and “win-or-lose” choices. At the same time, the state has reached its highest peak in representing “economic” (read corporate) interests in its “allocative” or “productive” role and articulation in defense of investors rights and freedoms through technocratic and sometimes secretive arrangements such as the postponed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), among others.

The roles of Third World states, however, are on many levels contradictory in the context of transnational capitalism:

On one hand [the state] is typically characterized [by neo-classical theory] as almost completely omnipotent in its ability to set policy according to its macroeconomic objectives. On the other, it is also described as virtually totally impotent and incapable of acting in an economically rational and efficient manner (unless, of course, it effectively follows neo-classical policy prescriptions)” (Brohman, 1995a:301).

By way of theoretical constructs, national states are confined, in accordance with economist reductionism, to neo-liberal positions and competitive performance in the global arena, in a ranking order that promotes warship by all known and permanently innovative means instead of cooperation, self-reliance, social justice, sustainability, reciprocity and accountability.

Internally, the national state still represents a paradoxical space for political contention, resistance, and action that has been prematurely discarded in favour of new global configurations such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. The USA,

described by Brzezinski in 1971 as “the first global society” and the principal “disseminator” of the “technetronic revolution” (in Mattelart, 1994:135), is using these institutions to disseminate its governing beliefs about liberal pluralism (for instance in the entrepreneurial press system) and particular cultural policies (the melting pot) to other contexts. The market system in industrial capitalism, through its creation of scarcity and responses to ill-defined needs and demands,<sup>6</sup> is accordingly characterized as the best place to locate satisfiers and choices by individuals seeking the most effective ways to maximize utilities (the *Homo economicus*), replacing political life and cultural expressions by information exchanges and connectivity. “Communication” is thus defined, in neo-classical economic theory, as the optimal place for this kind of informational exchanges (Babe, 1995).

More organic perceptions of time and humanity’s non-instrumental connection with all forms of life, or the search and creation of alternatives, and preservation of non-market values, rules, or culturally and historically shaped notions of collective *ends and purposes* are outside the range of such descriptions. The progressive idea of *one* indisputable development model admits “pluralistic” means and even local creativity to reach this ideal, but leaves the existential question of purposes (or even the revision of motion and change) out of the debate. As described by Brohman, “By precluding attention to elements of human behaviour that do not fit its narrow definition of economic rationality, neoclassical theory leaves itself no mechanism for understanding and explaining the often messy empirical world that so defies its models” (Brohman, 1995a:298). For instance, and despite many appealing connotations, the terms “participation” and “popular participation” have distracted close attention from the nature of the power relations involved, i.e. participation in the world market by “isolated and subsistence peasants,” participation of people as objects of national programs of development, participation of the public in pre-selected options, participation in populist policies, and so forth (Nelson and Wright, 1997:2).

Colonization is not restricted to what has been described as the Third World nor is it a category that, if applied to states, wipes out the *internal diversity* of situations. In this sense, the concept of “margins” retains a valid place in respect to both national and intra-national dimensions. Harold Innis and scholars following his tradition of political economy and culture have made relevant contributions to the appreciation of genealogies of centres and margins. Dorland, for instance, recognizes that for Innis, Canada’s institutional development “has its roots in an unbroken continuum, reaching back to the early modern emergence of the European, absolutist state” and has been marked simultaneously by “relative stability” and by “continuous repression” (Dorland, 1997:3). Despite differences between Canada and Argentina, Innis’s tradition of ideas and frames

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<sup>6</sup> Every economic or social theory starts, implicitly or explicitly, with a definition –socially mediated or abstractly constructed- of needs, and provides ideas and norms about how to satisfy them. Victoria Rader, along with Gustavo Esteva, discusses the concept of needs extensively and says: “the basic needs approach adopted by authorities in times of social unrest assumes not only the oppressive political order but the oppressive *economic* order, which is the source of powerful dehumanizing forces: the obsession with material standards of living, the creation of artificial and chronic scarcity, the separation of needs from their means of satisfaction, and the weakening of family and community supports” (Rader, V. (1990) “Human Needs and the Modernization of Poverty”, in *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*” Burton, J. (Ed.) , New York, St. Martin Press.

of examination open a number of theoretical windows for the study of the symbolic order and related time- and space-reducing technologies in staple-based economies. “Placing technology and space at the centre of his research enabled Innis (and critical scholars influenced by him) to establish a reflexively marginal approach to the strategic imbrications of technology, geography, culture, knowledge and power which have shaped Western Imperialism, and which have done so in particular ways in the twentieth century” (Berland, 1996:2).

In the analysis of the intersections of peripheral states with new arrangements of transnational capitalism, the representations of the national state suffered several mutilations. A minimal expression of state is desirable from the neo-liberal perspective (strong enough, nevertheless, to “correct” what is collected under the umbrella-concept of “market imperfections”), downgrading it to its now prevalent role of guarantor for transnational investments. Two concepts are applicable to understand the lineage of present institutional and economic practices in this respect. One is the idea of a state as a force beyond any disagreement, a state that inherited an autonomous rationality or *Raison d’Etat* to resolve the “highest priorities” or “vital interests” of a nation-city, swallowing every internal cultural variety or conflict into its homogenizing and overarching jurisdiction. Unity, in the nation-state, means subordinated unity from the margins to the centre. The second is the perception of development as a “transitional” vehicle or “detour on the way to cosmopolitanism or socialism”, a trajectory that would conduct nations and societies to the “proper” and modernized end of history (Lloyd, 1996:175). However, an ultimate rejection of the state as a commonly organized place is difficult to sustain, despite its contradictions. The consulted bibliography, on the contrary, suggest the perpetuity of unstable conditions and open-ended definitions of state in it’s inter relations with social movements (or political society) and economic forces.

