

Revolutions – A Conference

The Communitarian Revolutionary Actor: New forms of social transformation

By David Barkinⁱ, Alejandra Sánchezⁱⁱ

Abstract

The hope for a unique revolutionary actor that prevailed throughout the XX Century evaporated as a result of the weaknesses of social organizations and the ongoing crises that confront them. In this context, it is essential to identify actors whose visions and abilities might contribute to building new societies with a different balance of power among social and productive forces. The paper examines the potential of an almost forgotten group of revolutionary actors –collectively organized and deliberately involved in processes of social and productive transformation with a legitimate claim to territory– whose present-day activities involve them in concerted processes to consolidate a different constellation of societies on the margins of the global capitalist system.

Indigenous and peasant communities throughout the Americas are self-consciously assembling to restructure their organizations and governance structures, in many cases taking control of territories that they and/or their ancestors have claimed for generations. A particularly interesting feature of this dynamic is their understanding of the centrality of “surplus”. They are consciously undertaking mechanisms to take control of the production and use of surplus, both that generated in various productive activities they operate and in the mobilization of underutilized resources and peoples’ energies for improving their ability to raise living standards and assure environmental conservation and restoration.

Another important feature of this movement is the degree of coordination and information sharing among the disparate communities. Alliances (regional, national and hemispheric) are emerging and processes for mutual support being perfected to enable them to become more effective in their political organization. They are developing mechanisms that are transforming them into a growing movement offering a model for social and political change firmly anchored in an expanding productive structure.

Keywords: revolutionary actor, collective, community, social transformation

The Communitarian Revolutionary Actor: New forms of social transformation

David Barkin and Alejandra Sánchez

Introduction

The model of a world economic system is promoted as the ideal of development and growth to improve well-being and quality of life to society. It suggests that equality, justice and freedom can be achieved through capitalist progress. However, the social and productive relations of this model are generating increasing contradictions; on the one hand, western ideology is attempting to erase the particularities of cultures while societies are reorganized to privilege individual initiatives, making collective organization impossible; on the other hand, the productive system demands new spaces for the accumulation of capital, increasing inequality and the environmental crisis and threatening the future production of food, the supply of drinking water and life itself. In this context, it is worth asking: are there significant revolutionary processes capable of responding to social and environmental needs? how can processes of social transformation manifest themselves? and, who might be the actors of these revolutions?

Not all societies identify themselves with the promises of progress that arise from globalization. For this reason, that many of these societies have declared themselves against neoliberal domination and are undertaking diverse efforts to counteract the adverse effects of capitalist system. In this contribution, we examine actions of social groups that for generations have been resisting looting and exclusion. More recently, they are raising their voices to implement important processes of social transformation in diverse spaces.

We identify some characteristics of the indigenous and peasant communities that have transformed them into revolutionary actors. In recent years, they have declared themselves “anti-systemic” and are generating social and political processes that challenge from the logic of capitalism. This involves various mechanisms to maintain their lifestyles, control their productive systems, defend their legitimate claims to important territories, and their natural endowments, and, finally, undertake projects to improve their quality of life and protect their ecosystem. In this process, they are creating new ways to generate surpluses and distribute them for individual and collective benefit, creating a new “social capacity” to construct the basis for a “**communitarian revolutionary actor**.”

1. The community: the collective and communitarian character of the revolutionary actor

The construction of alternatives leads to the possibility of an economic, political, social and ecological transformation. Our analysis is based on the history of many indigenous and peasant societies of Latin America. These societies generally possess worldviews that emerge from their Indo-American roots. This worldview consists of a complex system of

beliefs, values and traditions. Although not exhaustive, we might include the following characteristics: 1) their vision of a balance in relations between society and nature, where the bond with the natural environment requires responsibility; 2) a communitarian view of property, where the care and use of their ecosystem is determined collectively and usufruct rights do not imply the possibility of private property or sale; 3) community work requires the redefinition of labor, based on non-capitalist values; and, 4) participatory democracy, involving unique structures of governance, responsible involvement and collective commitment¹.

The integration of their worldview, according to Barkin and Lemus (2015), implies a constant redefinition of their identities and a renewed understanding of significance of their cultural heritage under current conditions. That is, they are peoples who are transcending their historical heritage to redefine their collective identity, with a pluricultural character, where the community is aware of and decides to preserve some characteristics of their culture that are functional while discarding those that are not of importance; specifically, the communities decide to enrich their knowledge of the society-nature relationship. The construction of this knowledge allows them *to transform themselves as a community* (i.e. collective consciousness), generating models that become niches of sustainability² and social justice.

