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Geovanna Lasso

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Reterritorializing the food sovereignty model in Ecuador: the role of the Agroecological Collective in a context of disputed territories

Geovanna Lasso

Institute of Environmental Science and Technology, ICTA-UAB
Agroecological Collective of Ecuador.

In Ecuador, specifically in the agrifood sector, populism is exercised through different strategies, which up the power strategies, had put land, the peasants' labour, productive practices and consumption patterns at the service of capitalist accumulation, reterritorializing the capitalist model.

In this scenario, agroecology, is proposed as a science, practice and movement to transform the agrifood system. To allow the transition it is necessary to re-locate agroecology in to a contrahegemonic process, and to re-evaluate the role of social movements. This document pretends to contribute to this discussion. From the analysis of the action repertoires of the Agroecological Collective of Ecuador, in the frame of Gramsci's thinking, the CAE is recognized as a collective political subject. Politics, spatial relations and the production of political subjects are identified as the main strategies that allow them to promote resistance and the reterritorialization of agroecology. However, the lack of articulation with other social, indigenous and peasant movements, would constitute the main weakness to scale agroecology and locate it in a contrahegemonic process.

1. Introduction

Agroecology has been proposed as a science, practice and movement (Wezel, et al., 2009) that could allow people to re-design the current agrifood system (Gliessman, 2011; Altieri y Toledo 2011; De Shutter, 2010). To get this transformation and a successful transition that locates agroecology and food sovereignty in a counterhegemonic position and process that disputes the globalized capitalist model, requires to integrate several political aspects in the reflexion, proposals and actions (Gonzalez de Molina, 2012) and to rethink the role and strategies of social movements.

Once it is recognized that the crisis of the agrifood system (and the crisis of civilization) are products of the dynamics of accumulation of the capitalist system, it is critical to identify and understood the power strategies linked to the state (as well as those which are not), that facilitate the reterritorialization of the capitalist model. This could be more urgent in the particular context of authoritarian populist regimes, in which, through diverse strategies, this model expands with the approval and support of a significant part of the population.

On the other hand, it is necessary to recognise that the approach to agroecology, mainly in the academic field, has separated the ecological-productive dimension from the political one, putting agroecology in peril of co-optation by national and international institutions and by capitalism's dynamics of accumulation (Giraldo & Rosset, 2016).

In this frame, it is urgent to re-politicize agroecology by using the concepts and analytical frameworks of political agroecology more (González de Molina 2012; Collado, Gallar & Candón, 2013), as well as re-valorising it as a "theoretical-methodological, epistemological, and praxis tool to face the civilization crisis of the capitalist modernity" (Sevilla, 2006 as cited in Gallar & Calle, 2017, p.1). Is critical also to re-thinking the strategies and actions which can allow agroecology to scale and gain

counterhegemonic capacity and the role of social movements. This document attempts to contribute to the discussion of the role of social movements in the transition to agroecology.

With this aim, after a brief framing of the conceptual understanding of populism, I will present briefly the evolution of relations with social movements in Rafael Correa's government. As well, the populist strategies, as part of the power strategies, linked with the state to reterritorialize capitalist model. Secondly, the short- and long-term repertory actions of the Ecuadorian Agroecological Collective (EAC) are described. Framed by the Gramscian discussion of hegemony and praxis philosophy, the multiescalar/spatial and political strategies identified in these repertoires are analysed. As a conclusion, it is critically discussed to what extent the CAE is scaling and locating agroecology in a counter-hegemonic process, and it is concluded that a lack of a wider articulation with other indigenous/peasant and other social movements in Ecuador could be the main weakness to scaling and locating agroecology in a counter-hegemonic process.

