

# Resisting neocolonial development: Andalgalá's people struggle against mega-mining projects

## Resistindo ao desenvolvimento neocolonial: a luta do povo de Andalgalá contra projetos megamineiros

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### Abstract

Latin America is experiencing a new era of the myth of development based on a model of extractivism. The most dramatic face of extractivism in the region has been, on the one hand, the growing presence of transnational mining corporations supported by national governments as well as regional and international finance and development institutions, and, on the other hand, the intense resistance against this development by social movements. In this paper we present the case of Andalgalá (a small town in the Province of Catamarca in Argentina) and the people's struggle against transnational mining corporations and their allies. Following the tradition of the Philosophy of Liberation and Dussel's ana-dialectic method, we have closely engaged with, what have been called, the "Argentinean communities of NO", expressing their opposition to neocolonial forms of development and management. In this paper we are specifically interested in understanding how the two main managerial devices used by mining companies, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and governance pacts, impacted the people's struggle. Overall, this paper provides a snapshot of the battles at the frontlines of extractivism. It hopes to give voice to those people who are normally not heard, providing a space for their views of a different kind of development.

**Keywords:** Development. Management. Social struggle. Resistance. Corporate social responsibility. CSR. Governance. Extractive Industries. Mining.

### Resumo

A América Latina vem experimentando uma nova era de declarada fé dos governos no mito do desenvolvimento, em articulação com a expansão de políticas extrativistas exportadoras em um contexto de renovada dependência. A face mais dramática do extrativismo na região tem sido a crescente presença de corporações mineiras transnacionais apoiadas por governos nacionais e regionais e por instituições internacionais financeiras e de apoio ao desenvolvimento, e intensamente resistidas por movimentos sociais populares. Neste artigo apresentamos o caso de Andalgalá (uma pequena cidade na Província de Catamarca, na Argentina) e as lutas do povo contra corporações mineiras transnacionais e seus aliados. Na tradição da Filosofia da Libertação e do método ana-dialético de Dussel, nos engajamos com o que tem sido denominado "comunidades argentinas do NÃO", expressando sua oposição a formas neocoloniais de desenvolvimento e gestão. Neste artigo estamos especificamente interessados em compreender como dois dispositivos gerencialistas usados pelas corporações mineiras, responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) e pactos

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de governança, impactam a luta do povo. Acima de tudo, este artigo oferece instantâneos de batalhas na linha de frente do extrativismo. Esperamos ter dado voz àquelas pessoas que normalmente não são ouvidas, criando um espaço para suas visões sobre um tipo diferente de desenvolvimento.

**Palavras chave:** Desenvolvimento. Gestão. Lutas sociais. Responsabilidade social corporativa. Governança.

The division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others in losing. Our part of the world, known today as Latin America, was precocious: it has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations. Centuries passed, and Latin America perfected its role. We are no longer in the era of marvels when face surpassed fable and imagination was shamed by the trophies of conquest—the lodes of gold, the mountains of silver. But our region still works as a menial. It continues to exist at the service of others' needs, as a source and reserve of oil and iron, of copper and meat, of fruit and coffee, the raw materials and foods destined for rich countries which profit more from consuming them than Latin America does from producing them.

Eduardo Galeano (1971, p. 1)

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## Introduction

Galeano's opening paragraph of the classic "Open veins of Latin America" remains astonishingly topical, despite the fact it was written more than four decades ago. From Potosí (BO), Zacatecas (MX) and Ouro Preto (BR), during colonial times, to present-day Inti Raymi (BO), Tetela (MX) and Carajás (BR), there is a similar process of rampage and environmental destruction. However, from then until now, different logics and practices of organization have been established in order to fulfill economic objectives and to control social processes and peoples.

Dussel (2002, p. 61) explains that in the XVI and XVII centuries, a philosophical paradigm was mobilized to justify the praxis of domination. This paradigm, "accordingly with the demands of efficacy, technological feasibility of economic performance, and 'management' of a huge and expanding world-system", was the expression of a process of simplification and rationalization of life – as indicated by Weber (1999). Dussel's (2002, p. 59-60) argument is that there were two moments in the process of modernity and early capitalist development:

In the first place, a Hispanic, humanist and Renaissance modernity, still connected with the old inter-regional system of Christianity and the Muslim Mediterranean. The 'management' of the new world-system was conceived as a part of the old inter-regional system. Spain manages the centrality as domination by means of the hegemony of an integral culture, a language, a religion (hence the evangelizer process that Amerindians suffer); as military occupation, political and bureaucratic organization, economic expropriation, demographic presence (hundreds of thousands of Spanish and Portuguese who will inhabit Latin America forever), ecological transformation (modifying flora and fauna) etc. [...] Secondly, the modernity of Central Europe, which begins with Amsterdam in Flanders, considered by many as the only modernity [...]. In order to 'manage' the enormous world-system that is opened for the small Holland, it is necessary to increase efficacy by means of simplification. It is necessary to produce an abstraction [...] which excludes many valid variables (cultural, anthropologic, ethical, political, religious variables; aspects which were valuable for the Europeans of the XVI century) that would not allow an adequate, feasible or technically possible 'management' of the world-system.

Quijano (1997; 1998) helps us understand the Hispanic 'management' of domination by means of the construction of a social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, an idea that had no

known history before the colonization of the Americas. This idea was necessary to institute a model of power legitimated by the supposed differential biological structures between “the conquerors and the conquered” (QUIJANO, 2008, p. 182):

So the conquered and the dominated people were situated in a natural position of inferiority, and as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were likewise considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power (QUIJANO, 2008, p. 183).

Race continued to be a key concept for the ‘management’ of the world-system under the control of Central Europe. Based on the idea of race, a new structure of labor control was established in the historical process of the constitution of America as well as of world capitalism. According to Ribeiro (1977, p. 41), native indigenous and African slaves were transformed into “ancillary components” in the role of “external proletariats of the metropolitan economies”. As Quijano (2008, p. 187) indicates:

The privileged positions conquered by the dominant whites for the control of gold, silver, and other commodities produced by the unpaid labor of Indians, blacks, and mestizos (coupled with an advantageous location in the slope of the Atlantic through which, necessarily, the traffic of these commodities for the world market had to pass) granted whites a decisive advantage to compete for the control of the world market that the precious metals from America stimulated and allowed, as well as the control of such extensive resources, made possible by the control of a vast preexisting web of commercial exchange.

The paradigm of European superiority also included the idea of progress, which became consolidated “under a positive and evolutionary rationality implying the existence of only one, progressive and natural path towards perfection”. Western Europe was on this path to ‘perfection’, but did not want to stop there. It “felt the moral imperative to extend its aid to the imperfects – the primitive, barbarians, savages – and to support them in their long journey towards the superior condition of civilization” (SILVA, 2010, p. 20).

Based on this paradigm, the Europeans built new institutions and disseminated new ideas, reconstructing the world as a periphery destined to supply them with goods and services. Looting and slavery were fundamental parts of the industrial revolution, allowing the Europeans to revolutionize their own societies, “renewing and enriching their cities, adorning themselves with power and glory” (RIBEIRO, 1977, p. 62).

This statement is a clear reference to the process defined by Marx (1976) as primitive accumulation: the historical origins of wage labor, as well as the accumulation of the necessary assets in the hands of the capitalist class (HARVEY, 2010a). In Marx's (1976, p. 915) words:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production.

Some authors, following the path opened by Luxemburg (2003), refute the idea that “primitive accumulation occurred once upon a time, and that once over, it ceased to be of real significance” (HARVEY, 2010a, p. 305), as it could be understood in some readings of Marx (1976). For Perelman (2000, p. 37), primitive accumulation is a process that continues to this day. Therefore, it “remains a key concept for understanding capitalism — and not just the particular phase of capitalism associated with the transition from feudalism, but capitalism proper”. Harvey (2010a, p. 306) is very emphatic about this continuity:

To begin with the specific processes of primitive accumulation that Marx describes – the dispossession of rural and peasant populations; colonial, neocolonial and imperialist politics of exploitation; the use of state powers to reallocate assets to a capitalist class; the enclosure

of the commons; the privatization of state lands and assets; an international system of finance and credit; to say nothing of the burgeoning natural debts and even the shadowy continuation of slavery through the trafficking of people (women in particular) – all these features are still with us and in some instances seem not to have faded into the background but, as in the case of the credit system, the enclosure of the commons and privatization, to have become even more prominent.

