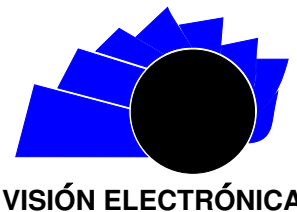




## Visión Electrónica *Más que un estado sólido*

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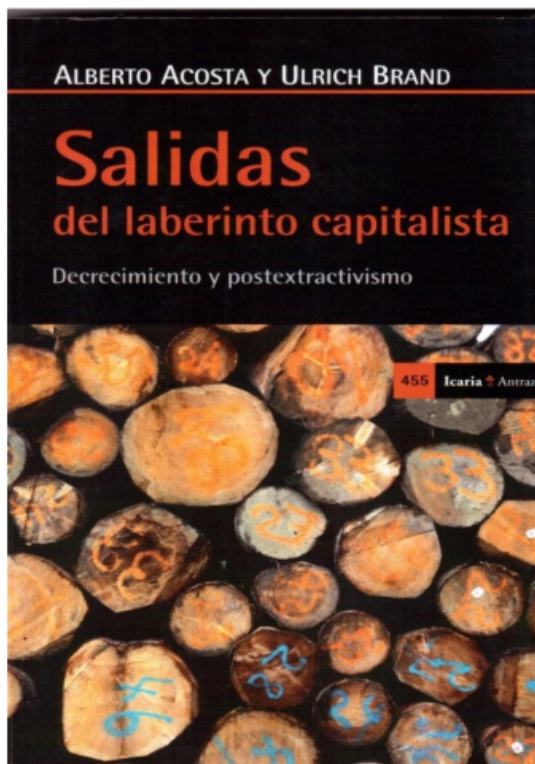


**VISIÓN ELECTRÓNICA**

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL VISION

### A. Acosta y U. Brand. *Salidas del laberinto capitalista. Decrecimiento y postextractivismo.* Barcelona: Editorial Icaria. 2017

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For all those who think that the neoliberal model is hegemonic, healthy and the only viable economic alternative, or those who consider it as Jamenson claims it is easier to think of the end of the world than the end

of capitalism, or for those who in their search for change are entrenched in ideological orthodoxies brought from other latitudes, who also maintain that there is only one path of change, and that any option outside this scheme is unworkable, but society is adjusted to ideology. For all of them, the present book exposes two alternative tendencies, which emerge as social praxis, European degrowth and Latin American post-extractivism.

While it is true that neither doctrines nor prescriptions of how to make social change can be considered, neither is it constituted as a finished theoretical body, but rather a commitment to critical reflection and the generation of political alternatives that allow the debate and discussion of social change from geographically distant socio-cultural practices, but aimed at generating alternatives to contemporary capitalism.

The authors, Alberto Acosta, Ecuadorian economist, university professor, was minister of energy and mines and president of the constituent assembly of 2007-2008. Candidate for the presidency of Ecuador for the 2013 elections, by the Pluricultural Unity of the Left. author of books such as: ".E1 buen vivir. Sumak Kawsay"; "Ûn Estado, muchos pueblos. La construcción de la plurinacionalidad en Bolivia y Ecuador"; Together with Eduardo Gudynas and other academics, he published the book "Colonialismos del siglo XXI. Negocios extractivos y defensa del territorio en América". Ulrich Brand,

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a German political scientist and research professor at the University of Vienna, was a member of the committee of experts of the German Parliament on "Growth, Welfare and Quality of Life" (2011-2013). Member of the scientific advisory board of ATTAC. In his theoretical work he deals with discussions on the critical state and the theory of hegemony, the theory of regulation and political ecology, along with Markus Wissen introduced the concept of imperial way of life". In the multiplicity of publications in German, English and Spanish, he addresses from a critical perspective the situation of contemporary capitalism, its condition of multiple crisis, globalization and its global environmental policy, the new dynamics of state policies of the 21st century, Post-fordists and the new forms assumed by the regulation, with the aim of generating alternatives against hegemonic the imperial way of life. The meeting point of the authors is in the academic work carried out as members of the working group on alternatives to the development of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