2. Rafael Correa and Alianza País (AP): from populism as a strategy for disputing neoliberalism to a populism with authoritarian features

2.1 How populism is understood in this document

Our conception of populism is framed, on one hand, by the understanding of 'the politic' as an antagonist dimension constitutive of human societies that recognises that in politics, "the decisions are not about expertise and technics, but about decisions that requires a choice between alternatives in conflict" (Mouffe, 2011, p.13). Under this framework, democratic politics cannot be limited to establishing compromises between interests and values, or a deliberation about the common good; it needs to have "a real influx in the desires and fantasies of the people" (Mouffe, 2011, p.13). In this way, the recognition of a 'we' confronting a 'they' is about collective identifications that are in conflict and antagonism, and that can't be solved in a discussion scenario but a decision-making one (Mouffe, 2011). The recognition of the duality of 'we/they' has to get far from its moral conception that confront the good vs the bad; rather, it is about confronting the left vs the right, the oppressed/dominated/excluded vs the oppressors/the dominant class. We are far from any post-political or apolitical conception that claim that 'we have to go beyond the distinction left/right' or that does not recognise the conflictive and antagonist character of politics. Finally, we recognise the important role of the 'empty signifier' in the unification of heterogeneous elements into a singular identity in the populist process (Laclau, 2012).

On the other hand, we locate the discussion under a Gramscian frame, for whom the fight for the hegemony is not only about the collectivisation of collective desires and looking for a common objective or common good that acts as an 'organic cement' that transform a social movement to a mass movement with counter-hegemonic power. It is about a philosophy of praxis, concerning the transformation of a disciplined common-sense to an emancipatory common-sense, and it concerns the individual and collective realization of the self-capacity to recognise and transform one's realities, to materialize a collective ideology through the power of a historical bloc with counter-hegemonic capacity (Gramsci, n.d.).

In this frame populism is understood as a "form of constructing the politic that is not associated with specific ideological contents or to particular practices. It is a way of articulating demands, which can be from a different nature". The result is "...the creation, through an equivalence chain between a heterogeneous multiplicity of demands, of the people¹" (Mouffe, 2011, p.13), distinguished as an 'us',

¹ Contrary to the liberal possibility of a democracy without the people, constructed under a rational logic and based on

from ‘they’, who has the power. In this way, populism as a mechanism “to construct the unity of the people’, offers some insights in reflecting the strategies and the mechanisms toward achieving hegemony, which have to be complemented with wider and integral Gramscian thinking related in this respect to the philosophy of praxis.

2.2 Brief historical context

In the agrarian and rural sector in general, neoliberal policies implemented by the Washington Consensus, aid policies and the renegotiation of the debt deepened the role of Ecuador as a raw material exporter and eliminated the specialisation and industrialization initiatives promoted by the imports’ substitution initiative (Acosta & Falconí, 2005). These added to a chain of right wing governments that had privileged family and economic group interests, promoting a massive concentration of the means of production and market, and the appropriation of the peasant labour force. The relegation of peasants to the worst soils was added to the expansion of the green revolution, which built a dependant model of production and constructed the idea that the peasant form of production is unproductive and inefficient (Carrión & Herrera, 2010; Larrea, 2006). On the other side, political instability was the norm during this decade or so; three governments during this period were ousted by civil society.

It is in this context that ‘Alianza País’ Movement and Rafael Correa as its president, arrived. Their claims focused on combatting the injustice and inequalities produced by neoliberalism in the last government; the opposition to a free trade agreement (FTA) with United States; the desire to remove the US military base in Manta, among others. These claims chimed with the claims of the left movements and the indigenous and peasant movements, in a context of discontent and rejection of the political parties that had governed or that had looked to govern in the last decade (Lalander & Ospina, 2012; Ramírez, 2010).

In this scenario, Alianza País got to establish the common objective that served as the ‘organic cement’ (Gramsci, n.d.; Mouffe & Errejón, 2015) of different social movements, mainly the main indigenous movements, ecologists, gender groups, among others: anti-neoliberalism and anti-partisanship (Ramirez, 2010). These objectives were reflected in the Constitutional process of 2008, which contrary to the previous Constitutions that were claimed by collective and social rights, promoted an alternative development model, or better yet, an alternative to development, through the ‘Buen Vivir’ proposal.