Their cultural and historical heritage represents an incentive and a social resource that contributes to maintain their existence, as well as to restructure their internal social processes to respond to current challenges. This implies that their social dynamics are in permanent redefinition, essentially the result of interactions with the capitalist system; that is, they are not isolated societies as they must continually interact with the capitalist system. They know and understand its logic, but their community worldview creates the opportunity to maintain non-capitalist economic and social relations and to interact with the capitalist economic system. This is possible because of their well-defined political position and collective decisions that foster the possibility of social change.

Revolutionary actors are capable of changing their situation, transcending capitalist relations; they are born and reproduced in the community. In the words of Villoro (2003: 41-42) "*The community is an ethical project that has been proposed for a long time and acts as a guide for social transformations*". The community has fundamental characteristics that give meaning to construction of the communitarian revolutionary actor. These include: first, the community formed by individuals who recognize them as part of a totality;

¹ Huanacuni (2010) and Bengoa (2000) both offer detailed explorations of the character of indigenous societies in the Andean region of South America, strengthening and extending the analysis in this text based primarily on Mesoamerican cultures.

² Their productive systems are not archaic as conventional economic model has been believed. The communities have great capacities (in the logic of their social dynamics based on other rationalities) but these are not recognized by neoliberal system. In this sense, the production systems used by these societies have proved to be important sustainable projects insofar they combine ancestral knowledge of nature, the use of various technologies, modern productive techniques and social and moral principles as environmental and social justice. The climate change is seen as a watershed for changes in their production, innovating strategies to solve future needs of society. The process of moving towards this type of society (niches of sustainability) requires five principles (of society): autonomy, solidarity, self-sufficiency, productive diversification and sustainable management of regional resources (see Barkin, 2013).

second, the community is based on service, where the common good is the result of the sum of individual contributions and reciprocity is inherent; third, the community does not renounce individuality (personal identity) since people find their fulfillment when contributing to the collective (by own and free decision); fourth, it postulates common values respecting plurality and individual values; and fifth, the community promotes the growth of social virtues such as solidarity and fraternity, in which a consensual process prevails (Villoro, 2003).

The community is the result of two principal elements: 1) a historical trajectory that include colonial subjugation and periods of apparent independence under various governance systems (characterized by deception, theft, exclusion and discrimination); and 2) a worldview founded at collective level –in which language³ plays a fundamental role–, in other words, we refer to societies which are historically instituted and developed in the collectivity: the common good prevails over individual interest. The community establishes a social contract (in different terms than the Hobbesian Social Contract (1651)⁴); it is formulated and accepted by the collective in which the individual is subsumed by decisions and the will of the community (Villoro, 2003); thus the notion of this social contract implies unity among the members of society.

To summarize, the community is a project of collective life, linked to new forms of social and political praxis –other realities, other rationalities⁵–. The conjugation of this praxis appears as the creator of new relations of production aimed at improving community welfare. These expressions of organization are not new; on the contrary, they are the product of generations of resistance, where values and collective goals are modified and transmitted by tradition and reaffirmed and reconfigured by custom. As part of this evolution, "being indigenous" has become an important issue for the success of their movements, the acceptance of their social demands, and the forging of alliances, as well as the transformation of their economic, political, social and ecological spaces.

Today the communities are building societies based on different logics in spaces that they occupy within the global system; they are well informed about the epistemological debates that question the dominant system and its development model. Part of their strategies are aimed at understanding and implementing programs for local and regional progress (Barkin and Lemus, 2015) that take into account their collective visions and environmental justice. This is the context in which the communitarian revolutionary actor is born.

2. The communitarian revolutionary actor and its elements of transformative action

The potential for social transformation of the communitarian revolutionary actor is its *social capacity*. According to Barkin, *et al.* (2011), social capacity is the group of

³ Language is not only as a means of communication, but also as a reflection of the worldview of a people or community (Lenkersdorf, 2008, Nations, 2016).

⁴ Hobbes developed a theory of social contract where the idea is: a political order is needed for civilization to exist; without it, we would find ourselves without authority in a state of nature, where each person defends himself as he can and tries to dominate others (Villoro, 2003).

⁵ See Rosas and Barkin, 2009 and Barkin, 2012

intangible resources that communities possess and use for consensual actions to establish strategies to consolidate their well-being. These are the attributes that communities put into practice through their worldviews, including principles of reciprocity, mutual aid and support networks to strengthen social cohesion and community benefit. In this context, we can speak of "collective attitudes" in terms of Villoro (1992: 278) as: *"Dispositions common to the members of a group, (...), which are expressed in beliefs about society according to preferences and rejections, this promote consistent behaviors with them ... involve adherence to certain values and rejection of some situations"*.