Another distinctive factor of intra-regional development in Latin America is the varied reproduction and actualization of colonial practices, a characteristic that has been studied by R. Guha in India (1993, 1997), describing the continuation of colonial institutions in contemporary wildlife conservation programs. The relevance of his argument relies not only in the observation of institutional and professional behaviour (the biologists, the local government officials, the WWF, IUCN, Sierra Club and other international agencies and NGO’s) and the extension of new protected areas (“protected” from their previously established inhabitants), but also in the definitions of people’s role within those plans. In the new techno-centric colonialism, mainstream assumptions are defining local people in rural areas as an environmental “burden” and “part of the problem” and rarely as subjects able to respond with solutions. Instead they promote displacement and scientifically defended exclusions, while absorbing “valuable indigenous knowledge”...if it has commercial potential.

### **Between structure, agency and normativity**

In this paper, I argue in favor of an integration of political economy with critical development theory. Both approaches, however, will only lead to alternative and autonomy if they transcend pure economic and goal oriented frames that have been, as it has been vastly argued, the guiding force behind different development strategies.

While most authors dealing with critical development theory would agree that the micro level is inscribed within rules set by structure and “external” factors such as state policies and the international market system, the importance attributed to the subject’s



role varies from what has correctly been characterized as “post-modern optimism” concerning identity formation and cultural consumption at the micro level (Garnham, 1997:56) to more developed articulations between the individual actor and macro and meso levels, as proposed by Long (1996). The subjects’ recognition of their own forces and creation of knowledge creation/dissemination, according to Long, is a process of multiple interconnected elements:

Actor strategies and capacities for drawing upon existing knowledge repertoires and absorbing new information, validation processes whereby newly introduced information and its sources are judged acceptable and useful or contested, and various transactions involving the exchange of specific material and symbolic benefits. Implicit in all this is the fact that the generation and utilization of knowledge is not merely a matter of instrumentalities, technical efficiencies, or hermeneutics (i.e. the mediation of the understanding of others through the theoretical interpretation of our own), but involves aspects of control, authority and power that are embedded in social relationships” (Long, 1996:146).

Booth, in a position similar to that of Mosco (1996) and Garnham (1996), recognizing Long’s position, proposes to be more cautious about the nature and scope of participatory research or case studies, demanding reconciliation of insights about local settings with the understanding of larger structures, without which these insight will lack realism. “It is legitimate to ask how we are to ensure that the findings of local-action studies reflect not only local realities and room-for-manoeuvre, but also the constraints upon action that may emerge at the regional or national level (or over longer periods of time)” (Booth, 1996:60).

Political economy, on the other hand, and despite its preferences for macro-analysis, has never been indifferent to the historical dimensions and complexities of symbolic representations and how individuals and social groups perceive their world and how this is reflected in their struggles. The question is how far political economy will separate itself from Marxist orthodoxy and from what has been described, by Handa, 1980; Hettne, 1984; Lutz, 1986 and Schuurman, 1996, among others, as unilinear and determinist progressivism and does not lead to a “realistic” and at the same time paralyzing defeatism. For instance, the study of economy as a system of power (Babe, 1995:71) seeks to understand not only a specific material context, but also the political, ideological and cultural life which provides the text.

Ideas have an important place within political-economic accounts, but, unlike idealist approaches, which begin with values, beliefs, or attitudes and from these explain society’s workings, the materialist approach contends that the realm of ideas itself requires explanation. That is not to say that ideas stand ‘outside’ the material. On the contrary, the ideological and cultural are embedded in the economic base and are an integral part of the reproduction of society” (Clement, 1997:4).

Furthermore, political economy “wants to explain ‘the economy’ and market forces so that political and social interventions can direct economic processes,” seeking most of all “to prevent the political and social aspects of life from being marginalized by

a strictly economic logic” (Clement, *ibid.*, p.4)<sup>7</sup>. The bifurcation from economics and political sciences took place around the turn of the century, with Alfred Marshall as one of the first and main representatives of neo-classicism (Babe, 1995, 1996 a and b; Lutz, 1988; Hunt, 1979), a separation has also contributed to the creation of a myth around the scientific and predictable nature of economics:

One voice [economics] speaks the language of rationality, logic, and positivism; the other [political science], a normative language that is permitted to talk back but not with the other. One is permitted to go only so far as Max Weber (1946), who felt that it was acceptable to be motivated by moral concerns, but that the canons of science left no room for them in analysis” (Mosco, 1996:35).

Realistic accounts of political economy, however, may respond to the questions of gains and losses, of production and distribution, but this

does not suffice to lead us from our present darkness to a world of justice, peace and sustainability. *Political economy as such knows nothing of altruism, mercy, forgiveness, redemption, self-restraint, understanding, peace. While it views the world as a struggle for power and aligns itself with the underprivileged, it is unable to transcend that struggle in the present*” (Babe, 1995:82, *emph. added*).

But also theories of development in the 80’s have been described as positivist: “the world is regarded as it is and not as it should be”, says Schuurman, (1996:20), stressing the relevance of two major and emerging normative approaches: feminist, and the question of how to develop sustainability (Schuurman, 1996:20-21). Using a more elaborated framework, and in line with what was called “Another Development” in the 70’s (in *Development Dialogue*, Uppsala, SIDA/Dag Hammarskjold Foundation) and the European Green movement, Hettne (1996:144) proposes a search for alternative theory that also proposes to go beyond economism, recovering the *normative* trend development theory had in the 70’s which was interrupted by the pragmatism of the 80’s. Unlike traditional political economists, however, Hettne affirms that an inventory of normative contributions and theories is relevant because it deals not only with “development in terms of how it actually takes place but rather how it *should* take place.” Deriving ideas from Karl Polanyi and following previous arguments (Friberg and Hettne, 1984), Hettne challenges the idea of a “natural history”, of unilinear progress, state intervention and command economy in Marxist orthodoxy (the “red” model) to the “blue” (the neo-liberal model) mainstream model because development can be -and is- affected by political action, human will and value-laden reason (“*Wertrationalitat*”) that is not constrained by the boundaries of instrumental reason (“*Zweckrationalitat*”). Alternative development (the “green” pathway or model) includes a non articulated multitude of perspectives that originates from the excluded and the periphery, and “is a cry for visibility, participation, and justice” (Hettne, 1996:145).