The first actions of the new government, such as ceasing the negotiations of a FTA with EEUU, the dissolution of the EEUU military base at Manta, the renegotiation of international debt to privilege social investment, the recuperation of the state and its de-corporatization, the anti-monopoly law that prohibited the owner of banks from also being owners or having relationships with the media, the change from the 20% to 80% as the percentage of the benefits of oil extraction that transnational companies have to give to the state, among other policies and decisions, got the credibility and support of diverse sectors.

However, during the Constitutional process, even when several claims of the indigenous, peasant,

individual needs. Which not take into account collective identities and desires; rather, disqualifying them as ‘archaic passions’ destined to disappear under the advance of the individuality and the progress of rationality” (Mouffe 2011, 13) As Mouffe and Errejón discuss, there is an aristocratic, right wing and European tendency to use the term ‘populism’ to judge or disqualify to the opponent, with an implicit pejorative conception about the people, “their low passions of people with poor education that are ready to vote irresponsible things in moments of desperation of frustration”, making visible “the fear to the tumultuous character of the rabble in politics, always suspicious of animal and infantile instincts easy to manipulate, mainly in south countries”. – where are the quotations from?

environmentalists and other social movements were incorporated, some differences at ideological and programmatic level appear, not only among AP and the social movements, but inside the AP too, making evident the internal ideological dispute that is also reflected in the Constitution and other planning documents².

For Lalander and Ospina (2012), the main causes of the separation between the government of AP and one part of the indigenous movement (The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, COANIE, and its political branch Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement – New Country, PACHACUTIK) and the ecological movements and other left wing organizations were the programmatic and/or ideological differences around extractivism, social mobilization, the agrarian policy and the de-corporatization/de-sectorization of the state. Rafael Correa's government opened two fronts of opposition; the right, linked to the neoliberal policies that created poverty and increased inequalities, and the infantile left, that does not allow the development of the country.

Despite this separation to the point of becoming part of the opposition, the government still had the support of other indigenous and peasant organizations³ and 'popular' sectors at national level. Several indigenous leaders became part of the government through their participation in the National Assembly, local governments, and other political organisations. These alliances and participation weakened the organizational structures of the indigenous and other social organizations even more (Lalander & Ospina, 2012; Ramirez, 2010)

Discontent, mainly from the indigenous and ecological groups, started expressing itself through mobilizations and other kinds of social protest, considered by these groups as a legitimate form of democracy. The government, by contrast, claimed the protest was not part of democracy, instead considering it as a violent and anarchist imposition by minority groups that had not won in the elections, using a disproportionate legal framework approved by the dictatorship of 1964, that defined the closure of roads, for example, as terrorism and sabotage (Lalander & Ospina, 2012). This could be identified as one of the main authoritarian features of this government.

However, there are other strategies not linked to authoritarianism but with populism as a political strategy. Among the main strategies here are discourses, integration of some claims of these groups (mainly in the Constitutional process)⁴, to locate the ecologist and indigenous movements as the 'them', the enemy of the 'legitimate government', and the disqualification of these groups as 'infantile ecologists', 'the infantile left' and 'the infantile indigenists' whose proposals don't allow the progress of the country and block the achievement of 'Buen Vivir'.

The government discourse⁵ emphasises the necessity for covering the basic necessities of the poorest people (water, electricity, sanitation, sewage system, nourishment and nutrition, employment, etc.) as a first and critical step to achieve 'Buen Vivir' at a societal level. Buen Vivir could become the 'empty signifier' that allows the identification of 'the people' with government proposals (Mazzolini, 2012). To do so, the extractive activities like mining and oil extraction are necessary. The productive matrix change was also imperative to can transit from an economy based on the extraction and exportation of raw materials to one based on knowledge and services (Ramirez, 2012) and to eradicate poverty. This was the discursive frame that allowed the implementation of a neo-developmentist model in agriculture, where modernization (the use of the technological kits composed of certified seeds and

² E.g. National Development plans known as 'Buen vivir National Plans'

³ FENOCIN, FENACLE, CONFEUNASSC, CNC Eloy Alfaro, among others

⁴ The incorporation of indigenous leaders into the state and the recognition of some social claims could be seen as strategies that Gramsci placed under the term 'passive revolution'.