The book is the product of the discussions raised by the authors and a number of researchers in the framework of the Conference on the degrowth in 2014 in the German city of Leipzig, the discussions of the research group societies post growth of the University of Jena and the discussion in the working group on alternatives to development [1], p.16]. The importance of the text lies in the criticism of the organization of life supported in the capitalist logic of economic growth, from delving into the characteristics of the contexts in which degrowth and the post-extractivism.

Six chapters structure the book to give account in the first part of the historical context where each concept emerges, later analyzes the founding elements of each axis of the debate, and concludes identifying mutual strengths and weaknesses [1], p.28].

Acosta and Brand characterize the historical context in which both post-extractivism and degrowth emerge, starting from establishing the features of 21st century capitalism, in Latin America, Europe and on a global scale. On a global scale they identify a multiple crisis, considered as "asymmetric, multifaceted, interrelated and systemic" [1], p.22]. It is an economic crisis because of overproduction, financial bubbles, the limited possibility of investment and capital appreciation, the crisis of the neoliberal model and the post-Fordism; ideological economic crisis since it is believed that markets adjust on their own, therefore the role of the state and governments must be minimal; economic crisis resulting in a social crisis that manifests itself in social conflicts, radical struggles and in general social pressures that make

"the hegemonic of capitalism wear down becoming more authoritarian" [1], p.19]. The crisis is manifested, among other symptoms, by the "outsourcing, subcontracting, or outsourcing" of other companies to carry out activities [1], p.34], people become "marketable goods", with the mitigation of generating a greater devaluation of both large sectors of the population and of the benefits of nature [1], p.33], beyond the economic crisis the authors identify it as a civilizing crisis, a crisis of capitalism as the dominant civilization.

Post-extractivism emerged in Latin America, with the struggles of the last twenty years against extractivism. In this sense the authors make two clarifications before addressing the analysis, first, the extractivism is not only limited to the extraction of oil and minerals, but also includes the extractivism agrarian, forestry, fishing, tourism, in general are activities that remove large volumes of natural resources and cultivate in an agro-industrial way with many inputs to export to central countries without further processing" [1], p.36]. Second the theoretical approximation is made from categories such as: the primary accumulation of capital of Marx, the land grabbing of Rosa Luxemburg, Accumulation by dispossession David Harvey, and extraction (violation of rights in the appropriation of nature) of Gudynas [1], p.37]. The specific conditions that allow the extractivism of recent years to develop in Latin America, according to the authors, has to do with what Svampa defines as the consensus of commodities, which, among other things, leads to an increase in raw materials due to the arrival of the China on the global market [1], p.34], the demand for natural resources and the rise in international prices, boosts export earnings and massive foreign investment for the extraction of oil and minerals, the latter boosted by huge incentives in the countries of the region, in such a way that it allows governments a margin of maneuverability, even to meet social demands [1], p.35]. However, says Acosta and Brand the impact of this primary-export structure limits industrialization, weakens agricultural production to meet the food security of the population, the economic structure in general loses the ability to satisfy the domestic demands, of inputs and capital goods [1], p.36], generating a high dependence on imports from the world market.

Extractivism in the capitalist context becomes a form of primary-export accumulation [1], p.50], characterized by the exploitation of natural resources of large business groups, with a great capacity to negotiate with weak national states, from the hand of these business groups arises a corporate class that captures the State, the media, pollsters, business consultants and universities" [

[1], p.44], treated according to the authors of an invisible hand, "which grants favors and privileges and assumes them as an acquired right" [1], p.44], including the Chinese case in the region meets these characteristics.