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<sup>7</sup> Adam Smith, in his *Moral Sentiments* also recognized “moral concerns” and tried to discern between science and morality, a distinction that went lost in *The Wealth of Nations* seven years later (1776), where he first used the idea of a guiding “invisible hand” that was equated to “Providence” (for instance in the distribution of land among “a few lordly masters”) in a first reference to a “natural” law in society (Lutz, 1988:35-39).

The need to follow, understand and promote local alternatives has a long and intermittent trajectory. On one side, Hettne (1996), Galtung (1986, 1996), Nandy (1986) refer to the tradition of non-Western or so called “pre-modern” visions, mainly coming from anti-colonial struggles, such as Gandhian and Buddhist philosophy, indigenous worldviews, as well as a diversity of humanist, traditional and new social and political movements (Esteva, 1992; Galtung, 1980, 1986, 1996; Hettne, 1984, 1996; Lutz, 1988; Morissette et al., 1992). Others, in addition, rescued early works that are within -or close to- socialist positions, such as Rosa Luxemburg’s concept of “natural economy” (Hunt, 1979: pp. 336-343, 347-349, Mires, 1990: pp. 55-57), Kropotkin’s *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899, in Galtung, 1980) and Serge Podolonsky’s *Ecological Economics*, a work that according to Martinez Alier “missed the historical opportunity to inspire an ecological Marxism” because it was cast aside by Engels in 1882 (Martinez Alier, 1992:53).

Some struggles follow local traditions and philosophies or may result from the multiplicity of negotiations, tactics, and reactions to emerging short-term situations and new paradoxes. As analyzed by David Harvey:

Movements of opposition to the disruptions of home, community, territory, and nation by the restless flow of capital are legion. But then so too are movements against the tight constraints of a purely monetary expression of value and the systematized organization of space and time. What is more, such movements spread far beyond the realms of class struggle in any narrowly defined sense. The rigid discipline of time schedules, of tightly organized property rights and other forms of spatial determination, generate widespread resistances on the part of individuals who seek to put themselves outside these hegemonic constraints in exactly the same way that others refuse the discipline of money. And from time to time these individual resistances can coalesce into social movements with the aim of liberating space and time from their current materialization and constructing an alternative kind of society in which value, time, and money are understood in new and quite different ways. Movements of all sorts –religious, mystical, social, communitarian, humanitarian, etc- define themselves directly in terms of an antagonism to the power of money and of rationalized conceptions of space and time over daily life (Harvey, 1989:238)

But Harvey allows little space for optimism: the need for material reproduction of social movements that live in opposition to the market systems, he affirms, will permanently have to open the gate for the “dissolving power of money” and a restored command over space and time by capital (Harvey, *ibid.*). Thus, Harvey does not offer any other option to fatalism, a position that implicitly attributes an insurmountable objectivity to the domination by forces that are thus placed beyond the social life and command, which is limited to proximate places and “private” life spheres.

On the other hand, the desperate search for basic –rather than *autonomous*-material reproduction, such as barter, local currencies, barter and exchange systems (such as LETS, local exchange and trade system), and other expressions of the so called “informal” economy, have found new impetuosity in the cities. Such systems of production and exchange surpasses the formal or accounted part of economic activity in terms of work (Ekins, 1986), are extremely unstable and may act as a pacifier of social

unrest and conform therefore a tolerated and even promoted social space. Concurrently with a growing number of rural-based movements (e.g. the “Sem Terra” or landless movement in Brazil) and indigenous communities, these processes are attracting renewed interest, but also a prudent theoretical distance. Schuurman, for instance, situate these movements as communitarianism, a perspective substantiated, he maintains, by post-modernism with three sub-directions: 1) *Neo-conservative* as a reaction to social anomie (return to history and tradition, neo-romantic philosophy of nature); 2) *Progressive communitarianism* (a shortly described search for other types of “local sources of resistance against the governing power and knowledge system”, based on social movements, and 3) *Nihilism*, identifying Jean Baudrillard as the most outspoken exponent of a post-modern philosophy in which “truth and reason have been lost sight of and simulation is ‘the name of the game’” (Schuurman, 1996:25). “But social movements (new and old) in the Third World are not expressions of resistance against modernity; rather, they are demands for access to it” (Schuurman, 1997:27)

Using a more differentiated frame, although focusing mostly in European roots and contexts, Hettne recognizes other versions and historical backgrounds of what he calls the “various manifestations of the Counterpoint” [to Mainstream models and assumptions]. One is *conservative romanticism*, which may also be seen as a reaction against industrialism in Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hettne proposes to understand “conservatism” beyond its common meaning as a reactionary resistance against change, but more as “preserving what is valuable from the point of view of certain values,” such as a threatened planet. Another expression of the counterpoint is *Utopian Socialism*. Hettne would discard, however, the progressive and industrialist beliefs of Owen and Saint-Simon, redeeming instead Fourier (and the revival of his ideas in our time) for his critique of the “dullness of industrial production” and the importance of “passions” in his communitarian proposals. Hettne presents *Green Ideology* as a synthesis of neo-anarchist and neo-populist ideas. He argues that anarchism by its historical rejection of statism “favoured a decentralized and multifaceted social structure which made individual self-realization possible.” He calls for a differentiated populism, closer to the tradition of the Russian narodniks, who rejected “large-scale and centralized production as well as the idea (and ideal) of division of labor” (Hettne, 1996:148-9)<sup>8</sup>.