⁵ Discourse constitutes a relational tool that frames and constitutes every social relation, institutionality, social structure, etc. "The discursive structure it is not a purely 'cognitive' or 'contemplative' entity, but an articulatory practice that constitutes and organises social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 132).

agrochemicals) and the integration of peasants in the commodity chains were the main policies implemented to substitute imports and diversified exports and markets (Production Matrix Change National Strategy [PMCNS], 2015).

Discourse (linked to the power-knowledge strategy), legal frames, lobbying, private-public alliances with inter-scalar relations, and the co-optation of concepts, are some of the power strategies identified⁶ during the Rafael Correa government which allowed the reterritorialization of the capitalist model in the agrifood sector. This reterritorialization can be seen through several indicators: *i.* the land use change linked mainly to the expansion of oil palm, maize, cacao and coffee; *ii.* The exponential increase in importation and the inefficient use of seeds and agrochemicals; *iii.* The change in consumption patterns over the last 40 years; and *iv.* The increasing amount of small and middle-sized producers integrated into commodity chains.

3. The Agroecology Collective of Ecuador: resistance, reterritorialization and bio-emancipation

Transforming the agrifood system and allowing the transition to agroecology requires to incorporate some political aspects to the reflections, proposals and actions, adopting the framework proposed by Political Agroecology (Gonzalez de Molina, 2012). We must urgently re-locate agroecology into a counter-hegemonic process, and re-evaluate the role of social movements.

As analysed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), in the Gramsci's thinking the vision laid out transcends the 'class alliances' view, and locates at the centre the 'intellectual and moral' and the 'ideas and values' that allow an ideological cohesion among heterogeneous elements. To this author, it is not enough to recognise other struggles, but to be in solidarity and construct with them (2001). The role of 'organic intellectuals', "not in the manner of the old elites but from the individual and collective construction, the process that serves to give contents to interpret and to channel", would be imperative (Gallar and Calle 2017, 3).

In this framework, the CAE constitutes itself as a platform of social action without legal accreditation that brings together diverse actors, including peasant organizations, NGOs, consumer networks, academics, the movement of the 'popular' and 'solidary' economy, the slow food movement, youth groups, etc.; "there is no membership - the collective is made of relations" where the role of the coordination is to facilitate them. Its strength is based on individual and collective desires and actions that gain power when are brought together (R. Gortaire, personal communication, August 16, 2017). These principles and processes have been the main strategies that have allowed the CAE to broaden and decentralize its actions.

To resist the hegemonic model expansion, but also to radicalize and expand agroecology, the CAE has two forms of action repertoires.

Resistance actions repertoire: This is applied when there is a situation that puts both agroecology and food sovereignty in peril. Mainly between 2014 and 2017, the actions of the CAE in four situations where analysed: The Seed Law process, the intention of the industry to remove the 'nutritional semaphore'; the intention to close the 'Minga por la Pacha Mama' radio program, and the intention to centralize and regulate the Participative Guarantee Systems (SPG). Actions are summarised in Table 1.

⁶ A detailed analysis of the power strategies and the reterritorialization of the capitalist model in Ecuador is made in the thesis research, which this document is part.

Action	Seeds Law	Semaphore	SPG	Radio program	Description
Networking	x	x	x	x	Design of strategies, bring together efforts, logistic, economic resources
Diffusion	x	x	x	x	
Media	x	x		x	Press, radio, TV
Public events	x	x	x		Assemblies, workshops, etc.
Technical/analytical Documents	x	x			
Social networks					
Lobbying	x	x	x	x	Letters, meetings with authorities.
Social pressure	x	x		x	Social networks, letters, demonstrations and protests

Table 1. Resistance action repertoires

Source: Own elaboration.