As will become clear from the upcoming discussion of the case of Andalgalá and Minera Alumbrera, the first open pit mine established in Argentina, Harvey's proposition is absolutely adequate. However, the organizational devices of domination had to be transformed in order to secure "inseparable economic, political and cultural processes which produce the appropriation of population, territories and resources by some societies or social groups upon others" (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2010a, p. 5).

At this stage, we can define the meaning we are attributing to management: organizational devices and practices necessary to fulfill the objectives of capital accumulation and the control of social processes and peoples in order to guarantee such accumulation. In that sense, what was briefly discussed above refers to the management of the colonial extractive industries and correlated domination. By extractive industries, the meaning implied here is "economic activities that remove a natural resource from the environment, submit it to marginal or no processing, and then sell it on: industries such as mining, oil, gas, and timber extraction" (BEBBINGTON, 2010, p. 97).

These industries have taken the form of predatory extractivism since colonial times: large scale intensive practices with a high social and environmental impact and the production of enclave economies. In the present, these enclaves are controlled by transnational companies with the support of national governments (GUDYNAS, 2011) in a process we are defining as neocolonialist: a process of subalternization of formally sovereign national states eager to provide legal, political and administrative conditions for the extraction of their natural resources by transnational companies.

In contemporary Latin America, extractivism is present indistinctively of professed political credos. In order to distinguish extractivist policies "which strengthen the role of the state in the exploitation and ownership of resources" while at the same time developing public policies to address "problems such as poverty and inequality", as in the cases of Bolivia and Venezuela, some authors use the expression "neextractivism" (GUDYNAS, 2009; 2011; AGUILAR, 2012, p. 7) or "progressive neextractivism" (GUDYNAS, 2009, p. 188). However, in this paper, we will refer to extractivism as a general economic policy independently of government's professed political orientation.

Extractive and neocolonial practices cannot be properly understood without considering the wider economic and epistemological context. Osorio (2012) criticizes the narrow analysis of extractivism, defending the need of considering it as part of the context of the intense economic transformations that have been taking place in Latin America in the last decades. These transformations have put an end to the industrialization process, giving birth to a new model of capital reproduction through commodities exports, such as agricultural and mining goods. This new model – defined by Svampa (2012, p. 41) as the "commodity consensus" - is substantially different to previous export-oriented modes of development, which have focused more on the capability to produce higher value-added goods. In many analyses and in the majority of government discourses, the increase in the capacity of commodities export is presented as a symbol of economic strength and development. However,

[...] more than development oriented dynamic economies (taking advantage of 'windows of opportunity' opened by new technologies as a certain discourse highlights), what we have in Latin America are new forms of reproductive organization which re-edict, under new conditions, the old signs of dependency and underdevelopment which tend to walk with their backs turned to the needs of the major part of the population. [...] It is dependency being reproduced as a particular modality of capitalism and insertion in the world accumulation (OSORIO, 2012, p. 104-105).

From the epistemological perspective, neocolonialism and extractivism are expressions of the coloniality of power. The expression 'coloniality' refers to structures of power, control, and hegemony that have emerged during colonial times, stretching from the conquest of the Americas to the present day. It refers to attempts to "eliminate the many forms of knowledge of the native populations", replacing them with the European "ways of knowing, producing knowledge, images, symbols and modes of signification" (QUIJANO, 1992, p. 440). Coloniality is a concept created to make sense of this constitutive feature of modernity, which nonetheless cannot be understood outside the context of Eurocentric hegemonic patterns of knowledge and its claim of universality. This intended universalism is what justifies the so-called civilizing mission to which colonized areas had been submitted: first the myth of progress and modernization, even now associated with that powerful symbolic carrier of promises of a better life – development.

According to Esteva (2000), the term 'development' is at the center of a very powerful semantic constellation. He believes that there is no other concept in the modern world that has been as influential as 'development', representing favorable change: from the simple to the advanced, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better. It is clearly an idea that follows the same evolutionist logic as 'progress'. Perhaps more importantly, however – as is widely known today – development has to be seen within the context of the crisis of colonialism, exacerbated after World War II, articulating the dichotomy between developed-underdeveloped in substitution for the dichotomy civilized-primitive (SILVA, 2010).

Latin America is experiencing a new era of professed governmental faith in the myth of development connected with the expansion of extractivist export policies in a context of renewed dependency. The most dramatic face of extractivism in the region has been the growing presence of transnational mining corporations supported by national governments and regional and international financial and development institutions. This 'dramatic face' results both from the technological mining model most often used (high tonnage open pit mining, relying heavily on chemicals with perverse environmental and health impacts) and from the corresponding reaction by the people: the proliferation of social struggles and resistance against mega-mining projects. Amid the mining boom, there are at least 120 environmental conflicts from Central America to Southern Patagonia (GAUDÍN, 2012). The correlation between mega-mining expansionism and increasing popular opposition has demanded the renewal of development management. We advocate here that this renewal reproduces the coloniality of power, maintaining the hierarchy of peoples as a central feature in association with the incorporation of two main managerial devices: governance pacts and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Dar (2008, p. 95) defines managerialism as an "ideology of control, progress and order that has been absorbed by mainstream development ideas for growth and stability". In the field of development, 'managerialism' can be perceived as the inter-connection of three features: (a) the value of technical managerial expertise expressed in the increasing professionalization of development aid (KOTHARI, 2005); (b) the dissemination of instruments and practices of control; (c) the transplantation of managerial knowledge produced for a specific kind of organization – the private, profit-oriented enterprise – to all kinds of organizations, including state bureaucracies, NGOs, and bilateral and multilateral donors (COOKE, 2010). In this paper we are focusing mainly on managerialism as the application of the two specific instruments of social, economic, legal and cultural control just mentioned: CSR and governance.

In the following sections we will present and discuss the case of Andalgalá (a small town in the Province of Catamarca in Argentina) and the people's struggle against transnational mining corporations and their allies, from the perspectives of the people of Andalgalá.

Our theoretical position is embedded in the tradition of the Philosophy of Liberation (PL), defined by Dussel (2008, p. 340) as a "critical philosophy self-critically localized in the periphery within subaltern groups". According to him, "the first intuition was influenced by the events of 1968", "inspired by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, and especially Marcuse's *One-dimensional Man*), which illuminated the political meaning of said ontology, allowing it to be more thoroughly understood" (DUSSEL, 2008, p. 340). After that, the contact with Levinas was critical for the development of Dussel's original analectic or ana-

dialectic method: the adoption of the absolute transcendence of the other as the point of departure. In the words of Mendieta (2001, p. 19), for Dussel, “the other is beyond the horizon of the already experimented and understood”. Dialectics is “the method of self-reflection and self-projection of the same”. The analectic moment requires the openness to think, to listen, to see, to feel, to taste the word from the perspective of the other; it is conditioned by humbleness, by an expectant solidarity. Therefore, a philosophy which reflects from the perspective of the other is a philosophy of liberation and the “politics of the other is an anti-politics, it is a political of subversion and contestation” (MENDIETA, 2001, p. 21).

The data presented here was collected from documents produced by the “Argentinean communities of NO”, to whom we listened and talked to; we read their publications, saw their pictures and films; we opened ourselves up to this ‘other’. ‘Communities of NO’ is a designation provided by Antonelli (2011, p.7) to identify the “network of environmental and citizens’ *asambleas* (assemblies) as well as other actors who oppose mega-mining projects and share the same “ethical values, epistemic evaluations, and the promotion of citizens’ consciousness disseminating the discourse of NO by different means (professionals, academics, media etc.)”. We collected primary data during a field trip in August 2012, when we visited Andalgalá, conducting in-depth interviews with a range of activists. Excerpts from these interviews are in *italics*, making it easy to identify them without repeating the reference. The pictures we took during the research will also be presented without specifying the source.

