

TOWARDS OTHER RURAL-URBAN CONNECTIONS THE SOCIAL REAPPROPRIATION OF NATURE

[Text Open for Discussion]

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The suppression of the opposition between city and countryside is not only possible, it has become a direct necessity of industrial production itself, just as it has become equally a necessity of agricultural production and, above all, of public hygiene. Only through the fusion between city and countryside has it been possible to eliminate the current intoxication of the air, of water, of the soil: only that can save the masses that today perish in the cities to the point that their excrement will serve to produce plants instead of producing diseases.

Frederick Engels (in *Anti-Düring*, 1878)

To develop England, the whole planet was required.
What will be required to develop India?
Mahatma Gandhi

All of my means are rational.
Only my goals are crazy.
Moby-Dick, de Melville

The periphery is at the center and the center is on the periphery.
Gog, rapper from Brasília

It is necessary to decolonize the State.
Evo Morales Ayma

Introduction

We live at a time of historical bifurcation, as the chemist-philosopher and 1977 Nobel Prize Laureate Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003) would have said. These are not comfortable times, as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) had already warned us when, in 1928, he used the expression “uneasiness of civilization” as the title of one of his most important articles. Many authors have stated that we are at the threshold of a crisis of civilization, not of an “era of change, but rather the change of an era”, as formulated by economist Rafael Correa, Ph.D., the current President of the Republic of Ecuador. In academic circles, one hears talk of *interdisciplinarity*, *multidisciplinarity*, and *transdisciplinarity* – the same prefixes *inter/trans/multi* that are used, not only in academic circles, to talk about the relations that make up the world system

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(Wallerstein), which is increasingly *inter-nationalized*, *trans-nationalized* or *multi-nationalized*² and, to a certain extent, indicate the crisis of the Territorial State, the geographic form of organization of power in the world system that has ruled over us since 1648 (Treaty of Westphalia). Thus, the borders between scientific disciplines are no longer so strict, and the geographic borders of power, of territories have become equally porous. Anyhow, the crisis that we are witnessing is an epistemic as well as political crisis, above all a crisis of the mode of production of hegemonic knowledge with its universalistic pretensions; in reality, a universalism that wishes to stand alone (colonialism). We can no longer think with the disjunctive, dichotomist, analytical forms as we have been used to so far, such as the disjunction between space and time. From Quantum Physics to the traditions of Aymara, Quechua, Maya, Hindu, Chinese or Guarani thought, there is the recognition of that principle of relationship that denies the existence of indivisible units – the atom, the molecule, the individual – which, as we know, provide a structure to the Cartesian, Newtonian, and Copernican scientific mode of production. Physicist Werner K. Heisenberg (1901-1976), also a Nobel Prize Laureate in 1932, dealt a harsh blow to one more pillar of this disjunctive principle – subject and object – through his principle of uncertainty. The implications derived from that are enormous, such as the one that separates reason from emotion, and by so doing overlooked the fact that there is more reason in emotion and more emotion in reason than is admitted in that vain philosophy, and that knowledge is inscribed in life (Gregory Bateson, and Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela). Thus, we lack knowledge *with* the world rather than *about* the world, such as that which was imposed on the whole world together with colonialism and which survived as “colonialism” of knowledge and power (Aníbal Quijano, Edgardo Lander, Walter Mignolo, Catherine Walsh): one still wishes to belong to the “first world”, an expression of common sense that denotes this colonialism inscribed in mundane day-to-day matters.

At the core of this epistemic tradition built in a certain region of the world – Europe – the disjunction between subject and object, between reason and emotion, between culture (society) and nature, between man and woman, between civilized and uncivilized, between rural and urban, between intellectual work and manual labor; there is more than mere disjunction, but rather hierarchy as well and, with the latter, qualifications/disqualifications, in which the place of enunciation is decisive: who has the power to say what is ‘reason’ and what is ‘emotion,’ who is ‘civilized’ and who is ‘uncivilized,’ the attributes of men and women, the features of intellectual work and of manual labor, or of affirming the domination of man (of society and culture) over nature, of subject over object? Once again, we are faced with questions that are at once epistemic and political in nature.

The City and the Urban as Hegemonic Discourse

Our fight is epistemic as well as political.
Luis Macas, Quechua agronomist and engineer,
Former Coordinator of CONAIE

From that emanates the idea that it no longer makes sense to think of “urban” and “rural” or of “society” and “countryside” as two distinct worlds, even if they were once deemed as such, as we shall see. Here too, this separation was not naïve, with such

² Even a neologism has been coined – globalization – in order to indicate that we live in only one world, in a global village (McLuhan), whose persistent affirmation, over and above revealing new processes, indicates the power held by those that affirm themselves through it: large *trans-national* and *multi-national* corporations. Therefore, other scales of power – and of living – such as the local, regional, and national, are subsumed. It should be noted that the scales are not mere cartographic expressions, but rather interconnected levels of power relations; hence, there is no scale possible without social groups/classes that affirm themselves by resorting to them.

clear hegemony being assigned to “urban” and “city” over “rural” and “countryside,” for the city was/is the *locus* of enunciation of this hegemonic discourse, capable even of disqualifying the critical discourses formulated from perspectives other than the urban one as romantic, delayed and retrograde, without considering that these categories – romantic (those that are compelled by emotion rather than reason), delayed (which presupposes that someone has a clock with the right time in the world), and retrograde (those that do not recognize that history moves forward, even though the proponents of such an idea are, more often than not, based on a linear vision of time) – are self-validated, self-legitimized, that is, self-centered on those that think of reason above emotion, the developed as superior to the delayed, of progress as superior to the retrograde. Colonialism of knowledge and power (Quijano) is so consolidated that all those people that formulate a critical discourse to this epistemic and political network are disqualified from the very start; that is, they are viewed as romantic, retrograde and delayed. We insist that the effects of this theoretical-discursive network were not – and are not – only discursive: they were – and are – political. We know the trials and tribulations of the peoples, ethnicities, groups and social classes that have not had/do not have the power to say who they are and how they think about and feel the world, because their organic intellectuals have been disqualified, and so are those that simply sympathized with them.

This hierarchical discursive network that values the developed, the civilized, and progress legitimize – from a theoretical and political perspective – the hierarchy that overvalues the city and the urban to the detriment of the rural and the countryside. The city appears at the center whereas the countryside is seen as periphery, much like the developed world with respect to the underdeveloped world, or the First World in relation to the Third World.

The first truly modern cities created as rationally planned cities were founded by the Portuguese and, above all, by the Spaniards in America (Abya Yala), which earned from Angel Rama the title *City of Letters*. And these were cities of a special type among those that Henry Lefebvre has called political city (Lefebvre 1969 and 1999), that is, that which exerts domination over the countryside based upon an essentially political control. The cities created in America (Abya Yala) starting in the 16th century were deliberately created not only as part of an empire but, more than that, as part of a modern-colonial world system that has constituted our long-term history to date. Based upon this world urban network headquartered in Seville-Madrid or in Lisbon, the systematic extraction of gold and silver was organized in its materialness, which entailed violence against the peoples and regions of such production, or the agro-manufacturing system known as *plantation* — a term that has often hidden the fact that Brazil, Cuba and Haiti did not export merely raw materials, but rather sugar, which was a product manufactured under the crack of the whip at sugar mills. Sugar was the *commodity* par excellence, and Europe at that time did not boast any technology that was more sophisticated than the sugar mills. Together with those modern techniques, slavery was established with mercantile purposes, and racism grew as a system of power. To this day, our class structure is permeated by the racial question, as highlighted by Aníbal Quijano and Florestan Fernandes.

These modern (and colonial) cities were rationally planned for purposes of domination, of territorial control, in which the rationally planned *Plaza* (“Square”) promoted “de-territorialization,” leading to the first *desplazados* of the modern (and colonial) world. Hence, the *Plaza* was the seat of violence epitomized by conquest, the seat of Power,

the Power that was hungry for conquest, of course, rather than Power as a construction emanating from the free social encounter of men and women. Incidentally, the “the term ‘urban’ was recovered only in the 16th century in Portuguese³ to refer to the City-Empire, particularly in the 17th century as a reference to the City-Seat of the British Empire under construction,⁴ and even the word *City* (stemming from the French *Cité* and from the Latin *Civitas*) gained ground in the English language starting with the financial center of London, and later in the Victorian Period served as a counterbalance to the countryside” (Monte-Mór, 2006:11). Be that as it may, all of the lexicon implied in the family of concepts “urban,” “city,” *cité* and *civitas*, to name only the terms explicitly mentioned thus far, were forged in reference to a hegemonic place, marked by domination, while “City-Empire,” as the Portuguese renamed the City in the 16th century – as the “City-Seat of the British Empire” – meant that *City* gained ground “starting with the financial *center* of London” (my emphasis – CWPG) which, in turn, was the *Center* of the British Empire imposing itself on the world and becoming “generalized in the Victorian Period.” At any rate, the place of enunciation could not be any clearer: the city reigns as an empire.⁵