Reterritorialization action repertoires:

The CAE develops the following long term activities:

- a. Agroecological schools (AS): at the moment there are nine Schools in different parts of the country, thanks to the coordination of several actors. From the analysis of two of them, the Wilfrido García⁷ AS (WGAS), and the FECAOL⁸ AS (FAS), it can be observed that its transformational potential is focused on its political character and the intention to nurture agroecological actors not just from their productive practice but from their militancy and leadership training. This is a stronger objective in the FAS, in which there is a strong selection phase and a strict training process; some participants are sent to a training phase with MST of Brazil, with whom they have an alliance (R. Intriago, personal communication, November 29, 2017). The participation in social protests is part of the school. Methodologically they are based on ‘Campesino a Campesino’ and Paulo Freire’s popular education principles. The AS are understood as experiential and collective co-learning spaces, where a process of action-reflection-enriched action is privileged, approaching knowledge from its integrity and complexity (CAE, n.d.). The active participation in learning, practice, militancy and protest spaces promotes self-valorisation and self-recognition as protagonist actors of change.
- b. Agroecological markets (AM), and the construction of networks among them is a critical objective of the CAE (n.d.). From 14 interviews conducted in several commercialization spaces, their multiple-cascade effect can be appraised in these terms: they promote diversification, improvement of nutrition/alimentation, economic income, labour autonomy, familial/community/rural-urban relations, and again self-valorisation as actors that can improve their reality and improve nutrition/alimentation for consumers. At 2017, there are 210 alternative

⁷ With 120 participants from four provinces of the Sierra Centro, is in its second class.

⁸ With participants from provinces from the Coast and the Sierra South; is in its third class.

- commercialization spaces, 127 of those were created between 2009 and 2016 (General Coordination of Commercialization Network [CGRC], 2017).
- c. Participative guarantee systems (PGS) is a mechanism that guarantees the transparency of the production process, in which the participation of producers and consumers is critical, giving them a more active role in the oversight process and generating confidence (Intriago et al., 2017, Peña et al., 2012). It is a process based on local necessities/particularities, so autonomy is imperative. At 2015 there were 1262 family producers with SPG, while 1258 are in a transition process (Heifer, 2015).
 - d. The agroecological workshops are an annual event, founded with the aim to connect peasants with academic learning in an inter-learning process and to generate a more symbiotic, peasant-needs-based research process. Decentralization, knowledge-exchange, and politics characterized the multiple events, in which peasants have a very strong role sharing experiences, knowledge, critical appraisals and proposals. The last Agroecological Workshop (2017), possible thanks the articulation of 27 actors, held events in 11 locations around the country and hosted nearly 3000 participants from very heterogeneous backgrounds.
 - e. The ‘Que rico es comer sano y de mi tierra Campaign 9’(CQRE) is a creative, militant and consciousness-raising space with the aim to “generate an intelligent population that can eat healthfully and ensure, with identity, local production, ensuring the wellbeing of species now and in the future” (quericoes.org). The multiple activities, like radio programs (with 128,000 listeners at 2015), promoters formation at four universities, public workshops, a consumers platform (with authority to monitor that regulations are complied), a monthly bulletin and social networks managing, among others, are executed thanks to the cooperation of around 45 actors¹⁰ in different parts of the country (M. Aízaga, Personal Communication, November 17, 2017).

4. Weaving geometries of resistance and reterritorialization: political and spatial strategies

Politics, space and nature, constitutive parts of Gramsci’s Praxis Philosophy, play a critical role in the fight for hegemony (Ekers & Loftus, 2013). For this thinker, politics,

...is the avenue through which the subaltern groups empower their members to work consciously and critically [on] their own conception of the world and became protagonists of the creation of the world’s history ... and [it] is through the political activity that individuals transform themselves” (Ekers & Loftus, 2013, p.144-155)

As mentioned by Karriem (2013), for Gramsci, collective transformation through cultural change is the key to promoting an historical fact; in this framework, understanding individual transformation is also critical. The transformation potential of an individual is based on the recognition of the individual as a “set of active relations with oneself, with other individuals and with nature”, so the potentiation and development of oneself can be achieved only through the modification of external relations with nature and other individuals (Karriem 2013). This frame constitutes a fertile analytical frame for understanding the strategies of the CAE.