This social capacity allows the community mobilize its social and material resources to achieve collectively established goals. On the one hand, these needs are based on the vision of the community and not on those determined by the capitalist model, and, on the other hand, involve the establishment of the economy within society, in other words, an economic process that is subsumed to the needs society rather than to the market (Polanyi, 1944). The latter entails a rethinking of the notions of progress, development and quality of life, because through the communities' value systems and collective principles, other meanings of well-being are developed, based on qualitative and intangible dimensions (rather than quantitative measures); in this way, social transformation becomes an expression of the social capacity of communities. In the following sections, some elements that are fundamental for this social transformation will be examined, elements that create the social capacity of the communitarian revolutionary actor.

Territorial management: Management of productive systems

The base of the economic sustenance of this type of society is the territory, considered as a common good or property; as a result, its appropriation is collective. These societies have a strong attachment to their territory, evident in their special (harmonious) relationship with the natural environment of which they are part. The territory is not conceived as a commodity, it is like a giver of life (*pachamama* or Mother Earth), a place where history, culture, social organization and nature are encapsulated. Its management has a strong relationship with the construction of collective identity (a socially constructed space). The territory is more than a biophysical space, it is a social, political, cultural, spiritual and economic space that gives meaning to the collective/community (Martínez Luna, 2003). This concept implies that their productive systems are established, defining a bond with nature, that includes a commitment to conserve their natural endowments and promote their restoration. If communities have the capacity to control and manage their territories then they can determine their productive systems, and therefore their social structures.

The territory is an organizing structure for the existence of these societies. In many cases, it has been the cause of a series of struggles and conflicts for its defense –struggles that have intensified recently because of the current form of the expansion of capital–. In strict sense, indigenous and peasant communities should have total control over the territory which they inhabit; however, the State in complicity with the powerful capitalists, often tries to impose decisions about its use; for example, regarding concessions granted to private industry for exploitation of natural “resources”. In some cases, the State has recognized the collective legal ownership of the territory (in Mexico there are legal figures such as “ejidal” or communal property); nevertheless, regardless of the form of legal ownership, the social

organization of the community allows the effective control over their territories⁶. This is why the communities have undertaken alliances, support networks, educational processes on legal issues and above all, political negotiation strategies, to get effective territorial management in their peoples.

Surplus management

With the consolidation of these new forms of organization, communities are able create new activities and identify and mobilize their available resources for their collective benefit. In these communities, this economic surplus does not assume the conventional form of a single quantitative (monetary) dimension, but also includes a many material and social resources that are not considered in the market. Collective management for the production and management of this surplus is a specific form that demonstrated and consolidates the community's social capacity; there is an intangible dimension to this process of generation, appropriation and use that reflects the values and principles of the community, rather than those defined by market dynamics.

With regard to surplus generation, it begins by discarding the concept of a labor force defined as a commodity. In most communities, this creates a dynamic by which they mobilize considerable productive potential through *voluntary work* ("*mano vuelta*" and "*tequio*"), forms of work based on reciprocity, cooperation and solidarity, (not mediated by salary); we might add that community leadership and administrative positions as well as the tasks of caring (education, health care, social services, etc.) normally attributed exclusively to women are also often collectively arranged in this way⁷. A crucial element in the appropriation of these resources is the notion of collective ownership, involving an assumption of social control of decision-making, on the basis of the same principles of reciprocity and mutual aid. Although part of the surplus is distributed individually to satisfy particular needs and reward individual efforts, the process of collective decisions about its distribution is one of the pillars on which the communities sustain their autonomy. Generally, we can conclude that the criteria for generating and distributing surplus are directly evaluated in terms of the strengthening of community life, while organizing diverse social, economic and ecological needs.

The mobilization of surplus is vital for understanding social change, because it undermines the centrality of the market. In its place, there is a system of production planning, management of surplus funds, and a management system to allocate resources to areas that benefit society. This allows the communities to decide and direct their resources, making decisions an explicit part of the process of community consolidation and developing alliances with other communities and social and political organizations. Mobilizing the surplus also depends on the social capacity to organize the work, the productive process, the exchanges and the sustainable management of natural resources. In other words, it is about *political capacity* (autonomy, self-management, bargaining power).

⁶ This is a fundamental element for defining the "indigenous" character in the terms of the "ILO Convention 169 of the "Rights of Indigenous Peoples", which "requires prior, informed consent" when acts of State that affect their territories are proposed. This Convention assumes the force of constitutional law in the ratifying States (<http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169>).