“Until recently, the recognition of a civilization implied the existence of *Civis*, of the City and, therefore, the native people of Brazil and North America, viewed as semi-nomadic people who did not build long-lasting cities, were deemed uncivilized, in opposition to the Mayan, Aztech and Incan civilizations, which built cities whose ruins have lasted all the way to the present time. However, continues Monte-Mór, recent ethno-historic, anthropological and archaeological approaches have questioned the validity of such classifications, whereas contemporary geography has discussed the very meaning of the City as subsequent to the so-called Agricultural Revolution” (Monte-Mór, 11). Here, it is important to draw attention to the details of the argument so as to avoid reaffirming paradigms that are part of the problem that we are facing today. We should highlight that recent approaches question the relevance of this classification between “civilized” and “uncivilized,” above all drawing our attention to the epistemic trap that is implicit in the idea that the ‘superior’ and the ‘civilized’ reside in what is long-lasting – the cities “of the Mayan, Aztech, and Incan civilizations”, in opposition to the semi-nomadic lifestyle of the “native peoples of Brazil and North America, who did not build long-lasting cities.” After all, ethno-historic, anthropological, and archaeological approaches not only question the distinction between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized,’ they also call into question the character of ‘long-lasting,’ which, in fact, validates hegemonic practices and discourses with their thirst for power expressed in an architecture that wishes to be immortal, long-lasting, leaving its imprint on eternity. And we know that it is long-lasting not only over time, it must also be visible in space in order to be long-lasting, be it through the towers of churches, monasteries and mosques, or in the modern temples of the *World Trade Centers*, as Lewis Mumford had aptly predicted in his book, *A Cidade na História* (“The City in History”).

It is thus necessary to avoid a vision that both dichotomizes and linearizes the ‘rural’ and the ‘urban’, as seems to be the case in the work by Monte-Mór, who invokes the assistance of contemporary geographers (Ericson, 2001; Fausto, 2000; Roosevelt, 1994 and Soja, 2000), when he tells us that “contemporary geography discusses the very

³ According to Houaiss, Villar and Franco (2001) apud Monte-Mór (2006).

⁴ According to Webster’s Lexicon (1987) apud Monte-Mór (2006).

⁵ We should not forget that the word *city* emerged as early as the Middle Ages, in the 13th century, according to Raymond Williams (1973 and 1983) “in a paradigmatic manner, referring to the ideal and biblical cities (instead of *borough* or *town*) and qualifying representations of power: provincial city, city-cathedral, etc.” (Monte-Mór, 11).

meaning of the city as subsequent to the so-called Agricultural Revolution,” a thesis that the author seems to embrace when he tells us that “the hypothesis – very heterodox and systematically rejected, of the precedence of the city over the countryside – was initially presented by Jane Jacobs (1969) on the basis of archaeological discoveries in the city of Çatal Huyuk (in Anatolia, Turkey, CWPG). Today, continues Monte-Mór, the discussion of such precedence has gained traction through new archaeological research involving, among others, the legendary Jericho (in Palestine, CWPG). See Soja (Soja, 2000)” (Monte-Mór, 11). The issue that seems important to recover here is not the precedence – or lack thereof – of the city over the countryside, but rather to highlight that this issue is only meaningful in the context of an evolutionist vision. It would be interesting to stress that the same author helps us with information that offers another reading that seems more complete and up-to-date, in order to understand the complexity involving the multiple relationships historically produced between “rural” and “urban,” insofar as he suggests a non-evolutionist, non-dichotomic vision. It is Monte-Mór who tells us that “the meaning of *urban* also stems from Latin, with a double connotation: from *urbanum* (“plowed”) comes the meaning “settlement”, the physical form of settlement of living space delimited by the plowing carried out by sacred bulls that marked the territory geared to the production and life of the Romans; from its semantic simplification stem the words *urbe* and *urbs*, the latter term referring to Rome, the City-Empire, which thus vanished until the great cities of the modern era came into being.” (Op. Cit.: 11). We have already analyzed the meaning of City-Power above, when we said that it was not exactly with the great cities of the modern era that the family of concepts that range from the city to the urban reappeared (the Iberian modern-colonial city, the City of Letters, and the term ‘urban’ in the Portuguese language recovered in the 16th century bear proof of that). What we are indeed saying through the analytical opening that we are attempting is the fact that “urban” comes from plowing (*urbanum*), which indicates that the two terms bear a relationship that is at the origin of the relationship between society and nature through the organization of space: it is the plowing carried out by sacred bulls that marks the earth and renders geography possible, which recovers the meaning of culture as originating from cultivation, rather than something that exists outside of the relationship with nature. From time immemorial, thus, culture is not in the city just as nature is not in the countryside, as the linearizing and dichotomic visions would have led us to believe, with all the ensuing damage produced. Even though we should recognize the huge theoretical and practical implications of human settlements,⁶ whether or not these were spatially concentrated, the rural and the urban are much more relational than we have admitted thus far. Hence, over above “rural” and “urban,” it is the relationship between society and nature that we should tackle; that is, that of human settlements understood from the vantage point of social and power relationships that were geographically constituted in their historicity. As we have seen, the city and the “urban” did not precede the countryside or the “rural,” inasmuch as the *urbanum*, that is, the settlement marked by plowing brought men and women together, constituting them territorially in a settlement as *locus* of construction in the common sense (proxemia), as place of encounters, as commun+ity. After all, men and women do not exist as individuals or, if they portray themselves as

⁶ For a series of activities, such as agriculture, livestock, and plant (collection) as well as animal (hunting and fishing) gathering activities, territorial extension is a condition for production, and it was decided that the areas where such activities were developed would be called “rural,” even though “rural” is by no means restricted to that. Among the so-called activities that are developed in urban areas, territorial extension does not pose as a condition for production. Here, there is a mistake with dramatic consequences, as we shall demonstrate later, which, I dare say, renders inconceivable any city as sustainable, in view of the fact that it is not able to constitute its own system of matter and energy.

such, it is through the social and power relationships that they make up and that make them up.⁷ In this case, the geographic space is a condition for existence: habitat-inhabitant-*habitus*⁸ are conditioned reciprocally.

Thus, instead of saying that today there is an interrelationship and a lack of distinction between rural and urban, it would be more valid to say that this indissociable link has always existed, even though the mutual relationship between men and women through human settlements has been extremely varied over space and time, which does not warrant an attempt to find one exclusive history of the city-countryside relationship or one exclusive history of the rural-urban relationship. After all, what do Tenochtitlan, Rome, Cuzco, Uhr, Paris and Dar-es-Salam hold in common? Or what do even Ancient Rome and present-day Rome hold in common? Or the Tenochtitlan of the Aztecs and present-day Mexico City, beyond the fact that they are linked to the same geographic place, even though the geographic site is no longer the same?

Therefore, what prevented us from seeing this indissociable character between the city and the countryside, between rural and urban, were mainly the theories that we have forged which – rather than help us to understand – served as the rationale for the domination of one over the other. Who among us has not heard that to be civilized, developed, or to progress we would have to move from the “rural” to the “urban”? To deconstruct the rural-urban (ou urban-rural) epistemic and political web thus becomes essential if we are to start opening other pathways in which to consider the triad habitat-inhabitant-*habitus*, that is, the relationship with our mundane space, the space of our living worlds.

Consequently, the challenge that we face today is no longer simply to break away from inherited paradigms and merely search for other theories to help us overcome the hegemonic paradigms that separate subject from object and reason from emotion, but to overcome the perverse effects of this mode of production of knowledge *about* the world rather than production of knowledge *with* the world. We should stress that, by virtue of its theoretical-political implications, we cannot reproduce the Platonic tradition of searching for a new idea (*Teo+ria*) just to take it to the (mundane) world of imperfection, a theory before the world. After all, paradigms do not fall from heaven; rather, they are instituted in the shifting sands of history through instituting processes that are led (instituted) by men and women made of flesh and blood, as English Marxist Historian E. Thompson used to say. Hence, the crisis of paradigms is at once a crisis of society, that is, of the processes and subjects that instituted them (Castoriadis, 1982) and overcoming it implies the identification of which subjects and instituting processes are in progress which could provide new mutual relationships among men and women and between them and nature through other forms of settlement, of spatial organization. Social movements offer us the best clues in that regard.

When we say that today we are not confronting merely a theoretical question in the face of the crisis of hegemonic rationality, what we do when we identify in it, with assistance

⁷ Carlos Lekensdorf talks about the Mayas who, in the Tojolabal language, say: “one of us have committed a crime”; here, where a mistake in agreement could be detected, there is another form of agreement between subject and verb, whereby the crime committed by one of *us* in another community is one of *us* committing a crime. Hence, they recognize individuality as a community construct. Lekensdorf calls this a process of *us-trification* to characterize the manner in which the whole process of constitution of this Mayan group takes place as a process in which the common constitutes each individual. (See Lekensdorf, Carlos, 2006. *Filosofar em Clave Tojolabal*, Ed. UNAM, México, D.F.).