The action repertoires of the CAE have been possible thanks the networking of multiple heterogeneous actors from different spaces and scales, weaving a geometry of resistance and reterritorialization. This relational, multi-spatial and multiescalar character of this networking allows the construction of new spatial identities (Levkoe, 2015) and constitutes “subaltern localization strategies” as part of a bigger

⁹ Translation: How rich is to eat healthy and from my land.

¹⁰ Producers and consumer’s organizations/movements, NGOs, local governments, agroecological/peasant’s markets, alternative restaurants/stores, ventures, etc.

scaling of politics (Escobar, 2001).

At a political level, it has been seen that social movements interact in changing scalar configurations, the state and political institutions being the most important, where local governments constitute a critical scale because autonomy at this level is more apparent (Blank, 2016; Miller, 2000). This strategic-changing-multi-scalar behaviour has been seen in the CAE's political strategies. Adapting according to the political situation, the CAE has moved from an active/participant position to a defensive one. At the beginning of the Rafael Correa's government the CAE was part of the 'Agrarian Collective', which had a critical role in the recognition of Food Sovereignty in the Constitution of 2008. Its members participated in public institutions (the Plurinational and Intercultural Conference of Food Sovereignty [COPISA], the Vice-minister of Rural Development) and in legal construction process (The Organic Law of the Regime of Food Sovereignty [LORSA] and the related laws proposals), to promote FS. However, in the face of neo-developmentist character of the policies applied, the relationship has been more confrontational and tactical, avoiding any possible co-optation or attempt by the state to take control.

With some local governments there is a cooperative relationship, and they have been important actors in the implementation of agroecological markets and PGS processes, sometimes through the creation of ordinances.

4.1 Creating political subjects in order to transition to agroecology

The experimentation "as a relation between social being and social consciousness (constitutes the) ...inflexion point of the emergence and formation of subjectivities (Thomson, 1981 as mentioned by Modonesi, 2010, p.20-21). In this document it is proposed that the CAE, through its actions and strategies, allows the relationship (in different ways and levels) with "the experiences of subordination, insubordination and emancipation, born from the relations of domination, conflict and liberation", that trigger the process of subalternity, antagonism and autonomy which according Modonesi, are the way to political subjectivization (Modonesi, 2010, p.18).

The spaces of reflection and collective learning could allow the recognition of an 'us' subaltern and oppressed, in front of 'them' dominants and oppressors; as well as the capitalist system and the mechanism responsible of this reality. In these spaces and in those of the protests, it is encouraged the action and insubordination to face a conflict situation. This participation allows a self-recognition as actors that can do 'something' to try to change their reality through resistance. While in the long term actions oriented to improve the productive practice or to participate in the commercialization and PGS spaces, allow the self recognition as actors that can change part of their realities (for example, improving their health and autonomy) through their productive or consumption practice, making them part of an emancipatory experience.

For Gramsci (n.d.), the moment of catharsis, in which oppression and insubordination, experimented with at the same time, becomes the liberation impulse, part of political subjectivization. It is proposed that this catharsis moment is activated and catalysed by the CAE through (among others): *i.* self-valorization and self-recognition as protagonist actors; *ii.* The feeling of belonging to a collective, a group of cohesive actors with the capacity to transform their own reality and others'; and *iii.* The disciplinization of mind through the politicization of individuals.