After presenting and discussing the recent history of Latin American extractivism and the Argentina’s mining boom, we introduce the struggle of the people of Andalgalá and the challenges they face, addressing the governance pact between transnational capital, the state and the mining company’s strategy of CSR. In this paper we do not focus on discussing CSR from the perspective of the mining companies. Readers interested in this perspective can consult, for example, Jenkins and Yakovleva (2004) as well as Mutti, Yakovleva, Vasquez-Brust et al. (2012). We also do not adopt the approach taken by stakeholder theory, which we find as inadequate and even counter-productive. According to Banerjee (2008, p. 51), the term ‘stakeholder’ is often accepted uncritically and, at the same time, represents a form of “colonialism that serves to regulate the behavior of stakeholders”. Instead, in this paper we are interested in understanding the consequences of CSR practices for the people’s struggle.

Needless to say that we include ourselves in these ‘communities of NO’, hoping that this paper will contribute not only to increase the visibility of people’s struggle against mega-development projects, but also to help raise awareness in our field against organizational and managerial practices that destroy the web of life and produce death (BANERJEE, 2008). We also defend, following Cooke and Dar (2008, p. 3), “the possibility of, and indeed the necessity for, an international solidarity in opposition to an amoral, virally pernicious, globalizing managerialism that tries to obliterate borders and difference”.

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### A short history of recent Latin American extractivism

The majority of Latin American countries are currently specializing in raw material exports, as shown by the increase of these in terms of exports and the growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the area of natural resources: 35% of total investments in 2011 (CEPAL, 2012). In 2010, FDI for metal mining in Brazil amounted to 22%, in Chile to 41%, in Bolivia to 34% and in Colombia to 30% (ECLAC, 2011; AGUILAR, 2012). This expansion of the mining sector reflects the intense demand for raw materials by the so-called emergent economies, mainly China, as well as the increasing value of metals in the international market (CEPAL, 2012).

From a historical perspective, Machado Aráoz (2011) connects the present mining expansion with the accumulation crisis of the post-war period and the boom of the 1990s with the geopolitics of neoliberalism. According to him, the extraordinary growth rates after World War II included a high increase in the exploitation of natural resources. At the same time, in the context of the Cold War and of developmentalist

efforts from peripheral economies of Latin America and from the newly independent Asian and African nations, a series of policies destined to nationalize the exploitation of oil, minerals and other non-renewable resources were put in place. These policies were also legitimized by the United Nations. In a Resolution of 1962 it declared that “the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned” (UNITED NATIONS, 1962, p. 1). An emblematic expression of this policy was the nationalization of copper mines announced by Salvador Allende in July 1971.

This process of “subaltern peoples aiming at recovering the control over their territories as sources and reserves of natural resources” was at the root of the emergence of international institutional concerns about the environment (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2010b, p. 41). A key document from that period was released in 1971, “The Limits to Growth” (MEADOWS, MEADOWS, RANDERS et al., 1972), which had been commissioned by the Club of Rome, an international think tank organization. In the following year, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm. According to Machado Aráoz (2010b, p. 41):

The new scenario of restrictions was the starting point for the emergence of a new environmental discourse generated at the institutional centers of world power as a relevant aspect in the configuration of new devices aimed at restoring the historical conditions of environmental injustices which define the modern capitalist ecological imperialism.

At the same time, a series of political and institutional transformations created the conditions for restructuring world power. For Harvey (2007, p. 69), “something radical occurred in global capitalism after 1970 or so”. This transition “began at that time and became consolidated around the Washington Consensus of the mid-1990s”. The new imperialism, which evolved after 1970 “entailed the construction, under the hegemony of Europe, North America and Japan, of battering rams to smash down all barriers to capital surplus absorption wherever they were to be found”.

In Latin America, it was necessary to ‘smash down’ governmental barriers of political regimes oriented by national-popular projects. The most emblematic case was the overthrow of Salvador Allende’s constitutional government in Chile. The acts of sabotage and terrorism actively supported by the United States produced the final event in the Latin American September 11, that of 1973. That coup represented the landmark of a long period of National Security dictatorships in the region (HINKELAMMERT, 1993), creating a favorable scenario for the implementation of neocolonial practices under neoliberal globalization (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2011, p. 157):

From a general point of view, the state terrorism not only had the ‘political function’ of dismantling the processes of mobilization and popular organization [...], it also had a crucial ‘economic function’ for the instauration of the basis for a new cycle of expropriation.

As part of this new world power scenario, a new Meadows Report was produced, also commissioned by the Club of Rome. In “Beyond the limits: confronting global collapse, envisioning a sustainable future”, the myth of unlimited economic growth was restated (MEADOWS, MEADOWS and RANDERS, 1992). This document was part of the set of discourses aimed at creating the era of “sustainable development” (WCED, 1987): an “extraordinary conceptual juggling act” (LANDER, 2011, p. 2) which defined as complementary what in fact is antagonistic (MISOCZKY and BÖHM, 2012).

At the same time, the World Bank began to offer fresh ideas and recommendations for developing countries regarding the mining industry. Andrews (1992, p. 11) reviews several innovations in mineral resources technology, emphasizing that this new technology “flourishes best in an atmosphere of commercial challenge and entrepreneurship”. Therefore,

[...] international donor agencies should continue to advise developing countries that reliance on free market mechanisms is a better alternative than direct government intervention in the mining sector. Excessive control, burdensome reporting procedures and unlimited discretionary power in hands of the government to grant or deny mining titles can be significant deterrents to the private investor and thus hinder the introduction of appropriate technologies (ANDREWS, 1992, p. 11).

In June 1994, the World Bank hosted and co-sponsored, with the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and with the NGO International Council on Metals and the Environment, the International Conference on Development, Environment and Mining. The Conference Summary (WORLD BANK, 1994, p. 6) indicates the roles that should be played by governments after having privatized their mineral assets:

The main role of the government should be to establish and maintain a supportive “enabling environment” that would allow private companies to be competitive in an international market. In its role as regulator, the government should take the initiative for: establishing a fair, consistent and efficient legal framework; creating and maintaining stable and supportive economic policies; promoting a solid technical infrastructure, both locally and on a national level; developing appropriate national and local government agencies responsive to the needs of mining enterprises; assisting in the development of policies and programs which will both utilize existing resources and personnel, and eliminate ineffective practices; encouraging diversification with the goal of eventually removing government subsidies; encouraging foreign investment, and welcoming new foreign skills and structures when appropriate; working with local financial institutions to improve access of mining companies to local loan sources; and ensuring that investors have equal access to the nation's mineral resources.

As a response to the continued encouragement, by the World Bank and other international agencies, to the commitment of governments to extractive growth as a development strategy, since the 1990s over ninety countries have rewritten their mining and investment codes (BEBBINGTON, HINOJOSA, BEBBINGTON et al., 2008).

As would be expected, in Latin America, Chile was the first country to engage in experimentation and implementation of a set of institutional reforms, starting in 1974 with new rules for foreign investment and continuing in 1981 with the new law on mining concessions and the water code, and in 1983 with the new mining code. According to Machado Aráoz (2011), these codes were edited around three pillars: total legal security for foreign investment in mining, fiscal and commercial benefits, and weak environmental control.

The articulation between Pinochet's experimentations and the World Bank stimulus packages – ideas associated with loans to accelerate institutional and legislation reforms – created a privileged space for the expansion of mining activities in the region. Following this trend, new mining laws were promoted in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador (1991), Mexico (1992), Brazil (1996), Guatemala (1997), Honduras (1998), and Colombia (2001). The Argentinean reform started in 1993, under Menem's government (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2011).