⁸ *Habitus* is, according to P. Bourdieu, “[...] a system of durable and transposable dispositions which, by integrating all *past experiences*, works at each moment as a matrix of perceptions, of appreciations and actions – and makes it possible to undertake tasks that are infinitely differentiated, thanks to the analogical transferences of schemes” (Bourdieu, 1983: 165). In: *Sociologia*. Ortiz, Renato (organizer), São Paulo, Ed. Ática. 1983. See also P. Descola and his “schemes of practices” (Descola, Ph. (2003), *Antropología de la Naturaleza*, Lima: Institut Français d’Études Andines (IFEA)/ Lluvia Editors), E. Thompson and his concept of experience, and Cornelius Castoriadis with his concept of “imaginary institution.”

from chemist and epistemology expert Enrique Leff, its practical and grave effects, above all those of the greenhouse effect (global warming), which is nothing more than the effect of the success of the epistemic-political system that emanates from Illuminism and the Industrial Revolution with its much-taunted steam engine. James Watt (1736-1819) has had a prominent role because he brought together in his steam engine a set of procedures that had been turned off. We all know the implications of the Industrial Revolution to the course of evolution of cities and the reconfiguration of the “urban.” In the illuminist psyche, the steam engine⁹ would be the definitive affirmation of man in his thirst for domination over nature. One used to believe that, from that point on, the city – by inserting itself in the metabolic circuit of production instead of merely extracting surplus from the countryside (and little is said of peasants, other peoples and ethnicities) – would gain emancipation from nature. Starting at the Industrial Revolution, people believed that the city would gain autonomy and, henceforth, everything would spin out of the city as the center.¹⁰ That was labeled the urban conquest, in which the “urban” was seen everywhere as “extensive urbanization” (Monte-Mór, 1994). In sum, what we have here is the “urban” rigorously colonizing minds and territories, and we have already seen how these two always go together.

The universalization of the use of machines – it seemed that no branch of human activity could do without them – made us believe that this was a universal technique. The use of the steam engine in transportation, initially on railways, and later in maritime navigation across oceans, provided the material and logistical conditions for the development (or “de-envelopment”) of all places. In other words, the conditions had been created for breaking through the seclusion of each place, each people, and each community. This was termed “development,”¹¹ most notably in the post-1949 world (Escobar, 1996).

In fact, through a paradoxical smokescreen of sorts, the machine became more visible than the steam itself, and we ended up forgetting that we had come from nature, or that we did not rule over it as the illuminist anthropocentrism – in its various strains, from Liberalism to Marxism – would have us believe. We saw mainly the products, the fruits that could be obtained through the use of coal and oil in those machines, over and above the effects derived from the laws of thermodynamics, among them the energy that is dissipated in the form of heat and waste (the principle of entropy).¹²

⁹ The steam engine was the expression of industry, not in the physical, substantive sense that we got used to hearing: the factory. The steam engine was the realization of human industry, of the human intellect, in the same sense – rather uncommon today – that men are ingenious, industrious, that is, the expression of human creativity and talent.

¹⁰ The Newtonian paradigm affirms and is affirmed through this reading.

¹¹ Arturo Escobar (Escobar, 1996) shows us that the word “development” had limited use until the late 1940s. Beforehand, the European presence in Africa was justified by talking openly about colonization which, as Enrique Dussel has taught us, flowed naturally from those that saw themselves as superior and, therefore, were obliged to raise others to their own level (a new form of evangelization?). With the struggles of different nations, mainly Africans and Asians, in the postwar era to free themselves from colonialism, colonization lost ground and was eventually replaced with the (colonial?) idea of development. After all, the prefix *sub* was increasingly applied to most non-European, non-Western countries (and the United States, the favorite realization of such Eurocentrism), being virtually synonymous with sub-European and sub-North American; that is, these were countries where most of the population was rural; schooling was low; primary activities predominated; industrialization was incipient; the share of urban population was small, among other characteristics (Yves Lacoste summarized all of this very well in his book *Os Países Subdesenvolvidos*). Starting at that point, missions from the World Bank were in charge of diagnosing underdevelopment, buttressing this (colonial?) vision with data. It is quite relevant to note that these actions by the World Bank were called “missions,” but these new agents were not called “missionaries.” After all, and once again, they tried to save others in the exact measure that the other ceases to be the “other” and starts being measured by parameters that are external to him/her (a new form of catechism?).

¹² Ingenuamente credita-se ao engenho criativo da técnica, a enorme capacidade produtiva que com ela é alcançado, e assim, olvida-se a dimensão material implicada. É que energia é, segundo os físicos, capacidade de realizar trabalho, assim como trabalho é a transformação da matéria. Um certo antropocentrismo viu mais a técnica e o trabalhador e olvidou que a energia contida na molécula de carbono (no carvão e no petróleo), embora descoberta pelo cientista não é feita pelos homens, mas sim pela natureza. Marx, recuperando os fisiocratas que conhecia bem, criticou seus companheiros de partido

The greenhouse effect, though it is not produced exclusively by emissions of CO² derived from factories, undoubtedly has in the industrialization process its main *leitmotif* (means of transportation in general and, more specifically, the widespread use of automobiles; the industrialization of agriculture, and the widespread use of fossil fuels and fertilizers, among others).

Because it was founded on the principle of domination, all of the technical-practical knowledge due to the deepest technological developments ever witnessed by mankind has overlooked the fact that man is inscribed within nature. As with any relationship characterized by domination, those that dominate impose their own will upon others; therefore, they withdraw from others what interests them and forget the latter's "otherness" in the process. This is what happens in relationships of domination among human beings, between man and nature, among groups, social classes, peoples, and ethnicities, as well as between men and women as genders. Neglecting our relationship with nature has produced an enormous concrete result today: global warming, which is not the offshoot of failures in the system, but rather of its success. Thus the need for another epistemic thought for a different policy, or another policy for a different epistemic thought. We are confronted with the need for a complex dialectical thought, a dialectics of complexity, as suggested by Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (Casanova, 2006) in order to search for other ways to make our own geography, to reinvent our settlements.

Some Dilemmas and Challenges Facing Human Settlements Today

It is quite surprising that, back in the year 2000, over half of the world's population (53%) should live, according to the UN, in rural areas. As a matter of fact, this surprise is due not only to the exaltation of "urbanization as the model of civility, belittling rural lifestyles as pre-modern and inferior forms of existence" (Leff, 2001: 288), but also to the Eurocentrism that goes with it. After all, if we were to look at the world from the vantage point of other continents, such as Asia or Africa, for example, we would not be surprised by these figures. Hence, over and above the fact that mankind is urban, we live under the specter that we should all be urban! Urbanization is seen as a destination in the multiple senses that the word entails and, therefore, policies should be geared to the task of overcoming the "rural," that "pre-modern and inferior form of existence," which must be overcome through industrialization and, consequently, by urbanization. And that has been the case. The same UN will let us know that in 2008 its figures indicated that, for the first time, the urban population equaled the rural population. From that point on, if nothing is done to change this trend, the concentration of the world's population will tend to focus increasingly on concentrated settlements.

Since the 1960s, above all in Latin America, a third large wave of expropriation of peasants and other peoples and ethnicities was set in motion, thus giving rise to what David Harvey would later call the process of "accumulation through expropriation" (Harvey, [2004], 2006). As we know, the two largest waves of expropriation prior to that were the one promoted by the colonial conquest/invasion of America and, in

fazendo uma nova crítica ao Programa de Gotha dizendo que não era só o trabalho que produzia a riqueza e que se o trabalho era o pai, a natureza era a mãe. Infelizmente essa aguda compreensão teve pouca consequência na tradição teórico-política por ele inaugurada. O fato de hoje os Estados Unidos da América terem aproximadamente 800 bases militares em todo o mundo é a expressão dessa dependência material para o processo de acumulação do capital, que o seu amplo desenvolvimento científico e tecnológico não é capaz de produzir. O papel de ponta da indústria bélica no desenvolvimento científico e tecnológico é outra expressão da violência necessária para dominar a natureza, inclusive os povos assimilados à natureza (selvagens, isto é, da selva) e que devem ser (des) envolvidos (Ver Porto-Gonçalves, 1989).

particular, that of Africa, where a true populational *razia* was committed through the slave trade, in which the English secured an important source of original capital accumulation. A second large wave of expropriation may be seen against European peasants through the de-territorialization engineered by the so-called *enclosures*, whereby fields were fenced off, most notably their common areas, in order to allow for the primacy of private property along the lines of capitalism.¹³

The geography of the urban phenomenon in the world has taken on a new configuration over the past few years. Despite the glaring hegemony of the urban-industrializing ideology, it is not in the industrialized countries that the majority of the world's urban population is found. Today, in each group of ten city dwellers in the world, seven are in Asia, Africa or in Latin America and the Caribbean, and only three are in Europe, the USA, and Japan. The ideology of the "urban" as the "model of civility" does not correspond to the day-to-day reality in which 70% of the planet's urban population lives. Of the almost three billion urban dwellers (2,923 billion), roughly 924 million live in shantytowns, and 94% of these slum dwellers are located in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, according to the UN. In other words, the population living in slums in today's world is larger than the overall population of all developed countries combined (Canada, the USA, Japan, and Europe). Worse yet, almost 50% of all of the world's urban population lives under precarious conditions, according to Samir Amin, and that corresponds to 64% of the total urban population of those countries lying on the periphery of the world system and 27,3% of the urban population of the countries lying at the world's economic and geopolitical core!