⁷ These elements as generators of surplus, are part of the *potential surplus* of Paul Baran. (1957, 1960; Sweezy and Baran, 1968)

A significant dimension of the use of surpluses is its ecological impact. Many strategies have been undertaken to confront environmental challenges. Throughout the Americas (and elsewhere) communities are facing threats created by "projects of death" (as they are called) such as mining, hydro- and wind-power, as well as by land and water grabbing on an international scale. In Mexico, there has been some advance in development administrative and legislative strategies to strengthen their social organizations to defend their territory and ecosystems against such proposals. (Carcaño, 2013; Armenta, 2016).

Political position

However, the community cannot implement a program for social transformation by itself. That is, its historical and cultural resources are not sufficient to achieve its objectives without support from other political and social forces. The communitarian revolutionary actor must develop a political position that promotes broader strategies and projects. Considering the limitations of political action within the capitalist system, the capacity for action of the communitarian revolutionary actor is based on its ability to exercise a degree of autonomy: the control that the community has over its territories and its surplus. If its capacity for self-management (legal frameworks) is recognized, then the community acquires great capacity for social transformation. The possibility of expanding this capacity is possible thanks to notable social movements that have emerged in Mexico and Latin America, where diverse communities have gathered in national and international networks to create regional alliances that reinforce their claims as individual communities. In particular, a trigger for these strategies of political organization has been for the defense of the territory and demand to protect their ecosystems⁸.

The communitarian revolutionary actor is aware of *power* that it possesses when its social capacity allows it to build an autonomous system of governance, controlling its territory and managing the surplus that it produces. However, the communitarian revolutionary actors do not seek to seize state power (through electoral or violent processes); rather they are oriented towards the exercise of *popular power*⁹ (Vergara, 2011) or *social power* (Toledo, 2015)¹⁰. The difference between popular power and social power is that the first refers to a collective organization where the main struggle is for the control (expanded) of the territory; therefore, this type of power can be developed in indigenous and peasant communities with great possibility; while the second refers to alternative projects

⁸ Some of the movements we can mention are the "Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería" (REMA – Chiapas, México), "Movimiento de Afectados por las Presas y en Defensa de los Ríos" (MAPDER- Chiapas, México), Organización de la Sociedad Civil Las Abejas De Acteal" and "Congreso Nacional Indígena" (CNI- México).

⁹ This idea of popular power is presented as an alternative to traditional conception of power centered in the State. It refers to power that is constituted in processes of struggle (internal and external), and the distribution of power in people through the assembly (Vergara, 2011).

¹⁰ Social power emerges as emancipatory force capable of overcome the crisis of civilization through organized and conscious action, this to repair: the regeneration of the social fabric, the restoration of the natural and planetary environment, and rescue of the dominated, excluded, exploited cultures of the peripheral worlds (Toledo, 2015: 145). Also, the notion of social power refers to "force that emerges independently or autonomously from civil society, and which seeks to maintain control over the forces of the state and capital" (Toledo, 2015: 144).

developed by various organized groups that include communities, cooperatives, unions, associations, among other groups.

The inability of the state to exercise its sovereignty in the face of international pressures to grant investment concessions further discredits the possibility for radical social change through the conquest of state power¹¹. However, in process of social transformation, the conquest of governmental power in local spaces by these types of societies would mean an important step towards the construction of new social relations based on the recognition of human dignity and the abandonment of subordination relationships¹².

3. Some expressions of the social transformation by the communitarian revolutionary actor

Today there are many expressions that can be called revolutionary, but their definition is a subject for great debate. The traditional vision of a violent revolution finds new perspectives with the notions of "daily struggle". The crisis of revolutionary politics has led to new formulations in *resistance* and *rebellion*; these have gained prominence in recent decades (Baschet, 2012), but are more difficult to define with regard to the concept of "revolutionary". We consider a *revolutionary expression* to include actions involving important social transformations in defined contexts, including fundamental changes in the social dynamics of social and productive structures, political life, and ecological conservation; these often involve repudiating the initiatives by capital and the state to limit their autonomy or ability to manage their territories.

Latin American indigenous movements have assumed "*resistance*" as a dynamic that characterizes their struggles from colonization to establishment of the neoliberal system; since then, their activities have transcended this *culture of resistance*¹³, as a way to defend inherited lifestyles. These revolutionary actors are indigenous, rural and peasant communities, they have built strategies to *resist* the economic rationality of globalized market and add the ethical, moral and cultural dimensions of sustainability, demonstrating that their activities are part of processes of social appropriation of nature with social and environmental responsibility (Barkin, *et al*, 2012), generating surpluses that contribute to their quality of life and conserve their ecosystems.

Resistance finds links with *rebellion* (this has multiple expressions caused by nonconformity with the dominant system that implies the *use of power from below*), in

¹¹ In this context, it is necessary differentiate "the power of the State" from "governmental power". The first is immersed totally in a "global" network (through the institutions) of capitalist social relations that "by nature, have gone beyond the territorial limits". The second refers to the way a political unit is organized and conducted (Holloway, 2002).