### **World(s), Globes, and “Globalization”**

The question about conflict or contending interaction between different Cosmo-visions, world-views, knowledge systems, and meanings concerning the real is central to the understanding of current debates. In the Western world, after the publication in 1962 of T. S. Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the classic centrality of positivism and universal models of science has been strongly disputed, although for different reasons within quite different theoretical contexts. On one hand, the image of a multiplicity of rising “worlds” –equating in some cases “worlds” with new scientific revolutions and findings- emerged after Kuhn’s frame became a key reference in most of the subsequent debates. The epistemological “pendulum” that moved from “extreme logicism to extreme relativism” (Nudler, 1990:185) has meanwhile allowed a more differentiated image of interworlds’ dialogue. “World and frame conflicts are accessible

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<sup>8</sup> One of the relevant sources to follow the ongoing debate is undoubtedly the journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*.

to rational methods, provided that the notion of ‘rationality’ is extended beyond its narrow, Cartesian sense” (Nudler, 1990:197).

It is interesting to note that for Innis the concept of “bias” also referred to context and socially constructed meaning as one of the strongest modeling forces in the work of intellectuals, rather than epistemological strongholds. As Creighton observes:

No word appeared more frequently in his work –it was part of the title of one of his collections of essays- than the word ‘bias’. No man was ever more acutely aware of the fact that everybody, including the most supposedly detached economist, was a creature of his own generation and environment and deeply affected by its values, assumptions, and beliefs. Such arguments, carried to their logical extreme, could end only in complete relativism; they could mean only that an objective economic science was logically impossible. This absolute conclusion Innis refused to accept. Bias was the social scientist’s greatest danger, but paradoxically it also was the best hope of salvation. Bias, he seemed to say, is an historical phenomenon that is always with us and can be studied and analyzed just like any other historical phenomenon. And through such study the economist could discover the cumulative force of bias, and their effect on institutions (Creighton, 1981:21)

From another perspective, Shiva challenges the universality of western science as a “globalised version of a very local and parochial tradition” because it is a system of domination by which local knowledge systems are excluded, diminished or de-qualified based on the prevalence of specific material goals (productive, commercial, military, technological, physical) which constitute the preferred common places to define “power” as an unavoidable destiny in the western value system (Shiva, 1990:10). Power relations, on one hand, are measured in terms of distance (or access) to material and more recently to commodified symbolic goods or “cultural capital”.

But power relations could also imply the study of a specific sanctioning capacity, of how boundaries of action are defined, how the burdens of proof are distributed (Beck, 1995), documenting “inequality in the possession of ‘cultural capital’ across persons and groups, thereby raising questions as to how and by whom components of cultural capital get valorized, how and why some tastes and preferences and some modes of knowledge become highly valued while others are denigrated, and so on” (Babe, 1996).

The dominant frames of applied inspection, consequently, privilege micro approaches by which reality is constructed through aggregated and self-contained technical studies, in which the social, historical circumstances and meanings, as well as the ecological consequences are excluded or reduced to input data, in which people and nature are treated as objects, resources and commodities, “extracting”, hence, information and data, excluding the subjects from the central aspects of the research process and final uses and control of the results. The western mode of intellectual production also fails to be empathetic and to strive for reciprocity with other knowledge systems.

The ‘scientific’ label assigns a kind of sacredness or social immunity to the western system. By elevating itself *above* society and other knowledge systems and by simultaneously excluding other knowledge systems from the domain of reliable and systematic knowledge, the dominant system creates its exclusive monopoly.

Paradoxically, it is the knowledge systems which are considered most open, that are, in reality closed to scrutiny and evaluation. Modern western science is not to be evaluated, it is merely to be accepted” (Shiva, 1993:12).

The claim of universality has also successfully been extended by applying the cartographic notion of the “globe” as a corporate brand name and synonym of “the” world, a single unit of analysis and provided a useful symbol since the rise of Mercantilism for the process of transnationalization of capitalism, also known as “globalization.” The sphere, more an abstraction than a perceivable fact, has become the target for “fantasies of large-scale planning. The image of the Blue Planet –so small and easily comprehensible- suggests that what has hitherto provided forms of human existence may now be planned and managed as a single object” (Sachs, 1994:174).

Planning from a distance and computer-modeled forestry, for example, are outcomes of this centralization of solutions promoted by would-be commanding pilots of “space ship” Earth. In 1994, the Mapuche community Aucapan rejected –in their subtle way, with silences, boycotts, “non-understandings,” and so forth- a highly subsidized project of pine plantation within their territory. Pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) are a real obsession for international agencies such as the World Bank. The argued rationale is an assumed provision of oxygen (to compensate global warming), commercial benefits, and control of soil, among others (Dimitriu, 1995; Laclau, 1994)

But the people from the communities of Aucapan, Malleo, and Chiquilhuin in Neuquen, just to mention one the resulting conflicts, have other views and arguments. They need the land for pastures and subsistence. They prefer other types of trees they already use to create natural galleries to protect the creeks from drying in summer, for instance, willows or fruit trees. They also know by experience that a pine plantation, once a forest fire starts, burns as much as five times faster than the nature forests, and that the chemicals in pine needles turn soils of the Andean region acidic. They also have seen new insects (*sirex noctilio*, *urucerus*) spreading. The long-term benefits of commercial plantations, even if done in eroded places, do not cover immediate basic needs and require a labour force that is scarce and might be useful to cover basic needs. These priorities, though, are not considered significant by experts and professionals of the National Institute of Rural Technology (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria, INTA) and provincial agencies, who approach the site with maps, satellite photographs and previously designed action programs and deductive research methods. “Participation” is then promoted and measured in terms of the degree of willingness to accept the outside professionals’ programs. The professional’s roles and practices are shaped by a number of interrelated factors: their own beliefs, institutional values, and agendas. Only in the least instance, and at the end of all conditions, if at all, are local views and expressed needs taken into consideration (Dimitriu, 1995). As described by Banuri, “the interest of the expert in acquiring, creating, promoting or acting upon the basis of such knowledge is increasingly motivated by internal considerations, rather than by normative social implications” (Banuri, 1993:13).