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### Argentina's mining boom

The Law of Investments in Mining 24.196/1993 assures fiscal stability for 30 years; reimbursement of VAT on exploration activities; exemption from tariffs and customs duties on capital goods, special equipment, or components of such goods. It also assures that mining servicing companies enjoy equal benefits: profits from mines and mining rights that are destined to increase company capital do not require income tax; the capitalization of mining reserves can reach up to 50%; there is VAT advanced reimbursement and financing in the case of new projects or the substantial increase in production capacity. Also assured are tax exemption



on mining properties and accelerated amortization and royalties are limited to 3% at the mouth of the mine. Also in 1993, Law 24.228 was passed, harmonizing the provincial mining procedures and establishing public biddings for large scale mining. As part of this agreement, the provincial governments agreed to lift all municipal taxes, rates, and documentary stamp taxes that might encumber mining activities; it also included the reimbursement of VAT fiscal credit stemming from investments in exploration twelve months after expenses have occurred. The legislation was complemented by Law 24.585/1995, the Environmental Protection Code for the Mining Industry, which requires that each provincial government creates an enforcement authority, introducing the concept of 'sustainable development'. In Giarraca's (2007, p. 4) view, it is this legal framework which has paved the way for "the enormous flux of foreign capital that has flooded" into Argentina over the last few years.

The Argentinean Mining Laws are an expression of how "distinctive institutional and administrative territorial arrangement" produces a "regional configuration in the divisions of labor and of production systems" that results from "the conjoining of economic and political forces" rather than being "dictated by so-called natural advantages" (HARVEY, 2010b, p. 196). As a result of these institutional and administrative territorial arrangements, the evolution of this activity in Argentina over the last decade looks as follows: a cumulative export growth of 424%; from 18 mining projects in 2002 to 614 in 2011; a cumulative minerals exploration growth of 664%, from 135,000 meters in 2002 to 1,031,600 in 2011; a cumulative investment increase of 194%; a cumulative production growth of 841% (ARGENTINA, 2012a).

Another governmental document presents mining as a state public policy, advertising 2.3 million km<sup>2</sup> with geological potential for the development of mining (ARGENTINA, 2012b). This is an astonishing proposition, considering that the whole country has around 3.75 million km<sup>2</sup>. The implication would be the transformation of around 60% of the country into open pits. The same document advertises the existence of specific legal apparatus, following international patterns, and a competitive taxation scenario. Very true remarks! However, the same cannot be said about the following remark: "metallic mining developed with non-contaminating technologies" (ARGENTINA, 2012b, p.16).

In fact, mega-mining projects, based on the dogma of development and on the fallacy of the endless availability of natural resources, have an enormous adverse impact, promoting territorial fragmentation and destroying any chance of a multidimensional organization of labor and production. They are an example of a practice that, "with respect to the physical world and within the web of ecological life [...] changes the face of the earth in often dramatic and irreversible ways" (HARVEY, 2010b, p. 185).

As a consequence, amid the mining boom, an explosion of social protests and confrontations has arisen all over Argentina. Under the slogan "No a la mina", the opposition against plunder and contamination has mobilized a variety of resistance movements, which have been actively confronting the extractive model of development driven by national and provincial governments in association with transnational corporations. As Harvey (2010b, p. 203) indicates, "the institutional and administrative arrangements within a territory are, theoretically at least, subject to the sovereign will of the people, which means they are subject to the outcomes of political struggle".

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### **Andalgala: the people's struggle to become Lord of the High Mountain**

In the 1990s, the province of Catamarca presented the ideal location and symbolic condition to become the first economic enclave for a transnational mega-mining company in Argentina. In a context of structural poverty and chronic unemployment, the promises were that the mining investments would bring development and modernization (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2009) for a region full of unexploited reserves of metallic and non-metallic minerals. As a result, the provincial government authorized around 1,200 areas for mining exploration.

Minera Alumbrera exploits the major gold, silver and copper vein in Catamarca and Northeastern Argentina. The company is a joint venture involving the British-Swiss Xstrata (50%), and the Canadian mining companies Goldcorp (35.5%) and Yamana (12.5%). Minera Alumbrera's output for 2011 included "446,718 tonnes of copper and gold concentrate, 32,445 ounces of dore gold and 1708 tonnes of molybdenum" (XSTRATA, 2011, p. 23). Concentrate is the mass of rock and water that the company transports via a slurry pipeline to the city of San Miguel de Tucumán, covering a distance of 316 km and carrying more than 100 tons per hour. From there, after dehydration, the minerals are transported by the company's trains to the river port of General San Martín, in the province of Santa Fe, covering a distance of 800 km. The port complex has a storage capacity of 60,000 metric tons and a loading rate of 1,250 tons per hour. Minera Alumbrera occupies a total area of 5,800 hectares where the open pit is located, and also workers' camps, an airport, the grinding and concentrating plant, and the tailings dam (XSTRATA, 2012). It is allowed to use 1,200 liters/second of water, the equivalent of 100 million liters per day (MACHADO, SVAMPA, VIALE et al., 2011).

Minera Alumbrera commenced operations in 1997. It is located in the Departments of Belén and Andalgalá. The towns closest to the mine are Andalgalá, Belén, Santa María, Hualfín, Mina Capillitas, Amanao, Chaquiago and Farallón Negro. The contamination risks affect three provinces: Catamarca, Tucumán and Santiago del Estero. The mine is located 70 km from Andalgalá.

Figure 1

#### Minera Alumbrera's open pit



Source: Marcha (2012).

Andalgalá, in the Quechua language, means "Lord of the High Mountain". The town has around 18,000 inhabitants according to the 2010 census. It is a "poor town under a mountain of gold" (LAVACA, 2006, p. 1). This is the reason why, in the first years, the people welcomed the announcement of the mining project. The people had good memories of mining, which was the region's main economic activity from around 1880 to 1920. As we were told, "*it remained a good memory from an activity that was a pillar of development, forgetting that it was then that the forests were destroyed to provide wood for the foundry*". After that, "*we lived the splendor of agriculture and livestock production. There were around 50 wineries, some of them winners of international prizes. However, after a time this splendor started to decrease. One of the reasons was that the trains which transported goods stopped running. We remained with the memory that mining was an important source of development and we had no idea of what an open pit mine was*".

The good memories and the ignorance of the new mining technologies associated with the government and company's advertisements of progress and development created the conditions for the project's acceptance.

Minera Alumbreira and associated public officials promised to build a neighborhood for 5,000 people, schools, a high complexity hospital, to pave roads and, mainly, to provide 6,000 jobs. None of these promises were fulfilled and, according to the former mayor, a mining supporter, "no more than 40 or 50 persons from Andalgalá have an effective job at the mine" (LAVACA, 2006, p. 2).

*"Suddenly, we were going to become Hollywood. Then, we realized that this is the big lie mining companies tell everywhere. Instead, mining is a symbol of resource plundering, it generates unemployment and is incompatible with any other type of economic production, and it is also synonymous with corruption".*

By then, the people from Belén had already created the Voice of the People, a social movement organized mainly by unemployed people. At first, their demand was for the promised jobs, denouncing the lies of the company and the politicians. Between 1998 and 2000, the protests became more radical, with a series of roadblocks preventing the access of trucks to the mine and demanding jobs. As an answer, the company began to offer rotating and temporary jobs in an attempt at demobilization. It did not work. In fact, the conflict increased, due to the frustration of local businessmen who were expecting an expansion of commerce and of neighbors expecting infrastructure improvements. Another complicating factor was the insistent presence of a suspended mist of dust which changed the sky of Belén and the deterioration of many adobe houses affected by the traffic of big trucks and machinery. It also became public that families closer to the mine had to leave their small farms because of the death of their animals, deterioration of water sources and the closure of traditional paths. This is the wider context that led to the creation of the Living Forces of the West, a meeting space for neighbors and businessmen of Belén, Santa María and Andalgalá (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2009).