SOCIAL CLASSES WITHIN THE WORLD'S URBAN POPULATION
(Millions of Inhabitants)

	CORE	PERIPHERY	WORLD
Rich and Middle Classes	330	390	720
Popular Classes			
Stabilized	390	330	720
Precarious	270	1,290	1,560
Total Popular Classes	660	1,620	2,280
Overall Total	990	2,010,000	3,000,000

Source: Samir Amin

We may say that we are witnessing yet another process of "de-ruralization," rather than a process of urbanization per se; that is, we are facing the dismantling of the rural environment rather than the building of an urban one, at least in those regions where most urban dwellers live today, according to the UN. After all, the majority of this population lives without the most basic urban services, such as sewage systems, housing, health, education, and transport.

In fact, the territorial reach of such *suburban* – viewed here as synonymous with *sub-human* – settlements has led to an expression – *periphery*¹⁴ – that indicates that we are facing a phenomenon of a different type, below both the "urban" and the "rural." The

¹³ Esclareça-se que a propriedade camponesa, também na Europa, comportava essa combinação de propriedade individual (familiar) e propriedade comum, aliás a combinação mais comum em todo o mundo.

¹⁴ Aqui é importante prestar atenção aos artistas populares que surgem dessas periferias, em particular os *rappers*, sobretudo os *rappers* da periferia (dos países) da periferia, esse outro sujeito de enunciação que emana desse outro lugar de formulação de discurso, fundamental se queremos produzir um conhecimento que emane do mundo, ainda que imundo.

populations in such peripheries, in addition to their immense vulnerability to the risks of immediate natural causes – downpours, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes – live in an environment marked by general insecurity, where the main *causa mortis* among the youth is murder.¹⁵

Thus, not even the idea of the “urban” as the artificialization of nature may be attached to these settlements on the peripheries; actually, even in that sense, the population feels more dramatically its vulnerability to the diseases, floods, and mudslides to which they are subjected on a daily basis. Nature leaves its imprint much more by way of death than life in those urban configurations and their peripheries.

Although to this day “the city still upholds the prestige that had been bestowed upon it by Ancient Greece, as a place where democracy and civility among human beings is forged” (Leff, 2001: 288), in no sense can we find urbanity and civility in the cities-peripheries of Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Caracas, Bogotá, Mumbai, Lagos, Johannesburg, nor where the poorest live in New York, Paris, and Tokyo. Violence is the most glaring demonstration of how far we are from having the most basic rules of civility of a democratic regime; that is, argumentation and dialogue based upon the exchange of words, rather than brutal force or bullets. In sum, the growth of the population living in cities around the world has not entailed citizenship.

The periphery thus stands as a phenomenon below that which would be considered “rural” or “urban”; actually, it stands for neither of the above. It is yet another territorial configuration characteristic of a process geared to the globalization of capital that implies various scales, a process felt in the dramatic day-to-day affairs of ever-growing swaths of the world’s population. As an environmental challenge, this phenomenon forces us to consider, once again, the materialness of social processes and power structures from the perspective of their territorial and geographic inscription.

Europe managed to disperse its populations around the world when such populations began to migrate to working class neighborhoods in the course of the 19th century, and neither industry nor urbanization could ensure employment to those people. Cecil Rhodes, an English millionaire, stated the situation in 1895 in the following terms:

“Yesterday I went to London’s East End and watched an assembly of jobless people. At that meeting, I heard exalted speeches with loud cries for Bread! Bread! Upon reflecting on my way back home, about what I had heard, I was convinced, more than ever before, of the importance of imperialism. I am intimately convinced that my idea represents the solution to that social problem: to save from deleterious warfare forty million inhabitants in the United Kingdom, we, colonial politicians, must dominate new territories so as to place in them the excess population, in order to find new markets in which to place the products of our factories and our mines. The Empire, I have said that time and again, is a question for the stomach. If they do not want civil war, they must turn into imperialists.” (Published in *Die Neue Zeit*, XVI, I, 1898: 304 apud Lenin, 1947: 102).

History showed that this was neither rhetoric nor the bravado of a politician. In the USA, the migrant population, many of them coming from Europe, was dispersed around the prairies of the Midwest on open fields to be cultivated, albeit at the expense of indigenous populations that were massacred in the process and with the exclusion of blacks from the rush towards the West, because they were slaves at the time. That is,

¹⁵ . Segundo o então Secretário de Segurança Pública do Rio de Janeiro, o antropólogo Luiz Eduardo Soares há, no Brasil, um *déficit* de população entre 16 e 24 anos, tal como nos países que passaram por guerras.

those were lands opened by white people at the expense of indigenous people and without blacks.

That offered the inhabitants of European and US cities a quality of life that took into account many of the requirements organized by labor unions and political parties made up of workers, way beyond the cries for “Bread! Bread!” – such as education, health, and housing. The reduction of the work day to 8 hours (it had been 15 to 16 hours daily) contributed to the reduction of morbidity and mortality. One example: deaths by tuberculosis have plummeted in Europe since 1890, even before the first sanatorium was opened¹⁶ in 1905. We should not forget, therefore, the political context leading to the emergence of a very strong labor movement abounding with doctrines and theoretical formulations such as socialism, communism, social-democracy, and anarchism, in which capitalism was the object of various criticisms. The geographic dispersion of European migrants mitigated to a large extent part of the tension of the struggles among classes on that continent, as Cecil Rhodes had recommended. As we can see, imperialism has deepened the modern-colonial character of the world system. Thus, among us in this part of the world, the spectacle of housing tenements in utter degradation on urban peripheries, and sometimes slums *stricto sensu*, is the very portrait of a habitat that has not effectively incorporated inhabitants as citizens.

Maybe one of the greatest challenges that we face today is that of recognizing (and overcoming) that racist character that permeates the whole globalization process since its inception in 1492, and which today is made acutely evident in the day-to-day lives of populations that live closer and closer together, not only because they live side by side in the cities and their immediate peripheries, but also because of the greater mobility of people (due to migration) and means of communication.

The geographic space where we live our daily lives shelters this history by means of its habitat and its inhabitants, with the particularities derived from social struggles, as well as the breakthroughs and downfalls in the processes of democratization that have evolved unequally around the planet. In Latin America, for example, the intense *de-ruralization* and *urban “peripherization”* of the past 30 to 40 years have been carried out, in most countries, under dictatorial regimes; therefore, far from assimilating social movements as legitimate protagonists of the invention of democratic practices, they have criminalized and marginalized them, even as they contemplated their requests from a material viewpoint (sewage systems, housing, increased student enrollment in schools, etc.). Nonetheless, since the Caracazo in 1989, almost two dozen governments have fallen in our region due to social mobilization against neo-liberal policies, delegitimizing these policies and, mostly after 1998, paving the way for other political groups to rise to power, all of which have called this agenda into question in a more or less explicit manner (we are referring here to Hugo Chávez Frías, Rafael Correa, Tabaré Vasquez, Evo Morales, Fernando Lugo, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, Daniel Ortega, and the Kirchners).

¹⁶ Pouca importância tem sido atribuída às conquistas sociais efetuadas pelo movimento operário, ainda que sob o capitalismo. Por exemplo, a queda da taxa da mortalidade tem sido mais atribuída aos avanços da medicina do que ao movimento operário. O exemplo acima é emblemático. Algumas conquistas do movimento operário foram fundamentais para a forma urbana das cidades européias, entre as quais destaco: a redução da jornada de trabalho que permitiu às famílias mais tempo para cuidar de seus filhos; a conquista da redução, e até mesmo a proibição do trabalho de crianças; a conquista dos direitos das mulheres de jornada de trabalho diferenciada e da licença maternidade. O primeiro eletrodoméstico de consumo de massa foi a máquina de costura (quem não se lembra da máquina Singer?) com a mulheres passando a costurar as roupas da família, em parte pela diminuição da contratação de mulheres pelo capital. Cabe a dúvida: foram as conquistas operárias com direitos diferenciados para as mulheres que diminuiu o interesse dos capitalistas na contratação da mão de obra feminina?

Over this latest period of neo-liberal globalization, we have also noticed the emergence of a significant movement of poor youth from the urban peripheries, under a strong cultural influence from afro-descendants, which shows us how resistance to this state of affairs has spread across the board. Politics has acquired another language in those same environments through these protagonists that reinvented politics through art, such as the *hip hop* movement that, with its graffiti, marks the urban territory with its signatures; with its dances — *break dance* — it occupies the urban *centers*; and with its poetry — *rap* — they provide social criticism of their day-to-day lives. Here, the periphery gains a new meaning.