¹² In this regard, the National Indigenous Congress (CNI), in a communique titled "*Que retiemble en sus centros la Tierra*" (Enlace Zapatista, 2016), announced its intention "to dismantle from below the power" through the designation of an indigenous council of government, that would be represented by an indigenous woman delegate of the CNI, as an independent candidate to represent the CNI and the EZLN, in the electoral process of 2018 for the Mexican presidency. In the same message they ratify that they do not seek or fight for power, rather they call the native peoples and the civil society to the organization for the defense of the life.

¹³ Bonfil Batalla (1987, in Baschet, 2012), summarizes the culture of resistance as capacity of Mesoamerican peoples to remain after colonial imposition and ethnocidal strategies of States.

contrast to classical revolution (to conquer state power for social transformation). *Rebellion* entails social organization to transform the context of those who are below (EZLN, 2003, vol. 5, p. 352; in Baschet, 2012:7).

But social movements have gone further. At present, we can find another expression of revolution in "*r-existence*". New perspectives of emancipation and the construction of sustainability are emerging from the historical resistance of indigenous peoples to modern colonization; this is result the struggle to legitimize the rights of peoples to their ancestral territories against the strategies of appropriation/transformation of nature and the expansion the global economy. The distribution the benefits of re-appropriation of the nature and technology is not the issue; rather the "*r-existence*" of these traditional populations who are at heart of socio-environmental movements in Latin America (Porto y Leff, 2015)

It might appear that indigenous and peasant social movements are simply opposed to capitalist economic expansion. Our formulation suggests that they are finding ways to improve their quality of life within their social organizations, re-appropriating their cultural identity in the process (language and ancestral knowledge of the grandparents). This "*r-existence*" involves rescuing ancestral knowledge and/or reinventing it, combining scientific knowledge and new ways to solving problems, in order to remain in their territories in while assuring social and ecological balance (Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, Beaucage, 2012, Rodríguez, 2010).

4. Marx's revolutionary subject vs the communitarian revolutionary actor¹⁴

Marx's theoretical-methodological approach is fundamental to study the revolution and the revolutionary subject. This framework offers diverse postulates that shaped the ideological construction motivating the revolutions of XX century¹⁵. In this section, we examine the distinction between the conceptualization of Marx's revolutionary subject and our proposal of the communitarian revolutionary actor.

We do not rule out the considerations of the Marxist tradition, which has important elements for present-day social transformations; for example, in the preface to Russian version of Communist Manifesto in 1882, Engels presents the Russian rural community as a starting point for a new communist revolution, because the Russian community could be denaturalized from the primitive common property and in that case could move to a superior communist form of property; this had been clearly written in a letter of Marx to Vera Sassulitch in 1981¹⁶. This aspect opens the necessity of considering different forms of social organization coexisting with the capitalist system (Marx, 2015).

¹⁴ There is a key significance to our use of the word 'actor' rather than 'subject'. To simply a lengthy discussion, we wish to emphasize the rejection of a passive concept of personal mobilization that played an important role in understanding the central role of people in these communities in crystalizing collective action in the construction of important projects for innovative projects of social construction in their organizations.

¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that most of the revolutions of the XX century were peasant revolutions! (cf. Wolf, 1969; Scott, 1985).

¹⁶ Thanks to for this reference to Elmar Altvater. Cf.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/zasulich/draft-1.htm>

In this sense, we do not reject the contribution of Marxist thought. It is the basis for understanding the current context where we can find the actors transforming their social reality, reinforcing their unique identities and capacity for change. In order to further define our contribution, we compare the Marxist position with our proposal of the concept of the revolutionary actor:

- The notion of *social classes*. In the mode of capitalist production, Marx and Engels define two emblematic antagonistic social classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie¹⁷, whose relation is defined by wage labor, which "masks" exploitation. In our case, we do not propose a social class, but rather an *indigenous and peasant community* that may or may not embody basic capitalist relations (wage labor). That is, a specific society with particular social dynamics outside the dominant system.
- The *class consciousness* of the proletariat. First arises as a political consciousness (knowledge that implies the awareness of its existence and its action, that is, its power of transformation) (Caycedo, 1999), to later promote the organization of working class. For us this awareness is found in *explicit collective decision* to not reproduce capitalist dynamics; perhaps the origin of this decision could be in indigenous identity as a referent of their worldview, which motivates its protection and defense.
- The consolidation of the working class into a *political party* (based on class consciousness). For Marx, the proletarian organization starts from small groups that form a single front, until consolidating a political party that represents them all; from this emerges the fundamental role of State, where its conquest is the objective of revolution. In our proposal, we suggest a *political position* of the communities that entails a series of negotiation strategies, alliances and agreements to consolidate legal frameworks that allow them to expand their autonomy and territorial and surplus management; the seizing of state power is not an objective of the communitarian revolutionary actor.
- The conception of *revolution*. The proletariat class, organized and consolidated in a political party, overthrows the bourgeois class and establishes its domination (Marx y Engels, 2011) through the political control of state. As stated above, the revolution in our proposal does not assume a violent position necessarily, since we show that there are revolutionary expressions such as *resistance, rebellion* and "*r-existence*".