At the same time, students taking courses related to health issues at the University of Córdoba came home for their vacations in Andalgalá. *"They had been alerted by certain doctors about the increase of diseases in the hospitals since the mining had begun operation. Simultaneously, as this information reached the people, the company was going to the schools to convince the teachers that the mining was going to bring wealth and progress."*

In this context, the people from Andalgalá began to study the impact of open pit mining, learning from Chile's and other experiences. Two people from the town went to Esquel, in the Patagonian Argentina, and learned about the struggle against Minera El Desquite, which resulted in a referendum, with 81% voting against the operation, followed by the project's suspension (MARÍN, 2009). People began to realize the perverse nuances of the development model offered to them (GALLEGO and KANTOR, 2010).

*"What we did was to study and learn. The mine forced us to understand economy, biology, geology... Then we started to denounce what was going to happen to us: in the streets, visiting homes, showing movies in the squares. At first the people did not believe in what we said".* In March 2000, *"during a summer, with the storms, the water always came turbid. Some people still did not believe that the water's turbidity and the mine were related. Then, a group of us tried to enter the mine. It was not allowed. We took horses, a camera, and went there. The video was very important in convincing the people."*

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2000, the day of the anniversary of the founding of Andalgalá and of a traditional parade, a small group of persons decided to take a step beyond the small meetings and to perform a public action under the identification of "Vecinos Auto-Convocados por la Vida" [self-convened residents for life]. One of them described the events to Gallego and Kantor (2010, p. 7):

At first we were in front of Graciela's house, Aldo was preparing a wagon with a lot of animals' bones that I don't know from where he took. He was dressed as Death ... and Claudio, my son, was walking before the wagon playing a drum. There were just a few of us when people started to cheer and applaud. Alberto, on one side and I from the other were telling them not to applaud us, but to join us if they agreed with our position ... when we reached the end of the march there were thousands of us, we were thousands ... and we cried, cried, and held each other.

This was a landmark of the process of becoming a people, no longer a mere “number, a body, a thing”, but a collective which “denies the economic-bureaucratic rationality, which refuses to act following the discipline imposed by the hegemonic power and incorporated over the years” (VILLEGAS GUZMÁN, JOB and HERNÁNDEZ, 2010, p. 10). The organization resulted from the necessity of defending life. It emerged from a sense of urgency, from the conscience that development is a fetishist symbol that has adverse material implications for the people.

The opposition to the mine already in operation continued with meetings geared towards learning and disseminating information, exchanging with other communities affected by mining projects and contamination. It also continued with public actions, mainly in the form of marches.

*“Since 2006 water has become clearly the central issue. Water is a public good and cannot be privately appropriated because it affects all the community and our lives.”* In the words of another activist: *“This is not development. Development is another thing. Mining companies are like elephants in a bazaar. Before we used to drink water from the river, now 40/50% of the population brings water from other places”*. Also, *“water provided the common ground for a wider alliance, including soya bean producers. It helped to discredit the discourse of development and sustainability”*.

In December 2009, the people learned that they were under threat from another mega-project: Agua Rica, which Yamana, the Canadian minority shareholder in the Alumbreira mine would develop. Yet, in September 2011 Xstrata and Yamana announced that they have reached an agreement providing Minería Alumbreira Limited the exclusive option to acquire Yamana's 100% interest in the Agua Rica project, effectively meaning that the current corporate arrangement would be continued after the expiry of the Alumbreira mine.

Agua Rica is a project to obtain copper, molybdenum and gold using the same technologies already in place at La Alumbreira. It would use 390 liters of water per second, almost 34 million liters per day. However, the consumption of water estimated by the population of Andalgala is much higher: 100 million liters per day. The planned new mine would be much closer to Andalgala, only around 17 km from the town center, and the environmental risks would be even greater than those of La Alumbreira. The project would begin in January 2010, but it did not due to the resistance and the absence of the social license, as it is going to become clearer in the following paragraphs.

Agua Rica, is named after a nearby glacier, whose water is a source of life for the town. *“The glacier releases water slowly. The cycle of water is the cycle of life and they come to take away the water of our cycle of life. First we were happy when we found out that we had gold. Now we understand that the gold is not ours. We should go back to our origins, to plant olives and grapes, to produce oil and wine, to plant vegetables in communitarian areas such those you can see over there. We need to protect our source of water to go back to our origins.”*

Figure 2

**Agua Rica – the new mining altar of sacrifice**



Also, in 2009 the people of Andalgala found out that the provincial government had given the Billiton Group permission to explore an area that covered almost the whole town. In case of positive finds, compensation would be paid to the residents who would have to leave their properties, because “the priority is development” (LAVACA, 2010b, p. 1).

This was the context of the creation of the Asamblea El Algarrobo:

In December 13<sup>th</sup> 2009, the teacher Aldo Flores was with some neighbors watching the documentary *La fuente del jardín de tus arterias*, with testimonies of how different groups had organized *asambleas* to oppose multinationals. Aldo was obsessed when the night was over: “if we do not act quickly, they will pass over us”. With one neighbor, Raul (this is not his name, but he asked not to mention his real name in order to avoid the increase of unemployment indices), he went to the communal path that starts at Chaquiago, in El Potrero district, and goes up to Agua Rica. 6 km from Andalgala, at 7:00 am on 14<sup>th</sup> December, he took the large Argentinean flag he had with him and stood strategically under the algarrobo that is in the terrain of Don Nelson Medina [...]. He also stood on one side of the path, Raul on the other, holding the flag. “The idea was: let’s go and if the others want they would come. We didn’t block the road, but explained to the people what was happening. Everyone could pass, except the trucks going to Agua Rica”. At 8 am, another neighbor arrived, replacing Raul who had to go to his work. At noon, two more. The mobile phone was receiving messages all the time. When the night came, we had more the 200 people: workers employed and unemployed, architects, housewives, teachers, doctors, businessmen, rural workers, students... A new *asamblea* was born: El Algarrobo (LAVACA, 2010b, p.2).

Figure 3

**Asamblea El Algarrobo's visual identity**



Source: Asamblea El Algarrobo (2012).

The place under el algarrobo is where a community in asamblea is blocking a project that is three times bigger than that of the existing mine. It exhibits: Argentinean flags, an image of San Expedito - patron of the good and urgent causes, a skull with vampire teeth and the slogan NO A LA MINERÍA, an image of Our Lady of the Valley – protector of Andalgalá – with a hole in the right arm which resulted from a rubber bullet shot during the repression that, as we can see, included everything and converted the image into a motive of popular astonishment for reasons both miraculous and ballistic. At one corner, the classic face of Che Guevara (who would never have imagined his posthumous and globalized role as a San Expedito of dialectical materialism) (LAVACA, 2010b, p. 1).

The repression mentioned above happened on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010, just two months after the creation of El Algarrobo. That day, around 300 activists sat in the middle of the road, in a Gandhi-like pacific protest to block the passage of mining trucks on their way to Agua Rica. The convoy was under the protection of public (local and provincial) and private (Grupo Kuntur) security forces. The repression began in the afternoon and continued during the night, resulting in hundreds of people being injured and 40 arrests (LAVACA, 2010b).

Figure 4

**The people and the repression of February 2010**



Sources: Lavaca (2010b, 2012).

That night, the town was shaken by a popular uprising, with the population attacking the mining office, the jail and the town hall, which was partially burned down. After these events the provincial government suspended the activities related to Agua Rica until the return of social peace (LAVACA, 2010b).

In January 2012, an articulated action of *asambleas* from Catamarca and Tucumán blocked access to La Alumbrera. “After 20 days, when the company began to suffer from lack of material with which to work, the repression started. As usual, there were provincial public and paramilitary private forces, this time with the logistic support of the national gendarmerie.” On January 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> there were arrests and repression in Santa María; in February 8<sup>th</sup> it was the turn of Belén; on February 10<sup>th</sup>, men, women and children were violently attacked in Amaicha del Valle; on February 13<sup>th</sup> the homes of eight *asambleístas* of Andalgalá were searched by police, who were looking for non-existent Molotov cocktails. Finally, for ten days, a group of people connected to the mine blocked access to Andalgalá with the complicity of public forces. During these days, local activists, journalists, members of the national parliament and public figures, such as the Nobel Peace Prize recipient Adolfo Pérez Esquivel were harassed and threatened. Some were forced to leave the town and were followed for 50 km (ARANDA, 2012). It was a renewed version of a well-known perverse practice of intimidation:

In the North of Argentina a scene has taken place that repeats itself tragically and monotonously everywhere in the mineralogical region of Our America: the repressive violence of the state used against citizens in order to defend the predatory interest of transnational capital. How sad is the landscape of today's colonialism, when ecological devastation is implemented with political expropriation and repression. [...] All around us the same political landscape: governments and public institutions using public force to defend the corporations and to repress resistance. [...] And they act, they say, to combat poverty, to foment progress ... It is the only way we have for development, they say ... [...] Development is the name of coloniality, a mental state, affective and political, in which the domination and destruction of our vital energies, of our resources and our dreams makes unnecessary the occupation by foreign forces (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2012a, p. 2).