The relation with nature (as seen before), inherent to agroecology through a co-production process (Van der Ploeg, 2010), is critical too in the production of political subjects. Individuals related to agroecology transform themselves not just through productive practice, but through the chain of positive effects seen above, in the field of labour, health, the economy and the social. In this process,

nature also is released from harmful practices that degrade and impoverish it. This co-production principle of agroecology aims to achieve a double emancipation, of humans and nature, constituting itself as a bio-emancipatory tool.

5. Conclusion

Politics, space, production of political subjects and the role of agroecology as generator of bio-emancipation, constitutes critical strategies in the counter-hegemonic process, as has also been seen in the Movimiento Sin Tierra (MST) in Brazil (Panke & Wolford, 2015). The CAE, through its action repertoires, puts into practice these strategies, constituting itself as a collective political subject that generates resistance and agroecology reterritorialization, “occupying the social and political arena in dispute, using counter-hegemonic proposals, with food sovereignty as a political flag (and) as a civilizational proposal of sustainability (Gallar & Calle, 2017).

However, in the framework of an agroecological transition, its role is marginal. The lack of networking with other indigenous/peasant organizations and movements not (directly) linked with the agrifood system could become the main weakness of the CAE in relation to scaling agroecology. This fault doesn't fall solely on the shoulders of the CAE, as the lack of networking occurs also among the indigenous/peasant organizations in Ecuador, which not only does not coordinate, but is manifest in rivalries and distancing relations for political reasons. This could become one of the main factors that affect the formation of a contrahegemonic process that could allow the agroecological transition unfeasible.

A counterhegemonic process should go through a wider process of networking of heterogeneous collectives/movements/actors ideologically linked, that through their political action could constitute a popular mass. This could lead the way not only towards the agroecological transition, but towards an ecosocial transformation of the productive and consumerist matrix that degrades the socio-environmental systems, of the patriarchal system that continues killing and abusing women in all the socio-economic ambits, of the cultural matrix that excludes and rejects racial, sexual and aesthetic diversity. This is an urgent question not only concerning the immaterial territory of ideology, but also the institutions, the politics, the ways of producing, consuming, commercializing and relating to nature and society, etc.

To leave marginality and bring together (all) the social struggles and claims framed in an alternative model (one derived from proposals such as ecosocialism, degrowth, Buen Vivir), we urgently need to re-think the necessity of challenging power in different spaces, at different scales, with different and complementary purposes. On the other hand, the collectivisation of multiple struggles can (must?) also be structured in a body with counter-hegemonic capacity.

In terms of the Gramscian proposals discussed here, one of the spaces to be challenged is the state, and one of the bodies with counter-hegemonic capacity is the political party. Both would be critical in the process of constructing a counterhegemonic force. A party, understood in an integral and radical manner as “an organism that could concentrate theory, experience (...) as well as a strategic vision” (Castellina, 2018, Building Unity from Diversity, para.3); and whose fundamental and unmovable principle is a permanent link with civil society for the construction and implementation of the policies, the institutions and the projects that allow the transition. This is also a party which privileges above everything the search for the common good. This is more urgent in the current crisis of the party form, which is culturally and morally impoverished (Castellina 2018), and whose current ideology, structure and functioning does not represent or even come close to those required for an ecosocial transformation.

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About the Author

Geovanna Lasso, Biologist, has made a Master in Conservation and Rural Development Durrel Institute of Conservation and Ecology (Kent University), moment when she starts researching on the rural problematic, particularly on the impacts of oil palm crops expansion on society, environment and agrifood system in Ecuador. During her work on the National Strategy for the Rural Good Living at the National Secretary of Planning and Development of Ecuador, she was linked with inter-institutional processes of development of public policy related with the promotion of agroecology and food sovereignty. Since 2010 she is a member of the Agroecological Collective of Ecuador. Currently she is researching on the situation of food sovereignty in Ecuador in the context of the dispute of territories, and the role of agroecology in the resistance and reterritorialización process, as part of her doctoral studies in the Institute of Environmental Science and Technologies (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.



The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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or email: emancipatoryruralpolitics@gmail.com