These distinctions do not imply an idealistic conception of the communitarian revolutionary actor. Commonly, when we think of indigenous, rural and peasant communities, our ideas are skewed in two ways: either a romantic vision of the primitive or a rejection of traditional social practices. The first leads to idealizing the social conditions of community. The second directs our thinking to the opposite extreme, that is, an absolute rejection of practices and ancestral knowledge. However, both options are far from the objective reality

¹⁷“By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live”. [Engels, 1888 English edition] (Marx and Engels, 2010:14)

of today's communities; the transformation by the communitarian revolutionary actor does not mean going back to the past, because it integrates traditional knowledge with present-day scientific knowledge and technologies, generating mechanisms, procedures and tools that serve diverse needs of the community¹⁸. Within the communities numerous conflicts remain, a product of centuries of adaption and resistance to conquest and the innumerable forms of injustices they suffered (Wolf, 1969; 1982).

The recent histories of the communitarian revolutionary actor offered in this presentation clearly demonstrate its capacity to effect social change and challenge the power structures of the societies within which these peoples are immersed. They demonstrate consciousness and agency as part of an explicit program to modify and strengthen their societies and their relationship with the capitalist world system (Little, 2015). When possible they are participating in projects of "national reconstruction", as might have been the case during a short period in Ecuador or in Bolivia, or in ambitious local proposals, such as the Zapatista movement in Mexico. Elsewhere, however, myriad groups are restructuring their own relationships with the larger society throughout the Americas, as is evident in the flowering of efforts to implement programs of environmental justice as they become more steadfast in their opposition to the "projects of death" proposed by international capital¹⁹.

While the "revolutionary" character of these societies remains to be determined, we suggest that the peoples involved in the dynamics described above have clearly identified new paths for social and productive organization that are directly challenging the structure of the state and the capitalist form of social organization. In the face of the substantial threat to human society posed by environmental deterioration and climate change, the "Second Contradiction of Capitalist Production" (O'Connor, 1988), they are at the forefront of the profound transformations that humanity requires. It is essential that we now consider this very substantial part of humanity in our understanding of the revolutionary forces that are effectively challenging the reign of capital.

Conclusions

This analysis suggests that it would be risky to define the revolution or social transformation to overcome the capitalist system. As to the question of what kind of revolution or revolutions can be created in the current context, we present three references without the intention of limiting the possibilities.

The first possibility entailed a revolutionary expression of *global* character, presupposing a change of economic paradigm (Economic revolution). However, a revolution of this magnitude is unlikely because the economic paradigm is not established only at theoretical level in the framework of science (scientific revolution), but also at structural political level, since the model is legitimized in the Institutions and in the government apparatus of the countries (requiring political revolution) and especially, in the social systems of behavior as part of the capitalist culture (calling for social revolution).

¹⁸ This is a fundamental part of the literature on "post-normal science" (Funtowicz y Ravetz, 1993).

¹⁹ Cf. The website of the European project: "Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade" (<http://www.ejolt.org>).

A second possibility is in societies that can transcend their global capitalist relationship (ability to move in the capitalist system and at the same time generate social, economic, political and ecological dynamics based on different logics). This alternative postulates revolutions of a heterogeneous nature, generating multiple transformations at the local level, by the societies that implement these processes.

Finally, third possibility is to recognize the existence of a set of environmental problems derived from human activity. Climate change is the maximum expression of anthropogenic damage is a factor that threatens the human survival for the serious problems at biological level, such as loss of biodiversity, soil fertility, changes in precipitation patterns and changes in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, among others (CEPAL, 2009). Finding solutions for this problem is the most pressing task facing present day institutions. Nevertheless, the priorities of the current capitalist system are directed towards the concentration of political and economic power, leaving aside the well-being of humanity and planetary equilibrium (Barkin, 2013). The social initiatives to try to change the behavior of large companies (the main emitters of greenhouse gases globally) are limited by the ability of dominant groups to paralyze any transformative initiative.