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### The neocolonial governance pact: CSR and the violence of development

“When Colombo arrived they brought gifts, such as mirrors, to the indigenous; the difference is that now we are paying for the mirrors”. These ironic words were used by an activist to refer to Minera Alumbrera's CSR program, which stands in stark contrast to the repressive tactics used by the company as well as private and governmental security forces against the population of Andalgalá and other activists. In the company's words:

Corporate Social Involvement (CSI) comprises a set of voluntary decisions to contribute to sustainable social, economic and environmental development. CSI is a new management paradigm that involves a long-term business vision to include such values and ethics, transparency and accountable decision-making into our business strategies and activities (XSTRATA, 2011, p. 17).

Despite naming its program ‘CSI’, it is clearly referring to CSR, usually defined as “the voluntary initiatives enterprises undertake over and above their legal obligations” (HOPKINS, 2007, p. 198), focusing on the so-called Triple Bottom Line, which is analogous to the economic, social and environmental performance priorities implicit in the notion of sustainable development (ELKINGTON, 1997).

CSR began to emerge in the early 1980s, yet only became a mainstream force after the 1992 Rio ‘Earth summit’, which, as part of a wider development of neo-liberalism, sedimented a move from government regulation to industry self-governance and self-regulation. CSR is clearly a Western construct (HILSON, 2012), best portrayed by the very influential Harvard Business Review article by Porter and Kramer (2006),

linking company performance to investment into CSR. In short, what these authors stand for is a growing business perception that 'it pays to be good'; or what Burke and Longsdon (1996, p. 495) call "CSR pays off".

The mining industry has embraced the notion of CSR driven by business imperatives in a context of growing crisis of legitimacy. The awakening to CSR has been related to the confrontation involving Bougainville Copper Limited, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, and the indigenous people of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) which resulted in the mine's closure in 1989 after a civil war broke out. Around 15,000 people died between 1989 and 1997 as a consequence of the government's bloody suppression of Bougainville rebels who had opposed the company. Rio Tinto had a key role in forming the Global Mining Initiative (O'FAIRCHEALLAIGH, 2008). A publication of Rio Tinto explains the emergence of the Initiative:

Late in 1998 a meeting of a number of international mining company leaders recognized that the industry needed to be more effectively engaged in decisions affecting its future. The leadership group grew to include 10 mining companies who are all members of the Geneva-based World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). [...] The GMI group asked the WBCSD to act as their agent to initiate a process of analysis of the role of mining, minerals and metals in sustainable development. The WBCSD contracted the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to develop a scoping study. This led to the formation of the independent Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) project, of which IIED is the manager (RIO TINTO, 2002, p. 2).

One of the first documents released by IIED (2002) referred to the need of generating confidence in the mining industry, expressing MMSD's objective of bringing the concept of CSR to life. CSR was considered to be key for generating cultural acceptance of large-scale mining activities, which, and that was MMSD's hope, should be considered as a factor of sustainable development (ANTONELLI, 2009).

The International Council of Mining and Metals (ICMM), created by the GMI, in 2001, as a multi-stakeholder research initiative, launched a document in 2006, stating the "need of a substantial cultural change" in the sector (ICMM, 2006, p. 5). Since 2003 ICMM has been working under ten principles, including the contribution "to the social, economic and institutional development of the communities in which we operate" (ICMM, 2003, p. 1). ICMM has been producing a series of manuals such as the "Community development toolkit" (ICMM, 2005) and the orientations for "Handling and resolving local level concerns and grievances" (ICMM, 2009).

Kemp, Boele and Brereton (2006, p. 392) analyze the initiatives and principles outlined by these organizations and found evidence that the mainstream minerals industries embraced the notion of CSR and are "investing considerable resources in developing and implementing management systems for community relations", as a "response to the growing challenges minerals companies face in achieving and maintaining a social license, or freedom, to operate". According to the authors, it is now recognized that these companies "face a considerable risk if they operate without the consent of affected communities" (KEMP, BOELE and BRERETON, 2006, p. 394). However, as the social license can be canceled at any time:

Obtaining and maintaining a social license to operate from local communities and other stakeholders requires consistent performance. For global companies, poor social performance at one site can affect the attainment of a social license at another. The management systems approach is attractive, in part, because it provides a mechanism for defining minimum standards and monitoring performance against those standards (KEMP, BOELE and BRERETON, 2006, p. 394).

According to these authors, in the mining industry the application of management systems has been associated with a focus on risk, considering social risks in conjunction with more traditional business risks



(KYTLE and RUGGIE, 2005). Humphreys (2000) refers explicitly to situations of social conflict, when mining projects risk delays which can have high costs and even result in the closure of operations. In this way, CSR must be seen as a necessary condition for the successful running of large-scale mining project. In Andalgala, we can see this logic in action:

Minera Alumbrera's social development actions split into two major projects categories: our Community Program (CP) and Corporate Social Involvement (CSI) activities. The former involve projects intended to increase the local human, social and cultural capital, while the latter involve supplementary projects to increase the actual capital in the form of infrastructure works (XSTRATA, 2011, p. 47).

In a partnership with Andalgala Municipal Administration, La Alumbrera provided the following agricultural support from 2009 to 2011: supplies to build a 100m vegetable drying module, benefiting six farmers; planting 50 hectare of grazing land and training in permanent forage benefiting one household; and supply of agrochemicals for walnut and quince plantations, benefiting fifty producers. From 2006 to 2011 the company spent US\$ 1,110,733 in school related projects; US\$ 110,404 in housing works; US\$ 148,851 in the implementation of a laundry shop run by a cooperative; and US\$ 624,703 in irrigation channels. Another key action has been the establishment of links with local producers and suppliers, buying goods and services from local businesses (XSTRATA, 2011).

However, the idea that CSR does not only do good things, such as actively supporting the local society and economy, but may indeed have ugly faces to it, as Banerjee (2007) calls it, is now widely acknowledged. Thanks to critical analyses, such as those provided by Banerjee (2007, 2008), Shamir (2004), Hanlon and Fleming (2009), Roberts (2003), Boje (2008), and others, CSR is increasingly seen as part of the problem, rather than the solution (SKLAIR and MILLER, 2010).

As the above quoted ironic comparison to Colombo's 'gifts' shows, for Andalgala's anti-mine activists, CSR functions as a public image or cultural management program by the mine owners, with the aim to improve the acceptance and legitimacy of the company's mining operations. Activists feel that CSR is an indirect means to limit their freedom of speech and opinion. The above described donations and business links are accompanied by the obligation of public manifestation in favor of the company, inhibiting possible criticisms and restricting the right to defend people's lives and the environment in which they live and work: "*CSR has expanded, producing ruptures within the movement, family conflicts, the destruction of the social links in a small place such as this, where a whole way of life is affected by the mining tactics. At the same time, the resistance becomes more radical, rejecting a model that destroys the local economy and communitarian relations, while increasing corruption and clientelist networks*".