This true revolution in the social geography over the past few years, which has forged this phenomenon of great magnitude that is the periphery, has taken place, at the same time, under the aegis of policies of a neo-liberal nature, in which the social responsibility of the State has diminished considerably (Tavares, 2003, and Porto-Gonçalves, R. 2003).

When we consider all of these processes in light of their geographic makeup, that is, of their inscription in the materialness of the geographic space of our daily lives, the drama lived by these populations on the peripheries gains a concrete dimension with the multiplication of *natural disasters* stemming from the extreme vulnerability to risks to which they are subjected. We should remember that most cities in Central America and in Andean America are located in areas of encounter between geological plates and are, therefore, susceptible to earthquakes; let us also remember that in Central America and the Caribbean, the occurrence of cyclones and hurricanes is constant (some scientists have even stated that there has been an increase in their incidence as a result of global climate change); likewise, many of these cities are situated in topographically accident-prone areas featuring juxtaposed valleys and steep slopes, which renders them particularly vulnerable to mudslides and floods with an alarming frequency, especially when we consider the tropical climate that encompasses the bulk of our region.

It is important to highlight that it is not only the urban phenomenon that has gained new features at the present time; rather, the whole space has gained a new significance on account of new relationships and social struggles. The phenomenon of the periphery provoked by intense migration from the countryside to the city showcases all the limits impinging on urbanization.

Even rurally-based social movements, as is the case of Brazil's Movement of Landless Rural Workers, seek to organize unemployed populations on the urban peripheries in order to come up with settlements geared to the struggle for land reform. Hence, there is an interface between the urban question and the agrarian question. The industrialization of agriculture has placed public health under scrutiny everywhere: bird flu, swine flu, mad cow disease; anyhow, the names of animals – chicken, pig and cow – which have become increasingly involved in artificial food chains remind us that we are still inscribed in nature's metabolic circuits even as these are urbanized and industrialized. We should not forget that the production of foodstuffs has always entailed the production of knowledge (agriculture is the culture of the fields, we hasten to repeat). Thus, what we have been witnessing of late is the displacement of the *locus* of production of knowledge from the fields (and from peasants and other peoples and ethnicities) to the laboratories of large corporations; therefore, more than genetically modified organisms, what we now have amounts to foodstuffs modified in laboratories (See Porto-Gonçalves, 2007). As a result, there is a profound relationship between agricultural production, with its industrialized seeds serialized in monocultivation patterns, and the *fast food* of industrialized food chains. In other words, the metabolism of the relationship between society and nature is being altered by homogeneous fields

polluted by agrochemical products – the same process that leads to soil as well as genetic erosion (loss of biodiversity) in order to render products homogeneous and to serve the food that we eat at *shopping malls*, supermarkets, and *fast food* stores.

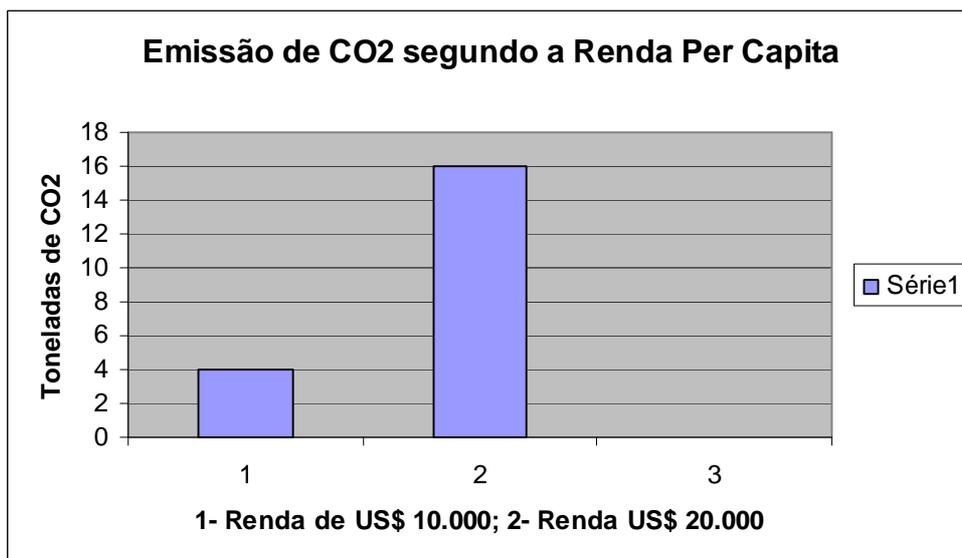
Hence, today the relationship between city and countryside is of a different type, as we have seen. The concepts of “rural” and “urban” are no longer the same concepts that we used to talk about up until a few years ago.

Distances are not the same in the face of new means of transportation and communication that require new values, where cultural diversity and the right to be different may coexist with social justice and the end of the racism that justified them. This is a requirement that is indeed possible in the social reorganization process currently under way.

“The suppression of the opposition between city and countryside is not only possible, it has become a direct necessity of industrial production itself, just as it has become equally a necessity of agricultural production and, above all, of public hygiene. Only through the fusion between city and countryside has it been possible to eliminate the current intoxication of the air, of water, of the soil: only that can save the masses that today perish in the cities to the point that their excrement will serve to produce plants instead of producing diseases.” So said F. Engels at the end of the 19th century, foreshadowing current environmental problems.

The Ecological Effects of the Urban-Rural Connection at the Present Time

There has been a large environmental impact provoked by the increase in the concentration of populations at some points of geographic space, in the cities and their peripheries. The geographic concentration implies, in and of itself, environmental issues that are not present when the population is spread out in rural areas, such as waste, the water supply, sewage systems; in a word, public health becomes an environmental problem of great magnitude. Furthermore, the financial costs needed to ensure basic ecological conditions for the reproduction of life are enormous (such as garbage collection, water supply grids, and sewage systems for millions of inhabitants concentrated in the same area).



CO2 Emissions According to Per Capita Income

Tons of CO₂

Series 1

- 1 – Income of US\$10,000;
- 2 – Income of US\$20,000.

Hence, we are before the concrete manifestation of the effects of an increase in entropy due to changes in the biogeochemical cycles of life on the planet. The growth of populations into urban-peripheral clusters not only exponentially increases the demand for matter and energy, but above all, completely changes the spatial and temporal relationship of biogeochemical cycles. Let us take a closer look at this.

The environmental impact of urban populations is not limited to a local sphere or the urban site itself. *Ecological footprint* analysis calculated for some cities in different regions in the world demonstrates this. The population of London, for instance, makes up 12% of the UK population, however, demands a 21 million ha *ecological footprint* or, more simply, all of the UK's productive land, according to calculations by Herbert Giardet from the London Trust. Let us consider the seriousness of this data: the United Kingdom can only support 12% of its population and thus, 88% of the UK population's *ecological footprint* is on areas in other regions of the planet.

According to a 2002 UNEP bulletin, “a typical North American city with a population of 650,000 people would require 30,000 km² of land, an area roughly the size of Vancouver Island in Canada, to meet its domestic needs without including the environmental demands of industry. In contrast, a similarly sized city in India would require only 2,900 km²” (GEO-3: 243). In other words, a person in a typical North American city has an *ecological footprint* of 461 ha, whereas in India, the *per capita ecological footprint* is 45 ha!

These data demonstrate the environmental injustice in which the current standard of world power implies, allowing us to refer to a true ecological debt of urban populations to rural ones, of industrialized countries and their populations to agricultural countries and their populations and, above all, of wealthy populations to the poor.

Culture, suburbanization and mass media

There is a relationship that must never be forgotten regarding the relation between space and the constitution of a common thing, that is, commun+ication and commun+ity through space. After all, it is through language that men and women build a common sense for their lives, creating a space of belonging that ultimately constitutes their territory. Space, community and communication are thus terms that are reciprocally explained. Hence, the implications between the creation of meaning and the material support for communication are enormous. There are situations in which this support is the body itself when each person has him or herself as support and has the right to voice and this voice's outreach needs no mediation. Even though one can still beat on a drum or send smoke signals, there is a horizon where each person can see and hear with his or her own body. With the support of writing, one can dissociate the body from the word and thus the word can flee from the space of immediate reference where the bodies find themselves. Empires would not exist without writing. Socrates refused to write anything. On the other hand, J. Gutemberg (? – 1548) invented the printing press so as to disseminate the Holy Word, the Bible and once again, machine, modernization (colonization) and religion (catechism) are linked. With machines that disseminate ideas, the power of a few (emitters) of imposing their truth over many (receptors) grew. The body that emits is not the same as the one that receives and thus the meanings are fragmented: some speak, others listen. This is not the place for us to expound on the phenomena of social communication, but just simply consider the meaning between space, politics and social communication.

This reflection helps us understand the rarely emphasized fact of enormous environmental impacts in the context of neoliberal globalization: they are the effects of what we call (de)ruralization and the accelerated growth of population clusters in cities and their peripheries within Latin America, *together with the implementation of major entrepreneurial mass media.*

Let us take a closer look at the Brazilian case for its importance. In 1960, Brazil's urban population was 28 million against 32 million in the rural region but in 1970, for the first time, Brazil became predominantly urban. In 2010, Brazil has approximately 172 million inhabitants in cities and their outskirts. In other words, in 50 years this urban population grew more than six fold while the total population grew a little over threefold.