The revolutionary processes that we offer in this desultory panorama are related to the phenomenon of *resilience* of the planetary system and the societies that inhabit it. This capacity for resilience is noticed in the communitarian revolutionary actor that we have described; the revolutionary actor is capable of implementing processes of social reorganization to face the environmental challenges. This interdisciplinary analysis of the revolutionary actor reveals their adaptability in the face of today's multiple social, economic and ecological crises.

For this purpose, from the perspective of Ecological Economics, we present a proposal for the communitarian revolutionary actor, the indigenous and peasant societies that are trying to transcend the capitalist relationship: this is a collective and political decision not to participate in the logic of capital (although it does not imply that they are isolated societies, outside of capitalism). That is, they were victims of the system (because of the forms of inclusion and/or exclusion) and decided to reconstruct their dynamics and social structures to recuperate valuable parts of their culture, identity and knowledge, linking them with scientific, political, economic and ecological knowledge of their territories (the essence of "*r-existence*"), creating spaces where they can exercise their autonomy (mainly determined by the power to control their territories and the management of their surplus). This intrinsic capacity of the communitarian revolutionary actor contributes to diverse dimensions of well-being, such as improvements in working conditions as well as material, social, cultural and environmental conditions, including health, education, spirituality and leisure.

The communitarian revolutionary actor is a collective social being that constructs and reconstructs itself, transforming its realities or creating them. Although it aims for a virtuous future, it protects its heritage to forge a balanced relation between society and nature, learning from the present to create new alternatives. In sum, the myriad

revolutionary involve different processes according to their contexts, reinforcing the conviction that "*other worlds are possible*"

References

- Armenta B., W. A. (2016), *Acumulación de capital extra-económica en el México rural. Cuetzalan del Progreso, Puebla*. Tesis doctoral en ciencias económicas, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Baran, P. (1958). *Sobre la evolución del excedente económico. El trimestre económico*, Vol. 25, Núm. 100(4), pp. 735-748 Available at http://www.aleph.org.mx/jspui/bitstream/56789/7652/1/DOCT2065286_ARTICULO_14.PDF
- _____, P. (1957). *The Political Economy of Growth*. New York: Monthly Review
- Barkin, D., Fuente, M. and Rosas, M. (2009). "Tradición e innovación. Aportaciones campesinas en la orientación de la innovación tecnológica para forjar sustentabilidad." *Trayectorias*, Vol. 11(29): 39-54.
- _____, D. et al. (2011). *Capacidad social para la gestión del excedente: la construcción de sociedades alternativas*. En: Federico Novelo (Coord.) La UAM ante la Sucesión Presidencial: Propuestas de política económica y social para el nuevo gobierno. México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, pp. 543-557. Available at: http://148.206.107.15/biblioteca_digital/capitulos/387-5309vfv.pdf
- _____, D. (2012). "Communities Constructing Their Own Alternatives in the Face of Crisis." *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol 32(Suppl): S12–S22 Available at: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-11-00088.S1>
- _____, D., Fuente, M. and Tagle, D. (2012). "La significación de una economía ecológica radical." *Revista Iberoamericana de Economía Ecológica*, Vol. 19.
- _____, D. (2013). "Viviendo el pacto fáustico. La resiliencia perversa frente al cambio climático." *Veredas*, núm. 27. pp. 7-19.
- _____, D. et al. (2013). "Movimientos sociales y resistencia: dos pilares en la construcción de sociedades alternativas". In: Novelo, F. (Coord.) *El retorno del desarrollo*. México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, pp. 417-435.
- _____, D. and Lemus, B. (2016). "Local Solutions for Environmental Justice." In: Castro, F de, et al., *Environmental Governance in Latin America: Conflicts, Projects and Possibilities*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 257-286.
- Baronnet, B., Mora Bayo, M. and Stahler-Sholk, R. (eds.) (2011). *Luchas "muy otras". Zapatismo y autonomía en las comunidades indígenas de Chiapas*. México: UAM-Xochimilco, CIESAS y Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