Corporations also look for the establishment of links with institutions, such as public and private universities, by means of contracts and subsidies. At the same time, they run extensive advertising campaigns, using a whole range of different media, repeating again and again how responsible and sustainable mining corporations are (MACHADO, SVAMPA, VIALE et al., 2011). When we visited Andalgala in August 2012, we only had to watch the local TV channel for ten minutes to experience the bombardment of pro-mine advertisements: Catamarca province promotes "sustainable, participative and inclusive mining"; Minera Alumbrera teaches the impossibility of a world without mines and presents itself as a "clean, safe and sustainable mine"; the most important event of the weekend – a rally – had been sponsored by Minera Alumbrera and its Agua Rica project.

Figure 5

La Alumbreira and Agua Rica logos in the rally material



In these media representations, mining is usually presented as part of humankind's evolution, as an expression of evolution and progress, as a synonym for development. It is claimed that mining would have many positive impacts for local economies, particularly those that are situated in empty territories, in regions economically depressed with no other opportunities. For these regions, mega-mining projects would be the only way out of poverty. This political discourse, disseminated by corporations and governments, defines all previous existing activities as useless and affirms the absence of any future outside of mining. It "indicates the need for development and reinforces mining exploitation as the only activity that would allow the insertion of this area in the national and international productive project" (ZEHNDER, GALLEGO and KANTOR, 2012, p. 152).

The constant reference to development, progress and modernization as positive values are articulated with the presentation of the mine as an organization which has these values at the core of its mission. In the words of the general manager of Minera Alumbreira: "We aim to support long-term development in neighboring areas, beyond Bajo La Alumbreira mine life. We seek to support locally inherent activities and to be actively involved in the social and organizational development of the communities in the vicinity of our operations" (XSTRATA, 2011, p. 7).

In order to measure performance, following the logic of management systems, La Alumbreira conducts periodic opinion polls. In November 2001 it contracted out Pulso Local to conduct a perception survey in Andalgala, Belén, Santa María and the province capitals (Catamarca and Tucumán), in order to "identify the perceptions, opinions, assessments and expectations of the local people" (XSTRATA, 2011, p. 46). The results from multiple choice questions indicated that, despite the company's CSR efforts, the mine had a negative assessment of its performance (87%), against 66% which considered the existence of benefits derived from mining operations. The main benefits were additional jobs (43%); royalties/income for the country (17%); social welfare/organizations (11%); support to education (8%). The main adverse impact of mining operations were: pollution (75%); environmental damages/overall pollution (65%); water/river/groundwater pollution (11%); illnesses (16%); water requirements (13%); not so many jobs (5%); not sustainable/they take away everything (5%); misallocation of royalties/corruption/no supervision (5%); social unrest (4%); damages to local infrastructure (3%); no contribution to community (1%) (XSTRATA, 2011).

Given the extensive pro-mining development campaign, involving local, regional and national governmental actors as well as a host of enterprises, the results of this opinion poll are astonishing. While the Alumbra mine has tried to provide a positive spin on this data, it is clearly evident that the majority of people are generally not in favor of its operations. That is, this data suggests that the company has not been successful in establishing a wider consent with its business model, which should also reflect badly on its CSR efforts. Humphreys (2000) indicates the difficulties to evaluate CSR programs, because its success would be measured in terms of what does not happen, such as the absence of tensions, of time spent in disputes or litigations, and not having to absorb the costs of regulatory impositions. If this is the case, CSR and communication strategies implemented by Minera Alumbra cannot be considered as a case of success.

“Failure to connect with local populations” seems to be a general problem with the CSR actions being promoted by extractive industries throughout periphery countries. “Mining, and oil and gas companies, are often their own worst enemies, heavily broadcasting their commitments to contributing to local economic development and in the process, raising the expectations of impoverished populations” (HILSON, 2012, p. 134). However, CSR is not just used to raise communities' expectations; it is often a strategic tool to shape the political and economic context of the region. For example, Kramer, Whiteman and Banerjee (2013, p. 40) show how in their case of the mining company Vedanta (India), “CSR literally and figuratively became a weapon used by the corporation to counter the resistance movement”. Campbell (2012) maintains that CSR is often a short-term corporate strategy that attempts to mask and sometimes silence the long-term, historical contestations existing in communities and countries. Rather than dealing with the fundamental political, economic and environmental issues that are manifested by large-scale mining activities, CSR contributes to the blurring of lines of accountability and responsibility between public and private actors.

This is precisely the scenario of Andalgala. So far the company has failed in gaining the people's support for the existing operation and obtaining the social license for Agua Rica. A social license is defined by the activists as the right of the inhabitants to accept or not accept the installation of mega-open-pit-mining projects which modify the social and economic model projected for the region.

For Ciuffolini (2012, p. 33), this awareness and opposition originate from the perception of an immediate risk. These social groups have a genuine “desire for development”, they “dream about a different future” (DE VRIES, 2008, p. 158). However, when development appears in connection with contamination and destructive forms of production, “a collective sensitivity of the danger contained within such development” reintroduces a political dimension to a space intended to be dominated by economic and technical arguments. More than that, these groups become conscious that it is not their life style that is under threat, but life itself” (CIUFFOLINI, 2012, p. 34).

They also understand that CSR and communication actions are designed as managerial devices to produce social conflict and weaken communitarian links: *“To be part of this struggle has implications for the way one lives. When the institutions, such as the religious ones, accepted money or gifts from the mine we had to exclude ourselves from these institutions. In this town we had to choose between the cycles of water and life and the institutional belongings we used to have. They contaminate everything: they entered the schools; the bishop conducted a Mass in the open pit. It hurts a lot the way they infiltrated our institutions. The Catholic Church building is falling apart, as is the catholic community. All the patterns of the conquest are being reproduced. We are living another conquest.”* In the words of another activist: *“What is the form of life the corporation is offering us? The generation of conflicts. This is the ABC of corporative strategy. We will have to find ways of pacifying our community. Our struggle cannot produce our destruction”.*

It is important to highlight that this awareness of the need to pacify the situation is expressed by the ones that oppose the mining projects in a context where the government is escalating the confrontation and becoming a central actor for the exercise of symbolic and material violence.

In February 2012, in the context of the conflicts presented above, the mayors of 35 Catamarca towns released a document stating that “Catamarca is mining by nature, by history and by conviction of the people”. At the

same meeting, the province governor announced: "we are proud of being miners". The protesters were accused of being conservative and compared to the elites of Buenos Aires who, under Spanish rule, impoverished the province. They were accused of wanting "to keep us backward and in poverty" in a time when "the international context values our products at record levels" (LA NACIÓN, 2012, p. 1). This monolithic discourse and the communication strategies "dislocate and repress the debate", installing a process of symbolic violence that "suppresses any possibility of dialogue" and opens space for repressive material violence forged against the people (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2012b, p. 4).

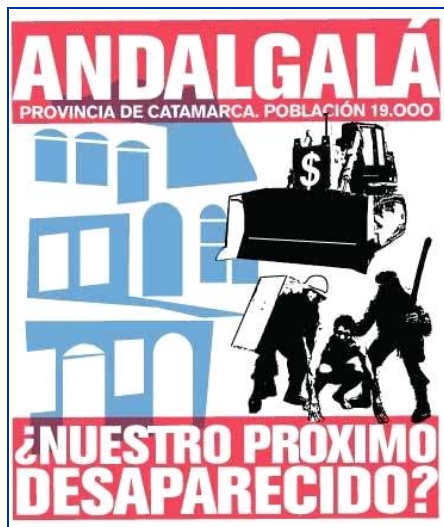
The government of the province of Catamarca is at the center of a governance pact that involves the mining corporations, fractions of local subordinated elites, ecclesiastic leaders, institutionalized academic groups, corporative media, and the national government. Beyond CSR and communicational strategies, this pact is responsible for creating a new repressive regime of authoritarianism and intolerance to confront social resistances and sustain, at any cost, the extractive model of development. According to Machado Aráoz (2012b, p. 3):

In return for some 'increase' in the province mining rent (which can be translated into infrastructure works, corruption increase, clientelism and/or the enrichment of contractors), the strategic association between the occupants of public positions and transnational corporations is being consolidated. This association, because of the technological, financial and commercial control it exercises over the mining business, becomes the central protagonist of the economic, political and cultural processes in the province. To be against the mining corporations is to be against the province government. Mining (meaning the interests of the big mining corporations) is instituted as the official state policy, a policy which is intended to be above all the citizens' questionings and at the margin of popular will.