### **Nature and Economic Models**

*The economic function is but one of many vital functions of land. It invests man’s life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons. We might as well imagine his being*

*born without hands and feet as carrying on his life without land. And yet to separate land from man and organize society in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of a real-estate market was a vital part of the utopian concept of a market economy" (...) "To detach man from the soil meant the dissolution of the body economic into its elements so that each element could fit into that part of the system where it was more useful...The aim was the elimination of all claims on the part of neighborhood or kinship organizations.*

**Karl Polanyi**, [1944] 1957, pp.178-9

*The world can, in effect, get along without natural resources.*

**Robert M. Solow**, Nobel laureate in economics, (1974) in "The economics of Resources or the resources of Economics", *American Economic Review*, May, pp. 1-14, quoted by Babe (1995) and Hall (1994).

The positive connotations of "progress" and "growth" are still prevalent in the national discourse, in the provincial administrations, the municipalities, in many social movements, and continually stressed in the media and educational institutions. Nevertheless, the social, cultural and environmental consequences of the privileged means of pursuing these goals and their assumptions are still rarely or only marginally challenged. These impacts, at best, are considered to be the inevitable costs or "side effects" of any economic activity even though they involve not only ecosystems but also cultures and different production systems. Options are reduced to the selection from technology packages and prescriptions, to contracting of specialized services to reduce costs, to internalizing some of the more evident externalities, to identifying new market niches, to improving competitiveness, to currying -by all possible means- public favors such as sponsorships, subsidies and concessions, and to applying strict adjustment programs. At the same time, the prior promises of social distribution of wealth in a never realized "trickle-down" effect, have been revised and updated with new labels, such as the image of "conscious protagonists in the market" (i.e. stakeholders) or "those-who-could-survive," farmers who are pushed to abandon the subsistence production to join the contract farming system. The discourses of growth are zealously continued in order to retain illusions of opportunities around the corner, which certainly are not for everyone. The race for adaptation requires competitive and innovative entrepreneurs and professionals, as well as governments willing to guarantee the narrowing spaces for economic reproduction.

Statistics of national "growth" (as calculated by the World Bank and national statistical agencies) and somehow improved in "human development" indicators (UNDP), even if current production schemes were maintained (the "zero sum" option promoted by some members of the Club of Rome such as Manfred Max-Neef) only reveal insignificant proportions of the squandered energies, the social and cultural destruction, and the environmental devastation, and rarely recognize any damage within the described societies or done to third parties (other societies, other generations, other species, etc.). And if recognized, these externalities are used as arguments for new enterprises (setting eco-standards that only few companies would be able to follow) and renewed involvement of the state and the World Bank to "restore" ecological balance. A major problem, however, is how -involving what social processes, knowledge systems

and power relations- damages and externalities are either discovered, perceived, assessed, valued and compensated or, on the other hand, reduced or simply avoided. The theoretical assumptions of the neo-classical school, it is true, have been discussed and analyzed in depth and

no part has been left unscathed. The paradigm has been shown to be extremely unrealistic in its assumptions, especially its notions of a rational, self-centered individual, and of the existence of a self-regulating market. It has been shown to be tied to a particular ideology, that of laissez-faire conservatism. And it has been found to be highly deductive and rather a-empirical; a kind of mathematical form of scholasticism” (Etzioni, in Lutz, 1988:iii).

However, one of the limitations of the intellectualist approaches to “scientific” discourse is the assumption that a position can be “defeated” by another superior “paradigm” using a Kuhnian logical framework in isolation from the social context, from other meaning producing practices. But this confrontation extends well beyond the academic world and its rules of argumentation. As Shiva argues, this “has less to do with knowledge and more to do with power” (Shiva, 1990:10), and power relations in which “positivism, verificationism and falsificationism were all based on the assumption that unlike traditional, local beliefs of the world, which are socially constructed, *modern scientific knowledge was thought to be determined without social mediation*” (Shiva, 1990:11, *emph. added*). This last statement has at least two parallel interpretations: on one hand, the social identification of problems and practical means to resolve them do involve “logical” procedures. On the other hand, the perception of objectives, consequences, implications and options are sometimes empirically measurable (for example if externalities are identified and reduced or avoided instead of being treated -or traded- as new justifications for investment in technological innovation) and at the same time dependent on culturally and politically shaped values and expectations (reciprocity, self-reliance, social justice, respect for future generations, egalitarian social life, sacredness of Nature). But because of the abstractive nature of economics, especially in neo-classical theory<sup>9</sup>, the ways in which nature and society are integrated into analysis is problematic and is leading towards exactly the opposite direction of what have been the promises of “development” : irreversible ecological and cultural destruction.

The weakest point of the economic model is its reductionism. The multiple dimensions of the so-called “externalities” are reduced to the *visible part* of the economy and to market transactions (and even there with highly arguable limitations), a blind spot that has been generously shared by most social-scientific studies (Beck, 1995:41). However, not everyone has overlooked these “side effects.” Firstly, the far-reaching consequences -or “deep” externalities- of industrialist economic activity, regardless of the character of its imposition (colonial practices, military dictatorships, enclosures, or market hegemony) have always been denounced by its victims but rarely taken into consideration by theorists of growth in any of its manifestations (neo-liberal, socialist, nationalist, or social-democratic). In *Gemeinschaft* economies, in which the market *place* -not the market *system*- permitted a face-to-face interaction between producers and

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<sup>9</sup> “it is pretty clear that an economist, like a poet, uses metaphors. They are called *models*,” says Donald McCloskey (in Babe, 1995:9).



consumers, the scale of production had fewer consequences and admitted closer interaction among the actors and therefore direct negotiations, rules and accountability.