Some of the economic traits considered by Acosta and Brand as pathological from the primary-export accumulation have to do with: high rates of profit from the wealth of nature, on profits that distort the allocation of resources. In the long term as prices are unstable due to the logic of competition that determines them in the global market, it causes problems in the balance of payments and fiscal accounts, massive capital flight when entering in crisis especially those who made profits in times of bonanza [1], p.40], with the consequent need to resort to the indebtedness that intensifies the external financial dependence. Also, this productive trend encourages imported goods to the detriment of the primary goods that are exported, in terms of raw materials are of low income, substituted by synthetic, low technological contribution and little innovation [1], p.40]. The functioning of the internal economy under this direction does not allow productive diversification, does not generate "dynamic chains of consumer, infrastructure and fiscal links, and does not guarantee technological transfer and generation of externalities to other sectors" [1], p.43]. At a time when countries with extractive economies have abrupt foreign exchange earnings that overestimate the exchange rate; they have migration of production factors from the agroindustrial sector to construction, import trade and services; When investment funds are cut to those sectors that generate more added value, more employment, that incorporate technological progress, and that actually present productive chains, these countries have the symptoms of the Dutch disease [1], p.39].

However, the authors recognize in the previous characteristics of Latin American underdevelopment, as a ballast, which has contributed to the consolidation of this extractive economy, starting from the way other traits such as: widespread corruption, poor administrative management of the State and severe bureaucratic arbitrariness, low spending on health and education, lack of integration of regions, lack of modern science and technology systems, a social and cultural imaginary that comes from colonialism [1], p.-52], complete the political scene.

For Latin America, the authors identify this extractivist modality not only in the neoliberal conservative governments, but also in the so-called progressives, who have emerged as an alternative to neoliberalism, and who failed to mitigate extractivism,

on the contrary, it expanded and deepened. For this situation authors such as Gudynas and Acosta reserve, the category neo-extractivism, as a version of the extractivism of the past in version of the progressive governments, which reach the Latin American political scene from the struggle of the social movements with nationalist claims and of high environmental content. According to the authors it is part "of a national-popular political-social device that justifies the exploitation of nature as a national development project" [1], p.54]. Some distinctive features have to do with the strong nationalist posture and with it the resurgence of national sovereignty, which seeks greater control by the State over natural resources where "those who do it, but not the extraction itself, are questioned [1], p.55], is sought through extractivism greater public resources, for the fight against poverty, social inequality and economic growth of the other sectors of the economy [1], p.58]. The crisis knocks at the door of these governments when the price of raw materials comes to an end, and the phase of adjustments begins, public spending cuts in social policies, devaluation of the exchange rate, increases in interest rates, labor flexibility [1], p.59] adjustments that hit the most unprotected social sectors of society, which were at the heart of the policy of the progressive governments, thus leaving the road paved for the return of neoliberalism."

The result of a model of peripheral and dependent capitalist development [1], p.59], neo-extractivism, is criticized for keeping alive "the myth of progress and development as a single direction" [1], p.58]; for being a contemporary version of Latin American developmentalism, Mechanistic vision of economic growth, which does not lose the conquering and colonizing character" [1], p.58]; by the pretense of leaving extractivism with more extractivism, otherwise facile attitude since it is comfortable to "take advantage of nature" [1], p.58]. The real curse of abundance of Latin America for Acosta and Brand lies in the inability to take up the challenge of building alternatives to the primary-export accumulation that seems to eternalizing" [1], p. 49].

On the other hand, within the framework of European austerity policies, degrowth emerge [1], p.19], of academic origin, questioning the social failure of the neoliberal model and the inability to overcome the crisis. Crisis defined as multiple in European territory, since it is not only economic, it has features of a socio-ecological crisis and reproduction, related to the division of labour between men and women [1], p.73]; crisis of political representation, manifested in the emergence of authoritarian policies that weaken

the representation of the salaried population, and of nationalist and extreme right-wing political parties [ [1], p.73]; ecological crisis, based on the neoliberal logic of objectify and commodification of nature [ [1], p.76], since the problem is considered environmental not as an integral social crisis in the solutions prevailing market patterns [ [1], p.81], the crisis is recognized but consumption patterns are not questioned; on the contrary, they are preserved and perpetuated [ [1], p.81]; Crisis of hegemony of neoliberalism, which manifests itself in the loss of ability to convince broad popular sectors, and on the unattractiveness of liberal projects such as: UEE monetarism, market liberalization and European integration [ [1], p.72-73].