Antonelli (2009, p. 55) defines this pact as a hegemonic alliance: "a device that connects the relations of transnational capital, in networks of operators and mediators, with the state, including its different institutions, in order to institutionalize the extractive paradigm". The organization of this hegemony involves contracting out private security forces as well as using the repressive police apparatuses. This was the case in the above mentioned conflict when the access to Andalgala was blocked. According to Machado Aráoz (2012b), public servants, policemen in civilian clothes, hooligans of soccer teams from neighboring provinces, as well as private security forces were all involved in this case. The objective is to produce an atmosphere of self-censorship, social fear and submission, a political culture that is not very different from the repressive police state in action during Argentina's dictatorship of the 1970s and early 1980s. "What should be considered as an expression of civic virtue, needed in a democratic state (active citizens' participation in the defense of general interests) becomes an expression of criminal offense", in a scenario of "deep and severe metamorphosis of government regime" (MACHADO ARÁOZ, 2012b, p. 7-8).

Figure 6

**Protests against repression and violence in Andalgalá**



Sources: Puertae (2012) and Canosa (2012).

**Final remarks**

In the context of organization and management studies, Cooke (2003) has made an important contribution when he discussed the link between colonialism and development management. The case of the La Alumbrera mine in Argentina and the struggle of the people of Andalgalá provides further evidence for how contemporary development managerialism functions in practice. For us, this case highlights the continuities between colonial interventions in the name of progress, Western civilization and neocolonial practices in the name of 'development'. Neocolonialism is precisely what we think is going on here: the term emphasizes repetition with difference, a regeneration of colonialism through other means. For Shohat (1992), colonialism persists also in forms other than overt foreign rule. Therefore, the usefulness of the term 'neocolonialism' resides precisely in its suggestion of continuities and its emphasis on new modes and forms of past colonialist practices.

One contribution of this paper has been to show how neocolonial relations of geo-economic, geo-political and geo-cultural hegemonies effectively function precisely through the active contribution of individuals and organizations located within nations and communities. Neocolonial hegemony is not something abstract; it is a real social relation that is embattled within real communities of people.

Another contribution of this paper is to indicate that the same hierarchical classification provided by the concept of race has been re-written: those who do not accept development must be civilized, if necessary by violent means. The conflict we have presented here is a David vs Goliath struggle: the people of one of the poorest cities of Argentina – humble, common people – against large, powerful, transnational corporations associated with national and provincial governments supported by corporative media and other powerful institutions. When this people stood firmly in defense of life, nature and future generations, they had been called violent, fundamentalists, terrorists, naïve and obscurantist ecologists, ignorant mad cats, misinformed, barbarians etc: the ones to be civilized.

As an expression of colonality and neocolonialism, extractivism is presented by dominant forces as a destiny, as the only possibility for development. However, our analysis contradicts this approach, making visible the concrete political, economic, social and environmental choices that are taken, which negatively

reconfigure territories and economies, producing a renewed dependency. These choices recreate geopolitical and economic asymmetries between countries that are providers of primary resources under the control of transnational corporations and countries that are the consumers of these resources. Instead of development, this extractivism has been producing new forms of economic subalternization, appropriation and transference of value, a decrease in the relative importance of the state in the economic production and regulation within the national territory, an increase in the participation and power of transnational corporations, both at the national and international level, a relative decrease of the industrial sector, and the presence of economic enclaves as the extreme expression of socio-productive structurally dependent spaces (MACHADO, SVAMPA, VIALE et al., 2011).

Mega-mining projects have proved to have negative impacts on communitarian social relations, including the increase of immigration (when living conditions are destroyed) and divisions within the communities. The practices of contracting service providers and donations under the rubric of CSR for individuals and organizations divide the population, disrupt social bonds, and destroy local institutions. In the case of Andalgala, CSR has been nothing but obscuring the real and often negative social and environmental impacts of mega-mining on local communities.

In order to portray mining as a fate, the governance pact deliberately excludes the experiences and knowledge of the people, while declaring to value participation and the social license. While presenting their projects as the only possible ones, they produce forms of domination and dispossession, making life impossible. It is in opposition to such development that the people of Andalgala struggles and resist mega-mining (GALLEGO and KANTOR, 2010). Instead, in their view, "development would not come from those who present themselves as prophets, but from the design of policies on the base of the concrete population needs and respecting their cultural identity and the environment" (VILLEGAS, JOB and HERNÁNDEZ, 2010, p. 4).

On one side, there is an intense use of a discourse of development and a practice that destroys forms of living and criminalize all the opposition to its logic; on the other, we have the people struggling to defend the land and the common goods, producing dissidences and knowledge to confront the fiction of development associated with mega-mining projects. The organization of *asambleas*, the dissemination of contra-information, the use of legal resources, the multiplication of territories of resistance (the road, the *plaza*, public buildings etc.), are part of the defensive strategy of the Andalgala's people to face the risk that, for them, is not potential but real and present (AVALLE, GALLO and GRAGLIA, 2012). This risk involves the contamination of water, the destruction of the landscape, the dispossession of land and means of subsistence, the rupture of communitarian links, the decrease and elimination of regional productive activities, the many forms of violence, the privatization of the common, the reinforcement of structures of domination, among so many perverse impacts of the mine.

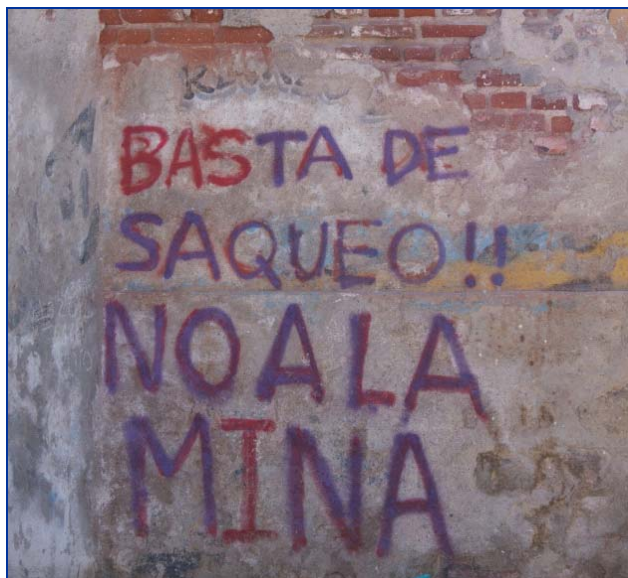
The self-presentation of mining as sustainable and socially responsible portrays the company and the government as the saviors that will bring development to these lost empty spaces and their poor ignorant people. Those involved in the governance pact know "very well that the development apparatus does not deliver what it promises, but still they play the game", accepting that "the official version of reality is distorted, yet still embrace it for pragmatic reasons" (DE VRIES, 2008, p. 168).

CSR strategies and governance are at the core of management as a means to fulfill the objectives of capital accumulation and to control social processes and peoples who oppose such accumulation. In the case of Andalgala's struggle, CSR has contributed to the transformation of the mining company into a central actor capable of reconfiguring pre-existing social, cultural and productive practices. The governance pact, built around the mine and constituted by political and business elites, is an expression of how the company has achieved the reconfiguration of political practices.

Despite all that, as we can read on the walls of Andalgala (Figure 7), the people still resist and struggle.

Figure 7

'No a la Mina', written on one of Andalgalá's walls



Despite immense pressure, the social license for Agua Rica has not been granted and the impacts of La Alumbraera continue to be denounced. The people remain firmly active in opposition to the extractive model of development, to the contamination of water, to the destruction of their land, to the dissemination of disease and death. At the same time, they imagine and struggle for a different future; a future that is still imagined under the name of 'development'. However, their idea of 'development' is not defined by the forces of capital accumulation but by the people as they seek to find a collective answer to the question they have been posing to themselves and to the whole society: how do we want to live?

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