The rise of long-distance economy has helped to deny, conceal and objectify the consequences. The history of capitalism is a story of permanent and increasing creation and transfer of externalities, a characteristic that has reproduced “margins” as social or geographical places of a double nature, as dump sites or as reserves of resources, both in terms of land and labor. It might be reasonable to link the idea of “externalizing” certain kind of “disadvantages”, such as social conflict (for example pushing “undesired” people into exile or emigration, one of the most complex externalities both for the “providing” and for the “receiving” societies) and environmental damage to the notion of “internal moral” used by Max Weber when he describes the genealogy of religious or ideological justifications and administrative “rules” produced in order to apply interest to loans given to third parties, that is, to persons who do not belong to the same community, class, religion or group. But the transfer of any kind of undesired consequences, as the contrary to communitarian reciprocity, comprises a multiplicity of dimensions which exceed the material narrowness assumed in most of the economic literature.

Galtung, in one of his earliest contributions to the understanding of the complexities involved, integrated knowledge (not only “practical” knowledge) into the elements to be considered. Trade, and moreover “free trade,” is more than a buzz word of unequal exchanges that might be surmounted using differentiated bargaining skills and technology. It is within this kind of relations that “comparative advantages” and unjust labor divisions have historically been extended (if not created) and reproduced. “The basic rule of self-reliance,” says Galtung, “is this:

produce what you need using your own resources, internalising the challenges this involves, growing with the challenges, neither giving the most challenging tasks (positive externalities) to somebody else on whom you become dependent, nor exporting negative externalities to somebody else to whom you do damage and who may become dependent on you” (Galtung, 1980).

In a more recent book, Galtung lists six spaces of externalities: Nature, Human, Social, World, Time and Culture linking them together in a more holistic and normative method of analysis. In order to avoid single-factor theorizing, “all six spaces have to be represented; no reductionism to less than six will work” (Galtung, 1996:155).

Mainstream economics has indeed reacted to externalities but for different reasons and in a way that may exacerbate the consequences instead of providing meaningful solutions. The shallow version of externalities can be traced back to from the beginning of its identification. When Alfred Marshall’s disciple A. C. Pigou introduced the term in 1920, he referred basically to visible “injury,” such as the smoke from a factory, to “buildings and vegetables, expenses for washing clothes and cleaning rooms, expenses for the provision of extra artificial light, and in many other ways” (Pigou, in Babe, 1996:90). The ambition and end goal of this approach was -and still is- to refine “scientific” methods of calculations of these kinds of “unpriced” consequences, initially conceived to impose taxes or subsidies, by means of state intervention, to “correct” the “inefficiency,” a position that was soon abandoned (state intervention in market processes have never been willingly accepted by the neo-liberal orthodoxy) in favor of cost/benefit studies. In the words of William Leiss, “Public and private spokesmen reiterated the

comforting message designed to channel debate: the matter was, like everything else, essentially one of *economic cost*. According to this view, environmental quality is one desirable commodity among many, its marginal utility to be determined by the same calculus that governs the fate of all commodities in the marketplace” (Leiss, 1974: viii). The “right to pollute” became soon a new marketable property right in the 60’s, especially promoted by the policy of the Chicago School neoclassicists (Hunt, 1979:369), and has extended to almost every conceivable domain in the 90’s. The process of commodification has now reached the atmosphere, for instance in “Gas Emissions certificates” that are currently traded in the context of Global Warming Protocols according to administratively determined national pollution or oxygen “quotas.” The World Bank estimated the trade of “CO2-bonuses” –already offered in the New York stock market- to be soon a yearly 250 billion market. How does this affect the different regions? In the case of Patagonia, what used to be a territory managed from Buenos Aires is now seen as a source to compensate “global” gas emissions, and described as one of the privileged places, because of the huge forest plantation of 25.000 square kilometers planned by the German GTZ (Society for Technical Cooperation) that is expected to absorb as much as 750 millions of tons of carbon dioxide per year (*Brecha Magazine*, Montevideo, October 5, 1998). The social space has been implicitly minimized in this kind of experiment (the local population, at best, might be considered in terms of labor and centrally planned forest-fire or surveillance brigades), and geography has been reduced to physical characteristics. The political relations, along with this transformations, are also moving from a barely accountable nation-state to unaccountable global structures and priorities of ecological balance, in which the pace of adaptation from industrial complexes and untouched automobile transportation to marketable standards is sustained or “complemented” by this kind of “resource management” projects in the margins.

Ascribing *price*-value to externalities is an multi-edged argument since value is a philosophical category that changes over time. If there were no estimation at all, because of the incommensurability of the burden on Nature of industrial activity or the non-market labor done by women, just to mention two central aspects of current debates, then there would be less space for public debate and participation, leaving consequently more space to speculations about a “neutral” technology that enable experts to perform “scientific” assessments and induce “corrective” measures via enhanced innovation or substitutability (e.g. bio-technology). Some would argue that life and Mother Earth are reducible to computer-based calculations and assessments, or at least reduced to those “relevant” aspects that are presumed to be essential for survival or even market expansion. This, assuming its feasibility, would be a *complicated* task, but it does not reflect *complexities* because it reduces subjectivity and social life to data inputs and numbers.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> One of the “complicated”, if not entertaining, side of calculations is what most escape to our recognition. Complicated calculations have always attracted some kind of attention and social admiration, as in the Arab legend of Sissa, who is believed to be the creator of chess in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. King Hiram offered to reward him with gold, but Sissa asked to be paid in a 1:2 progression of rice grains for each square of the chess board, starting with one grain (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, and so forth). It would have been physically impossible to comply (over 87,000 trillion rice grains) without losing innumerable kingdoms. Smart calculations might have been