The responses to the economic crisis go in two directions, the neoliberal cuts of structural adjustment (austerity measures), and the neo-Keynesian alternatives (Austria and Germany), with successful attempts to maintain industrial sectors and increase the competitiveness of export products [ [1], p.68]. Although the measures are not homogeneous for the whole of Europe, the austerity policies are stronger for southern Europe (Mediterranean countries), in general the measures are oriented from financial capital, to stabilize economic growth by liberalizing privatizing and deregulating markets [ [1], p.71], creating obstacles to the generation of alternatives, such as the free movement of capital in which financial actors pressure and act against any leftist government; de-industrialization, inequality, dependence, and in general the inability to overcome economic constraints of other regions of Europe, make it equally impossible to face the power of transnational capital [ [1], pp.71-72]. In political terms the response to the crisis has several nuances, ranging from political movements that promote the separation of the European Union in the case of Portugal, Greece, Spain, Great Britain (Brexit), to German Merkelism [ [1], p.69].

The problems identified are heterogeneous ranging from unions in Germany and Austria that prefer "corporatism of competitiveness at the expense of other regions and other workers" [ [1], p.74], to the problems of refugees and displaced persons from the Middle East that since 2015, have caused a social crisis with manifestations of deep xenophobia of European society, reinforced by neo-liberal policies of unemployment, precarious, competition in labour markets, cuts in public spending on social services, and for the permanent association of refugees as direct actors in terrorist acts [ [1], p.75].

Acosta and Brand distinguish the essential aspects of what they call the ecological crisis, which would define the global environmental situation. Global waste,

which manifests itself in all types of waste, from extractivism waste. the huge waste caused by the planned obsolescence of technological products, the farming of monocultures with genetically improved seeds and technological packages, aggravating the fact that the large transnational food conglomerates control the seeds, and hunger afflicts a large part of the most vulnerable population [ [1], p.85] technological waste, which contains heavy metals and persistent chemicals, which cannot be safely recycled [ [1], p.87], the accumulation of waste not only changes the chemistry of the planet but also shapes a "eighth Pacific garbage continent (700,000 km. three times Ecuador)" [ [1], p.88]; a subset of activities deriving from the protection of the environment (recycling) resulting in goods with harmful social effects "illegal business, trafficking in persons, child labour, inhumane working conditions" [ [1], p.82]; waste in all its dimension, waste of money, of goods in the production processes consumption and trade, including water "85% of the world's household water ends up wasted in the world, is so "equitable" the distribution in the world that the global North contributes with 670 million tons and the global South with 63 billion [ [1], p.84], consolidating in what Schuldt calls "civilization of waste" [ [1], p.83]. Another symptom of the crisis of great importance has to do with the loss of the planet's biodiversity, the German ministry of agriculture estimates that 30% of the world's seeds are on the way to extinction, the feeding of the world is assured with 12 species of plants, which only 4% of the 300.000 species of plants are used by humans [ [1], p.85], and that the triad of cereals rice-Wheat-corn contribute 60% of the calories and proteins by humans from plants around the world.