The effects of this growth have already been observed in precarious settlements. Let us analyze the reterritorialization process to which these populations were submitted in these new settlements. We must however point out that these populations had no formal education when they lived in rural areas. The arrival of large human clusters in Brazil coincided with the implementation of modern communication systems, namely television. Both Embratel (Brazilian Telecommunication Company) and Globo Network were created in 1965, the latter has become since then the largest network among the big communication corporations in the country. One must bear in mind that it was precisely in the 60s that Brazil's urban population surpassed its rural one.

Traditionally, cultures that are made up of populations with no formal education are rich in audiovisual expressions. This fact would cause an effect of great esthetic quality expressed by the quality of Brazilian television. After all, television is a means of audiovisual communication, where that culture concocted with no formal education presents its best quality.

Now, first associate this picture to a dictatorship established in 1964 and later on to a true massification process through advertising and marketing which produced, besides newsreels and soap operas, completely different values from those urban environments of the first industrial cities. In English cities, Charles Dickens and F. Engels gave us beautiful descriptions of that landscape, the neighborhood and the proximity of people, largely contributed to the constitution of a subjectivity that would become known as working class awareness. After all, urbanization of the cities in the first industrialized countries occurred around the factories that were being built and thus, industrial cities and working class neighborhoods were one and the same thing.

Reterritorialization of peasants arriving at the cities in Europe as well as in the US, happened largely by adapting their identities through mutual assistance associations and trade unions which originated the first labor unions. Teaching an illiterate person to read was one of the most common forms of solidarity that made p the working class in the first days of urbanization. This is one of the reasons that English newspapers had enormous circulation with some having as many as a million daily issues in 1900.

Under marked urban-periphery conditions such as the Brazilian one in the past 50 years coupled with the implementation of corporate audiovisual means of communication, that favored audiovisual esthetics creation in line with the best Brazilian popular culture traditions, the capitalistic fabrication of subjectivity (Guatari) acquired enormous sociopolitical power namely under a military dictatorship regime. There is a wealthy esthetics in the advertising that entices desire everyday all day long. The poor landscape of urban peripheries is in tune with the mock landscape on TV. There is a symbolic violence of enormous implications for urban life.

Mass communication was essential in the constitution of this new rural-urban configuration in this period that many call neoliberal globalization. Let us recall here a

fine observation made by the English historian and environmentalist E. Thompson, in the book *Costumes em Comum* (Common Customs), when he points out that we are the first generation in History for which the production of needs no longer belongs to families or to the most immediate territorial community. There are fantastic industrial means of forming needs which make children much more influenced by them than by their own parents. Consequently, we see changes in their reference to their idols, which increasingly become mediatic models. **We should not underestimate the implications of the displacement of value from work to consumption, which implies in another relation with the world, space and time. Labor implies in a kind of satisfaction with what is done within a time frame and satisfaction derives from an effort, firstly, and then seeing the job done. There is a time and an effort between the desire and the attainment of the desire. On the other hand, consumption implies in immediate satisfaction, and therefore, without the mediation of labor. This immediatism largely infantilizes people because, just like a child, between the desire and its fulfillment, there is crying. In youth, the childish accomplishment of a desire may give rise to violence for a prompt resolution. And this urge for short term resolutions contributes to the exhaustion of politics, as Hanna Arendt had already pointed out, and not only when violence substitutes everyone's right to a voice because it nullifies the other. Politics loses any sense when there is no future to be debated, which presupposes, obviously, that one has something in common with whom to build a future.**

It is important to highlight here that what one most sees in urban waste are wrappings of all sorts. The wrapping is not only used to condition a product. It also serves to wrap the consumer himself with its esthetics. Thus, another meaning of wrapping emerges, since to wrap also means to wrap someone up to make him sleep and thus, all nicely wrapped up, we are led to our dreams and on this journey to the accomplishment of the purchase. When one is unemployed and/or does not have income to make the dream come true, this is its most perverse feature, namely when one looks at youth, the symbolic counter-violence becomes, oftentimes, mortal. Here lies the importance of the black poor youth *hip hop* movement that transforms violence into poetry, in reflection.

Thus, we see ourselves facing socio-environmental contradictions that are subjectively instigated by all sorts of media which, nonetheless, gives meaning to social and power relationships of a productive-consumerist society that is anchored by this Narcissistic individualism. This is what we see every day in the urban space in traffic, in traffic jams, in mental tension, in cardio-respiratory diseases, in accidents and their trauma, in CO² and other greenhouse gas emissions, in the debatable speed; in short, in the general impotence that is transferred to engine power through the object relationship between men and women, which is growingly suggested, when not explicit, in car advertisements¹⁷ and others.

Hence, individual transport overlaps collective transportation causing the known damage to the environment and to everyone's psychism, through deliberate actions by large corporations that have their interests (and of their shareholders) in mind in detriment to the health of everyone else and of the planet. Today in many cities around the world what we see are traffic jams all around and restrictions to the use of cars with rotation of odd and even number car plates or campaigns for car use restriction. The time needed to reach the workplace and our homes is increasingly growing (H. Lefebvre

¹⁷ After all, the automobile, ultimate symbol of individualism and of the power this ideology incites did not impose itself on each one of us as a natural result of its superior virtues to collective transport. At least, this is what a trustworthy source as the Antitrust Commission of the US Senate assures us when it states that between 1932 and 1956, General Motors was involved in the demise of the streetcar system in, at least, 45 American cities.

called this imposed time). Everyday urban life synthesizes the planet's situation: with 20 to 25% of the urban population owning a car, everyone suffers the effects of jams, as well as, 20% of the wealthiest people in the world population consume over 80% of all raw materials and energy traded every year in the world. This consumption accomplishment ideology is still so strong and the automobile, its most important symbol, is such that although we're all in traffic jams most people dream in having this good as E. Altvater taught us, it's an oligarchic good. Recently, in 2008, during what the media called the financial crisis, automotive industry got special treatment, which just demonstrates the car's centrality as an emblematic component of what has been called urban.

Griot, Other Connections: mobility and action

It is not the first time that a broad population transfer process is recorded in recent history. Actually, free circulation of people and goods, as Adam Smith had already noted, is a condition of a capitalist society. After all, capital would never have free circulation IF it had not constituted individuals (labor) likewise circulating all over looking for jobs after, of course, having been deterritorialized as a people, ethnic group or peasant community. We now know, that the generalization of mobility did not happen (does not happen) naturally, as history shows us in the enclosure of common land in England, in slave trade from Africa to all over and in the expulsion and genocide of indigenous people in the four corners of the world.

In the 19th Century, namely in the second half and in the first half of the 20th Century there was intense displacement by Irish, English, Scottish, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Chinese (the *coolies*) and Japanese to the Americas, to Oceania and even to Africa, namely to the South of the Sahara.

We have already said that these movements enabled Europe to export its demographic surplus and enabled the US, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, the South of Brazil, Australia and New Zealand to occupy territories, almost always against native, aboriginal and indigenous populations. Thus, Europeans occupied space that belonged to other peoples with their migration. The issue today is that the vast majority of migrants do not come from Europe or the US or Japan, but rather, the vast majority come from poor countries and GO to these countries that which are highly selective nowadays in admitting migrants.

The heavy legacy of colonialism and imperialism that forced territorial displacements is at the root of countless fratricides in Africa, Middle East, and even in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In Latin America, the permanence of *coloniality*, even after the end of colonialism, makes the land issue, the eternal issue of land reform and the territories of afrodescendent populations (*quilombos* in Brazil and *palenques* in Colombia and Panama), and of indigenous people (Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Brazil) become central, especially with the crisis in social relations of traditional dominance, largely destroyed with the general crisis of the State made worse by neoliberal adjustment policies (Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Mexico).

There are multiple territories redefining their strategies within this context of neoliberal globalization period crisis, and populational displacements are but one of its main evidence with environmental effects of their own. After all, the territory is where society meets nature and thus, population displacements in space are the expression of territorial re-ordering and, therefore, of the population-resource relation, with a concession to mainstream language.

The number of deterritorialized people (refugees, clandestine migrants, *desplazados*) increases all over the world and, unfortunately, the landscape with camps¹⁸ is beginning to become a common sight. The bottom line is that we have an open conflict for the conquering of territories, in short, for the dispute for vital resources to corporations and States, a strategic position for resources such as energy and minerals considered vital (water and biodiversity included), while for the vast majority of the population the issue is finding land to plant, space to build a house to live in, water to drink and employment to live.

The impairment of the State's role is, by all means, among the reasons for the crisis of the territorial form of the Nation-State, and within the national territories one feels the overall disability of public policies. And it was precisely in the last 30/40 years, when Latin America witnessed the deruralization and suburbanization processes skyrocket, that the guidelines of the so-called multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, almost always echoing Wall Street, recommended that the State recede from its public responsibilities.