The weaknesses of ascribing *market* value to social processes or to nature appear when externalities are translated into money, as done by analogy with Marx's argument of labor as a commodity that is sold in the market. Since money is a commodity, any analogy would imply a commodification of nature, a theoretical *tour de force* that would imply "paying nature a salary" for its "services," regardless of the yardstick that is used. The subjective historical character of any pricing system, such as class, gender, race or inter-generational differences of what is valuable and why, is assumed away. A neo-liberal representative of the Ecological Economy, for instance, claims to have found a reliable formula of how to squeeze Nature's "services" into the market:

[W]e have estimated the current economic value of 17 ecosystem *services* [sic] for 16 biomes, based on published studies and a few original calculations. For the entire biosphere, the value (most of which is outside the market) is estimated to be in the range of U\$S 16 to 54 trillion per year, with an average of 33 trillion per year. Because of the nature of the uncertainties, this must be considered a minimum estimate. The global GNP total is around 18 trillion per year (Constanza, 1997).

One of the limits of a pricing system is the standardization of value and needs, translating complex processes into the language and exchange rules of a specific currency, excluding non-market value and time-based (and therefore changing) perceptions of value.

Neoclassicism and the price system [...] as a system of information, knowledge, and communication, utterly efface intimations of uniqueness, sacredness, and intrinsic value. The uniqueness of species (let alone uniqueness of individual member of species), and the sacredness of life, are precluded by neoclassicism and the price system because, by neo-classicism's internal logic and mode of naming, uniqueness and sacredness are quite unthinkable and unimaginable. Uniqueness and sacredness alike imply incapacity for, or inappropriateness of, substitutions, which is to say they imply an absence or inappropriateness of price; *but absence of price, by neo-classicism's logic, means an absence of value* (Babe, 1995:99, my emph.)

On the other hand, the idea of risk, failure, and damage has opened the debate for new forms of accountability, especially since 1972, the year in which the "industrialist consensus" started to break, but not so much due to the action and predictions of isolated groups of scientists, the rejection by hippies of the industrial society or by "early" (western) ecologists who criticized the consequences of the dominant modes of production. The Meadows report (Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth"), in a context of

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always used to gain certain advantages, but this does not imply, conversely, that any calculation is inexorably destined to be used for domination. In many cultures, as in the ancient Arabic world, astronomy and numbers were just a social game or philosophical interrogation. After the industrialist era and the proportions of environmental and social changes, some kind of abstraction that goes beyond previous direct social experience (we do not have cultural memory of the ozone hole, for example) is necessary in order to integrate multiple *other dimensions* (e.g. spiritual meanings, other non-monetary values) into the debate. That is *complexity*, and a good example of it is the multiple social and cultural dimensions in the struggle to avoid the patenting of seeds and life in general.

panic (the so called Oil “crisis,” with its first signals being some “dramatic” limits to speed in the Deutsche Autobahn), echoed commonplaces and prejudices of “public opinion” regarding the exhaustion of natural resources due to the increase of the world’s population and conveyed mostly Neo-Malthusian undertones. However, the report had a deep impact because it was produced from within the core of the industrialist milieu and realistically described a number of problems (forests, water, soil erosion, extinction of species) and enhanced a general view of susceptibility to “natural disasters.” One of the first challenges came from the Bariloche Foundation, in a document that has been known as the “Modelo Mundial Latinoamericano”<sup>11</sup>. The main thesis of this report was that the available resources on earth (soil, metals, energy) were infinite or almost impossible to exhaust. It optimistically proposed to expand the use of nuclear power in Latin America, and declared that the main problem of the world was the lack of distributional policies and not the mode of industrial production. In the conception of the authors, there were no ecological problems; the problem was not growth (growth, on the contrary, was promoted in the report) but justice within a “developmentalist” (“*desarrollismo*”) approach, a position that has been described by Mires as “left-rostowianism” and was parallel to and shared by most of the “dependentistas” in Latin America (Mires, 1990:73).

### Notes of Context

For generations, Patagonia symbolized vast territories, unlimited resources, and the place one could find mythically depicted in Jules Verne’s *End of the World’s Lighthouse*. As one of the necessary routes to make the maritime connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans before the construction of the Panama Canal, the Strait of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego appeared in the accounts, fantasies, and writings of many travelers, scientists and adventurers (Magellan, Captain Robert Fitz Roy, Charles Darwin, Alexander von Humboldt, “Butch” Cassidy and the rest of the gang, Orélie-Antoine de Tounens [Patagonia’s “emperor”], Antoine de Saint Exupéry, Bruce Chatwin, Luis Piedrabuena, among others) all of who helped to construct an image of mystery, risk, and a sometimes aestheticized “wilderness”.

The Argentine government used its military to enforce its jurisdiction over the continental part of this region in 1879,

when Indian resistance had been wiped out and close to nine million *hectáreas* of ‘liberated’ land passed into the hands of the less than four hundred individuals who had financed [General] Roca’s Blitzkrieg-like expedition, [and the] indigenous culture was left to be forgotten by the general populace and studied by only the professional anthropologists (Foster, 1990:16).

It was one of these anthropologists, Francisco Moreno (a close friend of General Roca), who was hired as the official surveyor of the Chilean-Argentine border, and who donated the territory he received as part of his remuneration, thereby enabling creation of the Nahuel Huapi National Park in 1903, very much inspired by Yellowstone National Park in the USA. More sympathetic to the Europeanized urban context than to the windy southern lakes, and a strong defender of the liberal ideals of the national elite, Moreno created, instead, the Museum of Natural Sciences in La Plata, a local version of the

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<sup>11</sup> Herrera, A et al. (1976) Catastrophe or new society? A Latin American model Ottawa: International Research and Development Centre

Smithsonian Institution, including a monumental architecture and building up from his private collection, which included 400 indigenous skulls.