- Baschet, J. (2012). *Resistencia, Rebelión, Insurrección. Conceptos y fenómenos fundamentales de nuestro tiempo*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales.
- Beaucage, P. (2012). *Cuerpo, cosmos y medio ambiente entre los nahuas de la Sierra Norte de Puebla. Una aventura en antropología*, Taller de Tradición Oral del CEPEC, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas – UNAM, Dialog. Red de Investigación y de Conocimientos Relativos a los Pueblos Indígenas y Unión de Cooperativas Tosepan Titataniske.
- Bengoa, J. (2000). *La emergencia indígena en América Latina* (Vol. 20). Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Carcaño V., E. (2013), *Las mujeres indígenas en la Nueva Ruralidad Comunitaria (NRC) y su implicación en la generación de excedentes. El caso de la organización Masehualsihuamej Monsenyolchicahuanij*, Tesis doctoral en ciencias económicas, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.
- Caycedo. J. (1999). *El sujeto histórico y su complejidad. En el libro del seminario Marx vive. Siglo y medio del Manifiesto Comunista. ¿Superación, vigencia, reactualización?* Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Available at: <http://www.cronicon.net/paginas/Documentos/No.39.pdf>
- CEPAL (2009). *La economía del cambio climático en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago de Chile. Naciones Unidas.
- Enlace Zapatista (2016). *Que retiemble en sus centros la tierra*. Comunicado del 14 de octubre del 2016. Available at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/10/14/que-retiemble-en-sus-centros-la-tierra/>
- Funtowicz, S.O. and Ravetz J. (1993). “A New Scientific Methodology for Global Environmental Issues.” In: Costanza, R. (Ed.) (1991). *Ecological Economics: Concepts and Methods*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Holloway. J. (2002). *Change the World Without Taking Power: The meaning of revolution today*. London: Pluto Press.
- Huanacuni Mamani, F. (2010). *Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien. Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*. Lima: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas–CAOI.
- Lenkerdorf, C. (2008). *Cosmovisiones*. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Available at <https://es.scribd.com/document/144550123/2008-Carlos-Lenkersdorf-Cosmovisiones>
- Little, D. (2015). “Marx on peasant consciousness.” Available at: <http://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2015/09/marx-on-peasant-consciousness.html>.
- Martínez Luna, J. (2003). *Comunalidad y Desarrollo*. Oaxaca: Conaculta-Culturas Populares e Indígenas y Centro de Apoyo al Movimiento Popular Oaxaqueño, A.C.
- Marx, C. (2015). *Precapitalist Economic Formations*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/precapitalist/index.htm>
- _____, C. and Engels. F. (2010). *Manifiesto of the Communist Party...* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifiesto.pdf>
- Nations, J.D. (2016). “Naming the Dragonfly: Why Indigenous languages matter in the 21st century.” *Langscape*, vol. 5(1): 20-24.

- Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN (2015). *El Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Capitalista* Volumen I. UAM-Xochimilco.
- Polanyi, K. (1944 [2001]). *The Great Transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. (Boston: Beacon Press).
- Porto Goncalves, C.W. and Leff, E. (2015). “Political Ecology in Latin America: The Social Re-Appropriation of Nature, the Reinvention of Territories and the Construction of an Environmental Rationality.” *Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente*, 35: 65-88. Available at: <http://revistas.ufpr.br/made/article/viewFile/43543/27087>
- Rodríguez W., C. A. (coordinador) (2010). *Defensa comunitaria del territorio en la zona central de México, Enfoques teóricos y análisis de experiencias*. Mexico: Juan Pablos Editor.
- Rosas, M. and Barkin, D. (2009). “Racionalidades alternas en la teoría económica,” *Economía: teoría y práctica*, Nueva Época, número 31.
- Rosas, M. (2012). Generación de excedentes y sustentabilidad en comunidades indígenas y campesinas. Globalización versus desarrollo, las nuevas condiciones para un proceso de cambio estructural viable y sustentable. Available at: <http://repositoriodigital.ipn.mx/handle/123456789/16752>
- Sweezy, P. and Baran, P. (1968). *Monopoly Capitalism: An essay on the American economic and social order*. New York: Monthly Review.
- Toledo, V. (2015). *Ecocidio en México. La batalla final es por la vida*. Mexico: Grijalbo.
- Vergara-Camus, L. (2011). “Globalización, tierra, resistencia y autonomía: el EZLN y el MST.” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, Vol 73(3): 387-414.
- Villoro, L. (1992). “Sobre el concepto de revolución.” *Revista del Centro de Estudios Constitucionales*. Núm. 11. Madrid.
- _____ (2003). *De la libertad a la comunidad*. México: FCE-ITESM. Cuadernos de la Cátedra Alfonso Reyes.
- Wolf, E.R. (1982). *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ⁱ David Barkin is Distinguished Professor at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. His principal field of teaching and research is Ecological Economics. He is an Emeritus member of the National Research Council and works on issues of environmental justice in Latin America. At present, he holds the Georg Forster chair for climate-related research at the Humboldt University in Berlin. He has recently finished a book whose translated title is: “From Protest to Proposal” and is working on a volume to be entitled “Food: Sovereignty: A strategy for poverty reduction.” For comments: barkin@correo.xoc.uam.mx

ⁱⁱ Alejandra Sánchez is student of Doctorate in economics at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. Her research in Ecological Economics focuses on indigenous communities in Mexico.