Postextractivism and Degrowth

Social Ecological Transformation in the Context of South-North Relations
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Catholic social teaching

• Growth of human person
• From developmental optimism to scepticism
• Orientation towards being („to have“ as a means)
• Economic growth a means, not a goal in itself
• Art of *oikonomía*, use value
• Reembedding economy in moral, social ties
• Economic democracy, common use of goods
• Gratuitousness, logic of the gift
• Perspective: solidarity economy
Catholic social teaching

• Multiple crises
  - Ethical, spiritual, cultural
  - Ecological, social
  - Economic, political
• Technocratic paradigm
  - Dichotomy of subject and object
  - Myths of modernity
  - Rapidación
Disembedded economy

- 1980s: End of catch-up development (Latin America, Africa)
  - Debt crises in the global South
  - Structural adjustment programs
  - Deindustrialization, rise of resource extraction
  - „Lost decade“ for development
- Further disembedding of economy
  - also in the global North
Neoeextractivism

- Crisis of neoliberalism propelled by social movements
  - Social critique
  - Ecological critique
- 2000s: „Pink tide“ in Latin America
- Neoeextractivism: extraction based social policies
  - Reduction of poverty, increase of social/income equality
  - „Strong state“ attempting to guide national development
  - Repoliticization of economics and development
- Governments and movements: contradictory relation
Neoeextractivism

Increase of wages in relation to capital gains (Latin America)

Reduction of income inequality (Latin America)

Neoextractivism

Reduction of poverty and increase in income equality much larger in countries with commodity boom (Latin America)

Neoextractivism

Commodity boom (2008-2014)

Source: Le Billon & Good, 2016, „Responding to the commodity bust“
Neoeextractivism

Role of resource demand in emerging economies, China

Postextractivism

• **Extractivism**
  - Removal of large quantities of natural resources
  - Without processing, mainly for export
  - Metal ore, fossil fuels
  - Industrial agriculture, fishing and forestry

• **Critique** of extractivism because of
  - Association with technocratic paradigm
  - Destruction of indigenous, non-capitalist economies
  - Ecological destruction
Neoextractivism

Decline of extraction in industrialized countries, rise in least developed and developing countries

Postextractivism

Mining conflicts, Latin America

Resistence of communities paralyzed the Las Chancas project, a strategic copper mining project in the region of Apurimac (Peru)


Cumulative mining conflicts, world (2000-2016)

Source: Conde & Billon, 2017, „Why do some communities resist mining projects while others do not?“
Postextractivism

• Critique of extractivism because of „resource curse“
  - Economic dependency (one-sided division of labor)
  - Rent economy, corruption, enclave economies
  - „Dutch disease“
  - Political dependency (resource nationalism, „magical state“)
  - Authoritarianism, non-accountable business interests
  - Resource price volatility, deterioration of terms of trade
  - Overproduction
  - Problem of international resource price coordination
**Postextractivism**

- **Transition** to post-extractivist society
  - Democratic planning of transition
  - Long-term process of societal restructuring
  - Crucial role of non-expansion of extractive activities
  - Gradual building up of non-extractivist activities
  - Examples: agro-ecology, sustainable tourism, knowledge
  - Reduction of resource demand in North/emerging economies
  - Economic coherence of development policies
  - Geared at diversifying economy for domestic market
Postextractivism

- **Transition** to post-extractivist society
  - Broad societal support required
  - Culture of harmony with nature, new worldviews
  - Examples “buen vivir“, “sumak kawsay“
  - Recognition of cultural plurality (“plurinationality“)
  - Further redistribution of extraction incomes
  - Better channel them in building up non-extractive activities
  - Reducing inequalities as a basis for real democratization
  - Creating appropriate international arrangements
Unequal ecological exchange

Contribution of mining to total value added (2009)

Source: UNSD, 2011
Unequal ecological exchange

Total carbon, material, water, land footprint per country

Source: Tukker et al., 2014, „Global resource footprint of nations“
Unequal ecological exchange

Source: Tukker et al., 2014, „Global resource footprint of nations“
Unequal ecological exchange

Source: Tukker et al., 2014, „Global resource footprint of nations“
Degrowth

- Critique of growth since the 1970s in the North
- 1\textsuperscript{st} degrowth conference, Paris 2008, declaration
  - Right-sizing economy (wealthy countries, globally)
  - Voluntary transition (not an involuntary contraction)
  - to just, participatory, ecologically sustainable society
  - Meet human basic needs, achieve high quality of life
  - Reducing ecological impact, equitably distributed
- Degrowth amounts to reembed the economy
Overlaps and divergences