The intellectual activity of these years and the dominant direction of the institutional strategies since then have to be understood as part of a project of major proportions that affected most of the Latin American countries. “In less than a generation, Argentina assimilated the constellation of ideologemes known as positivism, a scientific codification of attitudes that supported the Liberal economic program, aimed to reject every trace of whatever could be considered pre-modern, indigenous, or ‘Hispanic’” (Foster, 1990:7). The model of the so called Generation of 1880 was predominantly pro-European, favoured urban life-styles, reinforced the dependence on foreign markets and institutions, and relied (as harbour-cities middlemen) on a staple-based economy in which the first nations were, and still are, viewed as inevitably (and “naturally”) “dying cultures”, and the country was circumscribed in terms of centrally administered wilderness and natural resources of “unlimited” abundance. The production and representation of spaces, consequently, defined distances in relation to a national centralism with its models of (European) *civilization* as opposed to *barbarism* (the local “*criollo*” population). But centralism is a term with contradictory connotations. The “country-city” dichotomy of last century’s centralism differentiated the rural-based cultural “purity” from the urban “polluted”, and socially dissolving environment (the masses). The city, being the “artificial” side, is the center of power, instrumental rationality and industry. “Wilderness”, and moreover the “indigenous”, represents the “natural”, creating a social distance to what has to be “civilized” or conquered (Barbero, 1989:170 and 205). Centralism, and the metaphor of “empty spaces” also consolidates the definition of progress “in terms of the triumph of ‘Man’ (an unequivocally gendered agent) and his technology over a wild ‘Nature’ (equally and oppositely gendered, usually explicitly), which it was its mission to tame and render ‘productive’” (Wallace & Shields, 1997:390).

### **Embeddedness: the local Identity**

Changing perceptions of identity and other-than-utilitarian views on Nature germinated in Patagonia in a combination of local historical contradictions and the emergence of an international ecological awareness, shaped first by traveler ideals of “wilderness” and lately by consumer demands for “eco-safe” and pristine places. On one hand, it stems from the involvement of the migrants to the south. The first Europeans arrived during and after the military “conquest” of 1871. The Welsh in 1865,<sup>12</sup> later Germans, Swiss, Italians, Lebanese, among others, received fiscal land to settle down by the turn of the century, when the Argentine state began to extend its influence towards the “*frontera*”. This concept of hinterland was inspired by the North American frontier, and

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<sup>12</sup> “On May 27<sup>th</sup> 1865, the barque “Mimosa”, under charter to the Welsh Emigration Society of Liverpool, left the Mersey en route for New Bay, an inlet about thirty-five kilometres north of the estuary of the Chubut [river]. On board were 153 passengers, comprising about 70 Welsh families, who, in return for the passage money of L12 per adult, were to receive ‘good food...on the voyage’, a farmstead of 100 acres per family, plus ‘at least 5 horses, 10 cows, 20 sheep, two or three pecks of wheat, a plough peculiar to the country and a number of fruit trees’ and enough supplies to last for four months after their landfall, i.e. until the first crops from the earth”. From “The Role of Symbol and Myth in the Welsh Settlement of Patagonia”, William I. Stevenson, (974), M.A. Thesis, SFU, page 16.

was actually the determining factor in the design of future cities and the railroad system in Patagonia. To conduct this project, the Argentine government designated a Californian surveyor and geographer, Bailey Willis, from 1910 to 1913. With the establishment of schools, police, postal services, administration of basic health, justice and railroad infrastructure, a new social basis was created for what could be described as a neo-conservative communitarianism and which also paved the ground for a wilderness/nature-based identity (the foundation of several mountain associations, “Clubes Andinos”, is a case in point). Friendly relationships with indigenous communities also were and are frequent. The Tehuelches and the Welsh were good friends despite the central governments concerns, and traded *guanacos*, the local llamas, and ostriches for their products. Tehuelche people also instructed Welsh settlers how to capture and ride wild horses and use the *bolos* for hunting, helped them as guides in their expeditions and provided food during shortages. Other migrational waves converged around farmer colonies in irrigated valleys (planned and carried out in the 1940’s) or close to national parks (World War refugees, internal refugees from dictatorial governments, and alternative and “New Age” settlers in the early 70’s). But also polluting industries, extensive logging and other extractive activities were subsidized and promoted, the latter based on the perception that this was a “reserve” with no end.

Within the last three decades, however, this imagery of endless resources has encountered significant limits. By the end of the 60’s, the national rural development agency revealed the consequences of intensive land use, primarily extensive cattle breeding in the *estancias*. Active sand dunes, starting near the Chilean border in the West, are crossing the continent and reaching the Atlantic Ocean, burying houses, roads and fertile land, with spiralling effects involved. By 1974, over 700 immense active erosion focuses were located (Castro, 1980). The process has increased its pace, worsened by mining, deforestation, perimeter of the artificial lakes of huge dams, and hundreds of thousands of kilometres of trails for oil prospecting. Over 70% of Patagonia is considered now to be on the verge of becoming an active and windswept desert, with incommensurable consequences which include solar reflection on the growing sand or stone surface (and therefore an additional source of global warming). Despite the knowledge about preventive and restoring techniques, which would in most cases impose prohibition or dramatic limitations to the rates of exploitation, the course of action indicates the propensity to maintain the doctrine of non-intervention of the state into “private” affairs, which means nothing else than intervention through renovated subsidies, for instance to commercial forestation in the steppe or re-forestation, but preceded by clear cutting practices. The sought solutions only promote new “*faites en avant*” and more of the same but faster. Diversification, accordingly, means the adoption of subaltern production schemes (instead of subsistence economy) such as contract farming, international merchandising systems, the creation of one Free Trade Zone for each of the provinces, extending the so-called “agriculture and cattle breeding frontier” in search of new resources, advancing towards the Andes, pushing for access to the National Parks by way of privatization and joining new potential partners (or competitors) in international tourism and real estate activities.

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