A central element of the analysis on the multiple crisis posed by the authors has to do with what they call the imperial way of life, defined as a daily practice, commonly accepted, that is supported by consumption, of automobiles, of meat, industrial products, single-family dwellings etc. [ [1], p.78]; and it is imperial because it emerges with the expansion of Western culture, since several centuries, in those centuries this way of life, was limited to the upper classes did not reach a hegemonic level, while today it is already part of the global South, not only in the ruling elites but in the middle class and is the cause of the hegemony of neo-extractivism, since it involves obtaining resources to maintain this imperial lifestyle [ [1], p.78], from political, legal or violent means, assumes forms of class domination, gender and ethnic groups [ [1], p.80]. The engine is the logic of capital accumulation, in which growth pushes the exploitation of fossil and cheap natural resources, on a global scale. It also implies territorial access to the spaces where resources are located, to the

labor force and to spaces that will become pollution sinks outside the global North. These "favorable conditions are what have made some countries powerful. For the authors, both the Fordist and the Post-Fordist lifestyles are part of the imperial way of life.

The degrowth as an option is a radical perspective from the authors' point of view, detached from Neoknesian positions or the approaches of the green economy, is radical as it confronts utilitarianism and the anthropocentric vision [1], p.105]. However, The struggles against growth are not born as daughters of the degrowth, the struggles are oriented as resistance against megaprojects, industrial agriculture with high ecological impact [1], p.106].

Among the central elements of the perspective degrowth, is the promotion of an integral social change that identifies in capitalist economic growth" [1], p.106] the fundamental problem of the multiple crisis, but also seeks to "to contextualize in a broad and integral way, the multiplicity of concrete experiences. The authors accept that there is no clear definition but clear demands and central demands; however, there is an emancipatory essence [1], p.106]. The critique of degrowth in the words of Eversberg and Schmelzer is oriented towards the "escalated fixation of capitalist modernity" [1], p.107], and the political-economic responses to the current crises. This perspective holds that in times of multiple crises growth is destabilizing, in which the social consequences beyond labor pressure and polarization encompass the individual (psychical) plane.

Part of the consensus achieved in characterizing the degrowth is to consider it as a multifaceted project that seeks to mobilize the support of economic and political institutions for the creation of a sustainable economic system, through a tax reform -ecological, restrictions on the consumption of natural resources and emissions; cultural changes, to reduce consumerism and inequalities, to reduce working age, to strengthen people's capacities and social capital, and support the efforts of the southern countries in this direction [1], p.114]; redefining the current consumer way of life [1], p.113], and at the level of elites looking for what is really needed, exercising the ability to live differently, "better with less, could be even the currency" [1], p.115]. For the authors "degrowth as a socio-cultural challenge can contribute to decolonize the imaginary" [1], p.116]. In short, the proposals for the transformation of contemporary society are at the structural and institutional level, in the relations of force, in the imaginary, in the practices. A "new social paradigm, an emotional offer is required, as Welzer affirms, to allow an identity of how one wants to live in

the future [1], p.116].

The premises of this perspective focus on the possibility that the countries of the global North, solve the growing problems of international inequity that have historically provoked, incorporating criteria that allow them to be self-sufficient rather than at the expense of the rest of humanity, they will have to change their mode of production "to retrace much of the road travelled" [1], p.111] and with respect to impoverished and excluded countries, seeking options for a dignified and sustainable life that is not a caricatured version of the Western culture and way of life [1], p.110].

Post-extractivism, for its part, is an alternative that goes beyond the degrowth because it has the pretense of overcoming capitalism, based on the valuation of other knowledge and practices, that reinterpret the relations of nature from a ancestral perspective typical of the Latin American peoples, quite close to the Good Living or Suma Kawsay. "that seeks the construction of a new social, political, economic, cultural reality" [1], p.132]. Based on knowledge constituted by cosmovisions tied to specific territories specific to non-capitalist communities harmonically related to nature, being community is not sustained by individuality therefore it is of "plural and diverse character, which requires a profound process of decolonization. [1], p.57]. In order to reorganize production for the liberation of market mechanisms, "to restore the material used, to recycle it and organize it in new ecological cycles" [1], p.133], to promote a new environmental rationality "that deconstructs economic rationality" from the re appropriation of nature and re territorialisation of cultures" [1], p.133 ]. This perspective forms part of the constitutions of pluralistic States in Latin America as well as in Ecuador and Bolivia, which promote the autonomy and collective rights of indigenous peoples.