In the case of Colombia, about 10% of a 30 million inhabitant population are *desplazados*, displaced either due to territorial conflicts with land reform as a backdrop, or due to natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, landslides in precarious human settlements or in camps, in cities' *favelas* and peripheries. A *desplazado* is neither a refugee in the traditional sense dictated by the UN nor a migrant. After all, the *desplazados* live in their own country and didn't leave because they wanted to and are living proof that neither society – living a crisis itself – nor the State are able to guarantee them a place to stay, in the precise, geographic meaning of the term.

The growing problem of generalized mobility is part of the challenge of the other connections that are being generated in the contemporary world in so far as it shows that it is territoriality that is at stake and thus the need for a vision that will articulate different levels is of the essence. However, the desired flexible borders for capital circulation have been extremely selective when dealing with the population. There is a clear opening for skilled migrants from Africa, Asia or Latin America, the so-called flight of intellectual capital, where we hear frequent praise to the intellectual abilities of Pakistanis and Indians who work in IT, for instance. Hence, we reach the paradox of watching poor countries exporting their intellectual capital to rich countries because they don't have the means to keep them there.

Many contradictions result from this situation and 9/11/ 2001 would be the other tragic side to these generalized conflicts of territoriality. In short, in this case we saw intelligence being perversely used to explode planes, with technical and scientific precision, against centers of business and imperial power, making territorial vulnerability a generalized phenomenon for the first time and no longer just of distant colonial territories as had been till now. The American hero is no longer the man that returns from a battle in Vietnam, but the one who died while attempting to enter the World Trade Center, such as the New York firefighters!

¹⁸ The Middle East brings together multiple vectors of diverse and contradictory territorialization processes — strategic disputes for oil by corporations and hegemonic States; refugees of different kinds (namely Palestine), countless religions, States with clear borders imposed by Imperialism of which, paradoxically, Kuwait, Iraq and Israel are live expressions. “Ethnic cleansing” which was, in fact, broadly practiced without this name in Africa and Latin America in colonial and imperialist periods and, more recently was related to Nazism in Europe with its concentration camps, is being used again in Eastern Europe as well as in the Israel and Palestine conflict, where the landscape is increasingly showing refugee camps, and even walls.

The explosion of youth rebellions at the end of 2005 in Germany, Belgium and especially in France, where dozens of cities were affected, gives us an idea of the complexity around migrations when they bring together geographically the contradictions of the modern world colonial system, which history had kept at a distance till now. Modern colonialism is made up of a wide range of discrimination, oppression and exploitation (racism, colonialism and countless injustices). Bringing people of different origins together, especially through migration, demands more than a new culture of tolerance. We are presented with the need to hone a culture that takes the other into account as being an-other and in this other, find a dialogue which, in order to be true, must be made between beings that differ, literally, that are differ-ent.

Like in 1968, youth today, in its own way, present the debate about the future in a very concrete and immediate fashion. After all, it is a future that is forged hastened by immediate circumstances, namely due to the lack of jobs or to precarious labor relations which, as we all know, is not equally felt by blacks, mulattos or whites, or even Arabs, Turks or Africans, or even by their offspring even when they are born in Paris, Bonn or Brussels, with all the meaning implied by these native adjectives, by the skin color, or in the signal of cultures, by the colonialism of knowledge and power of our system world. These youth explosions, like the Twin Towers explosions in New York on the 11th of September 2001, show us that the contradictions are truly globalized with all the geographic implications that the expression brings and thus, not only horror does not have a specific place. *Periphery is periphery anywhere*, as Gog, a rapper from Brasília said: “The periphery is in the center and the center is in the periphery”.

The whole process is contradictory in space as a whole that implies in relations of immense complexity, involving multiple levels: place, city, region, countries, continental sub-regions, and world. There, where many saw extensive urbanization, there was also social-spatial fragmentation in closed condos, in public places under private rationale, such as shopping centers where the square does not belong to the people, for they don't have the right to political manifestation; in spaces under the control of paralegal business groups, such as in industrial-financial capital circuits of drugs and weapons, or with the poor in the periphery who can't even look for a job because they can't commute because they don't have the money to pay for this, not to mention the company towns, cities under corporate control where citizenship is far from the city.

All this obliges us to refuse the enticing invitation to “act local and think global”, ignoring the fact that powerful forces operate on a global sphere. Our local action, which must be dense, has to be increasingly associated to a broader political horizon in time and space. If the local is a necessary condition, it is not enough to overcome issues that imply in multiple territorialities, many of which are still in gestation. We must invent other connections between the different spheres, between the rural and the urban. In short, other territorial configurations and, with this, reinvent politics. If so many walls are being built, paradoxically after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we must remember that wall is the meaning that originated *pólis*, in Greek. *Pólis* designated wall, limit between the city and the field and, only later it began to mean everything that was contained within the walls: the *pólis*, in the sense of city. However, we must not forget that the meaning that led to *pólis* remains within politics, as an art of defining limits, walls. The whole issue is therefore about who defines the limits: when ONE defines the limits, we are before TYRANNY; when FEW define the limits, the Greeks called it

OLIGARCHY and DEMOCRACY is when EVERYBODY defines the limits¹⁹. The issue at hand today is the reinvention of politics, which can only happen if everyone has the right to voice their opinion. The right to be an emitter, that is, to emit your truth is crucial. The right to information cannot be restricted to the right of receiving information. The issue today, in a crisis, is what Boaventura de Sousa Santos called weak democracy and we must make it dense. Noam Chomsky, the American linguist and Human rights activist, warns us that the company is the least sensitive institution to democracy, where the owner's right is above the right to life. For instance, till today nobody knows the chemical formula of the most sold soft drink in the world, just as the owner's absolute power still defines who is and who isn't going to work, according to profit expectations, although he may fire heads of families who often despair, especially in countries with poor social security. There is no doubt that shielding democratic practices within the company is one of the reasons, and not an unimportant one, for the feeling that weakens democratic processes, above all, when we reduce this processes to formal election procedures, inhibiting the sovereign power of the multiple, the diverse, the people.

Building meaning, with senses

Some ideas come across from the analysis suggested above that can direct the building of other meanings necessary for the invention of other relations between society and nature through our settlements. Below there are some:

- 1- any idea regarding the organization of space, in whatever sphere, cannot be knowledge produced outside, representing the separation between intellectual labor and physical labor, between those who think and those who do. Lastly, we can no longer accept knowledge produced *on* the world, just overlooking, as Hanna Arendt used to say, knowledge without (con)tact that does not feel the world, reason that ignores emptiness which has always been part of it, like power relations in knowledge. Hence we say building meaning with sense (*Habitus*).
- 2- territorial planning should be reinvented, chiefly from the dramatic experiences derived both from the depletion of public sense of neoliberal politics and from bureaucratic planning of the “really existing socialist” countries.
- 3- territorial planning implies in the idea that we share a common space and a collective will of becoming something that transcends each individual. Lastly, it implies in inventing the politics, inventing other limits – polis – for common life.
- 4- more than participative planning, an expression that had a strong meaning and was part of the political lexicon of Latin American social movements in the 70s and 80s, and has been systematically stripped of its meaning, we need planning that is critical, participative and protagonistic. Evelina Dagnino drew our attention to this discursive voiding of, among other things, the idea of participation, largely forged by multilateral institutions' intellectuals such as the World Bank, among others that the author called “perverse (discursive) convergence”. In this emptying process, NGOs played an important role in largely replacing political mediation that used to be done by social organizations and movements. The name of these organizations as non-governmental maintains a relation with neoliberal policies which in the name of new

¹⁹ Greek democracy was limited, for it excluded women who did not have the right to a public life. Hence expressions such as “mundane woman” and “public woman”, almost always associated with prostitution. In addition, about 30% of inhabitants of Greek cities were slaves and therefore were not free men.

governance, reduces the power of governments: hence the stimulus to NGOs by institutions that created the ideas of neoliberal policies. Hence, we must develop planning practices with a leading (protagonistic) participation²⁰, a word that was just recently introduced in the political lexicon by the Venezuelan popular movement in an attempt to recover a dense meaning to participation.

- 5- In the configuration of another plan it is essential that we recover the relation between places, between spheres. It's interesting to see that there are many meanings to sphere such as stairs and climb, escalate. Therefore, the idea of one on top and another below, which gives the meaning of hierarchical and heteronomic thought, in short, to the rationale of ordering and obeying. The experience of territorial states formation, the basis for the states system in the world system, created hierarchies in the spaces through centralized monarchies and absolutist states. Thus, the experience of the so-called national states, a poor expression for it suppresses territory and territoriality which makes it up, was forged under absolutism and monarchies which were the ones that held sovereignty. The idea of national sovereignty derived from this is yet one more over a space and resources that the new Prince, the State, exercises. The nation's body, its territory must obey the State whose headquarters, the capital, is the head that commands the body.
- 6- This political hierarchy through space is, simultaneously, social hierarchy since it is exercised by certain classes and ethnic groups against other classes, peoples and ethnic groups. This is what lies behind a discursive lexicon that opposes language and dialect; culture and folklore; universal knowledge and local knowledge; national-universal and regional. Thus, there is colonialism in different spheres and not only in a world sphere, as a certain historiography defended, including the understanding of colonialism as a phenomenon that would be restricted to a certain historical period. We must wait for Pablo Gonzalez Casanova so as to understand "domestic colonialism" and for Anibal Quijano to know that *coloniality* survived the end of colonialism by means of *coloniality* of knowledge and power. Only then we will understand Evo Morales' statement when he took office in his first term.
- 7- This implies that racism, machismo, xenophobia (and its territorialism: localisms, regionalism, nationalisms, globalitarism) should be seriously considered in the processes of reinventing our settlements through participative-protagonistic means. After all, socio-spatial segregations harbor these social and power relations, in addition to production relations.
- 8- Bolivia's and Ecuador's experiences that founded what has been called a plurinational state must be examined carefully for they try to compose a single territorial state conceiving rights to multiple territorialities (nationalities) that they harbor. In short, a tip on how to overcome "domestic colonialism".