- **Overlaps** between postextractivism and degrowth
  - Critique of disembedded economy
  - New approaches to „well-being“, „progress“, „development“
  - Search for different imaginaries of present and future
  - Focus social movements, progressive NGOs, public debate
  - Alternative economies (solidarity economy, commons etc.)
Overlaps and divergences

• **Divergences I: postextractivism**
  - Situated within environmental justice movements
  - Comprehensive critique of power relations and domination
  - Focus on international relations of domination/dependency
  - Neglect of emerging consumer classes in the South
  - Neglecting connection with „imperial mode of living“
Overlaps and divergences

- **Divergences II**: degrowth
  - Weaker, narrow notion of power relations and domination
  - Neglecting international political economy
  - Neglecting transformations in the global South
  - Often focus on “top-down” approaches
  - Mainly discussed within “post-materialist” milieus
Overlaps and divergences

• **Open issues** on degrowth from a “Southern“ view
  - Can the term „degrowth“ be appealing in the South?
  - Does it relate to how movements in the South frame issues?
  - „Degrowth“ does not raise much curiosity in the South
  - Critique of degrowth as Eurocentric concept
  - Not radical enough, „growth“ is not appropriate framing

• **Solidarity economy**
  - Shared vision of postextractivism and degrowth?
  - Strategy for substantial South-North cooperation?
Solidarity economy

• Solidarity economy is a **Democratic economy**
• It is an economy **reembedded** in moral, social ties
• Voluntary cooperation, equality, use value orientation
• Beginnings in the 19th century (cooperatives)

„A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a **jointly-owned and democratically-controlled** enterprise“ – „(...) cooperative members believe in the ethical values of **honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.**“ (International Cooperative Alliance, ICA)
Solidarity economy

• New forms after 1968: self-realization (global North)
• New forms of „constructive resistance“
  - since 1970s: against dictatorship (Chile)
  - since 1980s: against structural adjustment (Chile, Brazil...)
  - since 1990s: against neoliberalism in general (France, Québec)
  - since 2000s: emerging international networks/agenda
• South-North relations
  - Fair trade (since 1950s)
  - Migrant remittance economies (since 1990s)
Solidarity economy

• Examples in **food** production
  - Community supported agriculture (CSA), food coops
  - Agricultural associations and foundations
• Examples in **finance**
  - Mutual associations, cooperative banks
• Examples in **manufacture and industry**
  - Producer cooperatives, cooperative networks
• Examples in **social services**
  - Social cooperatives
Solidarity economy

• Solidarity economy in **Brazil**
  - 20,000 organizations, 1.4 mio. employees, 1.7% of active pop.

• Social and solidarity economy in **France**
  - 7% of all firms, 10.5% of active pop.

• Social and solidarity economy in **Barcelona**
  - 2.8% of all economic orgs., 8% of active pop., 7% of GDP

• **Cooperatives, globally**
  - 2.6 mio. coops, 1 bio. members, 12 mio. employees
  - 84,000 producer coops
  - 4.3% of global GDP, 4 countries with coops > 10% of GDP
Solidarity economy

- Caring for others is a good basis for caring for nature
- Democratic firms foster democratic, prosocial attitudes
- Democracy is central for degrowth and postextractivism
- Social ecological transformation must be negotiated
  - Which production has to be reduced? To which extent?
  - With which means? In which ways?
  - How to ensure social equality? Nationally? Internationally?
  - How to compensate for historical ecological debt?
Solidarity economy

- Solidarity economy is comprehensive democratization
  - Centered on members’ needs, urge to grow reduced
  - Cooperation fostered, competitive growth reduced
  - Crisis resilience increased
- Needs solidarity economic policy, international relations
- Values serve to reembed economy in moral, social ties
- Social ethics: priority of labor, justice, use value, gift
Conclusions and perspective

• How to do a **cultural revolution** (Pope Francis)?
  - What is needed to inspire people for change?
  - How can „voices of nature“ be included?
  - How can harmful power relations be reduced?
  - How to connect lifestyle and economic change?

• Postextractivism and degrowth should interconnect

• **Solidarity economy may be a shared vision**
Thank you

From top left to bottom right: La Vía Campesina, Ada Colau, MST, LegaCoop, Mondragón, Paul Singer, Mietshäuserssyndikat, Zanon
Key literature


Key literature


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