Unlike the degrowth that considers the crisis as multiple, post-extractivism considers the crisis of a civilizing nature, because it questions the civilizing pillars of Western culture, such as: unshakeable faith of the modern era in progress, technique, the paradigm of growth and the understanding of nature as an exploitable resource" [1], p.137], "the patterns of authoritarian and vertical political domination, the asymmetry of articulation to the world market" [1], p.137], does not accept the dichotomies as development- underdevelopment, advanced-obsolete, poor-rich, civilized-wild. All these categories account for processes of domination and submission, coinciding with post-development. It is a rejection of the different forms of domination and destruction of nature, not of

social use; of the various forms of marginality resulting from local and regional social structures, aimed at appropriation, exploitation of nature for the capitalist global market. It is also a criticism and rejection of "the European imperial instrumental logic" [1], p.137]. In this direction the claim is the decolonization of knowledge, with the incorporation of the proposals of the Good Living, but not with the intention of returning to a past, or idealizing indigenous-community lifestyles, what is meant is to respect the multiplicity of "knowledge, experience and practice in all walks of life" [1], p.139]. Another element, no less important, is the fact that the State is not dependent on the organization, but on spaces of self-management, which from the community level shape society and end up constituting another function for the State. As the Yasuní-ITT experience shows, the State is neither the only nor the main actor to make the necessary structural changes happen, for this reason a local, national and even global struggle is required [1], p.151].

On the debates about extractivism, the authors identify three types of predatory extractivism, sensible extractivism, which is only deployed in the post-transition phase and whose distinctive features have to do with respect for ecological and social standards, based on social negotiations and finally the phase of extractivism necessary for society, totally removed from a primary-exporting economy oriented "socially and politically agreed reasonable ways of obtaining natural resources" [1], p.141].

Among the positions shared by the two perspectives, the authors find that they are associated with the field of contestation, sharing critical elements, which constitute initial elements for thinking new horizons, emphasizing the need for cultural changes, mental and cognitive, to consolidate new forms of relationship with nature, likewise, have similarities in the intended purpose, the search for understandings and new practices that allow a dignified life for all humans and non-humans [1], p.19]; the attempt to make possible in a concerted manner "the counter hegemony" [1], p.31]; the deep criticism of capitalism especially "the neoliberal stage that deepens the commodification of social relations and of nature" [1], p.153]; how progress, development and growth are addressed in the collective imaginary and social and political practices; as they identify the current historical moment as part of a generalized crisis; and even agree with the International Energy Agency that "fossil reserves must remain where they are on the ground" [1], p.154].

Politically, both perspectives seek to overcome the

reductionism present in the debates of the left and the progressives, located in the distribution of income, to take it to a political level of profound social content" [1], p.154] In this sense they oppose the false conjuncture alternatives of immediate response, "that resign themselves to seeing reality as something given and difficult to change" [1], p.154]. With regard to science and the prevailing knowledge from which the relationship between economy-society-nature is approached, the criticism points to neoclassical economics, Keynesian theories and theories of development [1], p.156].

With regard to the differences between post-extractivism and its degrowth, as well as the first in Latin America, in the context of the struggles against extractivism of the past 20 years, makes it possible to give much more clarity to the problems related to "the prevailing capitalist ways of life and production" [1], p.156], and even to achieve progress in the fight against hunger and poverty, which have forced a retreat of neoliberal policies, in some South American countries [1], p.27]. On the contrary, degrowth emerges in societies that have achieved certain levels of well-being and aim at "a voluntary, smooth and equitable transition to a regime of lower production and consumption" [1], p.157].