² According to Etymologic Dictionary of the Portuguese Language by Antonio Geraldo da Cunha, protagonist in Portuguese was formed by the Greek words *protos* "first, principal" and *agonistes* "fighter, competitor". In short, more than the simple meaning of a lead actor, the protagonist is the fight to be the leader. With Hanna Arendt we learnt that the meaning of politics lies in being able to take the initiative of the action, begin it, and at least after the American and French revolutions the power of initiative, the power of beginning the action no longer belongs to the prince alone. Thus, there is a deep meaning in this expression that emanates from the popular Venezuelan movement which is that a leading participation is essential, where the powers of initiative go beyond procedures of choice (elections) of proposals by some who exclusively hold this privilege (of initiating, proposing, beginning).

- 9- Thus, we must be on the watch for the complex dialectic implied in the game of spheres and power which is far from local-global binarisms. We must be careful with the generalized use of the network idea, almost always as a metaphor, that ignores the fact that networks never live on their own, they are always implicated and involved in territories from where subjects that make them exist, extract energy, matter and information.
- 10- If we are to demand that the local sphere have full prerogatives of sovereignty, including dialoguing with and empowering other spheres, we must bear in mind that no autonomy is absolute and thus, limits will always have to be discussed, which is essential for politics.
- 11- No city is or can be sustainable by definition. After all, no city is a closed system of matter and energy. Even when we admit that what is urban is not restricted to the city, we can be sure that the production of food to feed its inhabitants (albeit we increasingly admit the existence of urban agriculture) or the generation of power that feeds it is not part of the city. Neither do the effects of population concentration and productive activities in the air, soil and water (waste and pollution, for instance). However, the citizens of coastal cities depend on their political capacity to be heard in other spheres where meetings on global warming have been held. In fact, this debate must be displaced so that other spheres can be seen, where regional people responsible for climate change can be qualified and identified. This change is not geographically homogeneous and thus the deleterious effects are felt unequally and not only by those who live in coastal cities, suffice it to see the changes in rainfall and the precariousness of houses and insecurity of places inhabited by the vast majority of the world's urban population.
- 12- Marcelo Souza teaches us that we must definitely acknowledge the importance of land reform and urban reform as geostrategies. No society will be effectively democratic if it is unable to democratize the access to space, to land. In the city, we must fight real estate speculation, a theme that together with fighting socio-spatial fragmentation is central in any urban reform agenda. In the field, where the extension of land is a fundamental variable even for the productive process, the struggle is not only against real estate speculation, fighting against land as a value reserve, but above all, fighting land concentration which leads to power concentration. After all, in our America (Abya Yala), the city is at the origin of the organization of a rural production system which presented power concentration based on land concentration. In today's agribusiness, like the one in the past, the same land concentration is at the basis of wealth concentration, always with the use of modern techniques (from the sugar mills of the past to the tractor-computers today that still use genetically modified seeds in the corporate estates).
- 13- Decision making procedures must be broadened with the purpose of combining representative, participative and community-based democracy. To this end, we must at least hear other voices that appear at the *polis* today staking their claim to be heard, such as this one from Bolivia, from the qéchuwa-aymara-guarani world: "(...) we are building a sovereignty by which we make our own decisions based on consensus, where we solve our conflicts, reach an agreement, through communal consensus and not through democracy, because there is submission in democracy, where minorities are submitted to majorities or majorities submit minorities. If out of five people, three agree but the other two do not, the three will submit to the two who are minority. In democracy, even majorities submit to minorities. We always reach a consensus, with which we must all agree so as to dictate any measure. It is very important for us that each one of us may intervene with the

same rights, and have the same opportunities, and be heard. We must all convince ourselves and reach consensus, all be in agreement, make decisions with everybody's contribution and not through a vote". David Choquehuanca Céspedes – Foreign Minister for the Plurinational Republic of Bolivia.

- 14- Seriously consider the expansion of entities holders of rights, as was instituted in the Constitution of Ecuador that sanctioned Nature's Rights. In this case, we must consider this contribution in so far as it embraces other rationalities that emanate from the qéchuán world and from other communities that also speak of community of life and thus incorporate not only plants, animals, water, air as well as the tangible and the intangible (see Sumak Kausay and Suma Qamaña).
- 15- There are other rich and diverse processes of instituting other territorialities under way and if we want to invent other ways of settlement with the actors and not only following ideas that are self-denominated as illuminated, we must listen to them carefully. 1- Maria Fernandez, the *nuyrocan* artist, a name given to children from Caribbean countries born in poor migrant neighborhoods in New York, says in one of her poems, "I was not born in Porto Rico/ Porto Rico was born in me". The ties between these Caribbean migrants, their *nuyrocans* offspring and American blacks are very strong in these neighborhoods. The music, such as salsa, is a result of this relationship and returns to the Caribbean via New York; 2 – Mexican migrants in the US are used to saying that they didn't cross the border, but rather that the border crossed them, thus updating history by means of geography. They remind us that Texas, Arizona, California and New Mexico were/are their territories (War between the US and Mexico between 1845-1848); 3 – Ecuadorian workers in Spain, threatened with expulsion for being illegal aliens ("*sin papeles*"), held up posters stating that their identification card was Christopher Columbus' letter. By doing this, they have history act thus pointing out the territorial overlapping derived from the fact that they are Ecuadorians working/living in Spain while keeping close contact with their places/families back in Ecuador. As opposed to the Spaniards that occupied the Americas (Abya Yala), including Ecuador, exploiting its wealth and people, Ecuadorians migrate because they do not find decent conditions for survival in their country of origin, largely due to *coloniality* of power which still commands our world system, in an imperialistic way. Lastly, other more encompassing territorial configurations are being engendered *desde abajo* by which not only is the state's sovereign territory strengthened with a constitution of a plurinational state with multiple territories (proposal 8), but it also conforms other territorial possibilities that transcend the territorialities (*transterritorialities*) of traditional territorial states.
- 16- We have seen how global warming exposes the limits of a society that takes to ultimate practical consequences a means of knowledge production that has forgotten nature by the implications (of the will) for power (domination) in knowledge. Today we know that we explore the planet in over 30% of its annual biomass reload capacity and global warming places us before regressive time limits. We have seen hoe ecological footprints in the cities show us the limits of urban life, the way it is arranged according to profit and market rationale. Capitalism as a means of production (including knowledge) was only fully asserted with the separation of men among themselves thus constituting individuals by breaking up peasant communities, other peoples and ethnic groups; separating men from nature through generalized expropriation that made nature be free of men and men free from nature and, therefore, created the conditions to expand mercantilization, with those deprived of property and

nature as private property. This is the context where we see unfolding of knowledge in which men and nature abandon each other and presents itself as a problem that is epistemic and political at the same time. The ecological issue thus shows us that there are limits to society's relation with nature. And limits, as we have seen, is the rationale of politics, an art that only makes sense if it is exercised in equality and freedom (in fact, the meaning of one is resolved by the other, as opposed to exclusion where liberalism placed it, and its defense of the abstract individual because he is a-social and as if one could be free in inequality, and socialism which, in the name of equality, left freedom aside, as if it were possible to exist equality without freedom). Ecological struggles around the world reveal a deep sense against this world that is out there, because they show us that we are facing a process in which mankind in trying to regain nature. Lastly, the issue is about social regaining of nature. This should be our strategic axis in each action, that is, if we want to have a place in the future.

It would be interesting if one made calculations of all expenses that the different municipalities have with building, expanding, and maintenance of asphalt streets; with building of overpasses, bridges, tunnels, *subways* and parking lots for cars, and compare these to what is spent on health, education, sanitation and on pedestrian comfort so as to be more precise and specific in the comparison. The hypothesis is that we would reach surprising figures showing us that municipalities govern more for cars than for people. It would be worthwhile to check it out.

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Todo dia o sol da manhã
Vem e lhes desafia
Traz do sonho pro mundo
Quem já não o queria
Palafitas, trapiches, farrapos
Filhos da mesma agonia
E a cidade que tem braços abertos
Num cartão postal
Com os punhos fechados da vida real
Lhes nega oportunidades
Mostra a face dura do mal