Discussions on alternatives to the current crisis identify a number of ambiguities in the perspective of degrowth, which have to do with the conflict between concrete projects and a comprehensive social vision; the proposal for the abandonment of a life of consumption and material comfort (liberation from abundance) only points to a section of society "cosmopolitan middle strata" that possess them, condemning to backwardness billions of people in the world [1], p.118]; the failure to question social and nature domination, as it does not consider the capitalist context and its practices, does not bring about elements of change in socio-economic and political, cultural, individual and conceptual macro-structures about nature [1], p.118]; the degrowth alone does not change the power structure, including it is possible to reproduce fascist-style structures and some kind of exacerbated nationalism [1], p.123]; the absence of a critique of "the systematic objectification of the labour force and nature" [1], p.33], the failure to address the issue of the organization of paid work and the need for a post-growth society [1], p.117]. In general, degrowth for the global north are assumed as a perspective whose ultimate goal is "no growth" and not the pursuit of social and environmental quality objectives.

Post-extractivism proposes to put into use in everyday life the Good Living, supported by age-old and ancestral practices of social and economic organization,

typical of Andean and Amazonian indigenous knowledge, which foster ties of reciprocity and solidarity, such as minga, Ranti-ranti, Uyanza, Uniguilla, Waki, Makikuna [ [1], pp.162-163], practices that demand horizontality, direct participation, direct action and self-management to advance towards consensus [ [1], p.164], in the search for a society that is not hierarchical, not authoritarian, and controlled from below from the community [ [1], p.165].

The authors raise the need to go beyond the concepts of post-extractivism and degrowth in the search for other more attractive notions such as "Good living." or "Good living." or "Common good of humanity" [ [1], p.168]. It should even refer more than notions to experiences, which allow approaches to a full life, free from impositions, freedom and happiness, a life of a dignified social and natural environment" [ [1], p.169].

With regard to "how to get out of the labyrinth", the proposals revolve around those minimum conditions that are required, at least in Latin America, in order to move towards change, which must be based on civilized solutions and not on violent means, spaces for discussion and reflection are needed, where the key is the strengthening of the basic values of democracy "freedom, equality, solidarity and equity" [ [1], p.171], tolerance with diversity as fundamental pillars to initiate change. Taking into account that there is no path traced, nor a definite alternative, for the authors not to have it frees from dogmatic visions, but it requires greater clarity of how and where you want to go. Another no less important element raised has to do with the international dimension and the debate on imperialism [ [1], p. 173].

Although the debates assume the relevance of the post-extractivism perspective, it is necessary to point out that Latin American societies are not

characterized by homogeneity, here highly differentiated social groups converge, people with cultural traits typical of Western culture, and other segments of the population with traditional ancestral cultures, characteristics of cultural hybridization in Latin America, this attempt to generalize a single Latin America makes the exercise more complex, and it is in this heterogeneity that, although Latin American authors consider the perspective of "unattractive to societies of the Global South" [ [1], p.159], it has a place. It is necessary to pay attention, as the authors warn, to the lack of importance that post-extractivism gives to the large sectors of Latin American societies in the middle strata, whose essential motive of life is to belong to that imperial way of life that fights post-extractivism, What to do with them?, if they are constituted subjects for daily consumption in our societies, subjects that are the maximum opponents of a change of conception between the relations society-nature.

For those subjects who were constituted for Western modernity from "creolization" processes, and who seek the individual and collective change of the social-social relations the process of decolonizing at first the practices and the imaginary of modernity, and its negative effects as a transition to convergence with more elaborate perspectives such as post-development, post-extractivism, "living well". Relations that must generate openness to other ways of building and constructing society, to understand that it is feasible to think and embark on the road to the construction of other possible worlds, outside of capitalism.

## References

- [1] A. Acosta and U. Brand, "Salidas del laberinto capitalista. Decrecimiento y postextractivismo", Barcelona: Editorial Icaria, 2017.