



ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

Vol.9 – Issue 1 [July 2022]

Introducing *Alternautas 2.0*

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Accepted: 25 July 2022 / Published online: 28 July 2022

Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counter-balancing mainstream understandings of development.

How to cite:

Cruz-Martínez, G. and A. McNelly (2022), Introducing *Alternautas 2.0*, *Alternautas*, 9(1), 7-13. DOI: 10.31273/an.v9i1.1191

University of Warwick Press

<http://www.alternautas.net>



ISSN - 2057-4924

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Introducing *Alternautas 2.0*

We are delighted to launch the new OJS version of *Alternautas*, hosted by the University of Warwick. The first iteration of *Alternautas* began as a rigorous peer-reviewed blog designed to widen the circulation of knowledge produced by the global South about the global South. It was forged in the fires of the pink tide governments – progressive governments in power across Latin America during the first decade or so of the twenty-first century – and the vigorous debates around development and its alternatives that raged simultaneously, as Carballo, Beling and Waldmüller outline in their history of *Alternautas* (this issue). The political landscape has shifted in the nine years since *Alternautas*' inception. The first generation of pink tide governments have run their course, unseated from power by the political turbulence that followed the 2008 financial crash (see our special issues on the End of Cycle, *Alternautas*, 2016). However, the right-wing forces that deposed the Left from power – either through coup d'état, lawfare or the ballot box – have proved unable to tighten their grip on power. A new generation of the Latin American Left is now in power in Chile and Colombia – previous bastions of neoliberalism – whilst the successors of the pink tide reside over Argentina, Bolivia and possibly Brazil, if Lula is successful in his bid to become president once again later this year.

This generation of the Latin American Left shares some important features with the pink tide. Social justice sits at their core. So too do forms of integration based on difference, as the emergence of Chile as a plurinational state following its constituent assembly (following in the footsteps of Bolivia and Ecuador) demonstrates. The Chilean constituent assembly emerged from social movement demands following mass protests in 2019, challenging the legacy of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and the image of Chile as neoliberalism's poster child (Ferretti

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and Dragnic, 2020; Vargas Muñoz, 2020). It was led by a Mapuche woman, Elisa Loncón, a significant symbolic step in a country that has long suppressed and invisibilised its indigenous peoples (Montes, 2021). The parallels with the experiences of previous pink tide projects – particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador – are hard to miss.

There are, however, some notable differences between this new generation of Latin American Lefts and the pink tide. Chilean President Gabriel Boric emerged from the student movement, Colombian Vice-President Francia Márquez from the Afro-Colombian feminist movement, giving expression to two important social movements in state structures for the first time. Neo-extractivism, the political economy foundation of the pink tide (see Gudynas, 2010; Acosta, 2013; Svampa, 2019), has been questioned by Boric and Colombian President Gustavo Petro. These governments have recognised the socially and environmentally destructive side-effects that leak from the pours of oil and gas extraction and metal and mineral mining. Petro is also the first leader to centre the need to transition away from fossil fuels in the near future at the heart of his political project (Quesada, 2022).

This is, in short, an exciting time to be relaunching *Alternautas*. The political conjuncture is still shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic and, arguably, the aftershocks of the 2008 crisis. It is a period of uncertainty but also opportunity, as Angus McNelly shows in his article this issue. New social movements have emerged since the formation of *Alternautas*, with the Latin American feminist movement in particular becoming a driving force for change across the region and source of inspiration for millions around the world (Gago, 2022). One of the tasks of *Alternautas* will be to contribute to and amplify debates over the political trajectories of this new generation of Latin American Lefts. In a similar vein, the debates about development and its alternatives many have matured a little, but they are no less pertinent. The intensification of the climate breakdown has centred debates on energy transitions. Whilst the debate between advocates of a Green New Deal and degrowth has become of increasing interests to the Lefts of Europe and the United States (see Aronoff et al., 2019; Hickel, 2021; Huber, 2022; Schmelzer, Vetter and Vansintjan, 2022; and the pages of the *New Left Review* journal), ‘transitions’ have become central to the debates on tackling environmental and ecological collapse in Latin America (Svampa and Viale, 2020; Svampa and Bertinat, 2022). This should not be surprising, as the emergent literature on transitions draws together debates over developmentalism, neo-extractivism and alternatives to development. Likewise, debates over extractivism have continuing importance, with the expansion of cattle ranching, monocrop cultivation (particularly of soybean for animal feed), logging and

mining activities into the Amazon rainforest continuing unabated. Like the debates on transitions, scholarship on the Amazon is vital in the combined fight against capitalist-driven climate change. It is here, at the apex of the debates about what Latin America's future looks like in a rapidly warming world, that *Alternautas* will situate itself.

Returning to the driving ethos behind *Alternautas*, we have decided to restructure our new-look journal to stimulate debate and discussion, between scholars in Latin America and the anglophone academy, and between academia and social movements. To this end, we are opening a section of each issue for dialogues. These dialogues will take two forms: interventions and testimonies from social movements in Latin America and critical responses to articles published in the previous version of the journal. These interventions will be shorter than the peer-reviewed articles (between 500 and 2000 words long) and will be designed to fan the flames of critical discussions, with the aim of furthering intellectual and political debates around the central political, economic, social and ecological questions confronting Latin America today.

Issue One of the New Look Alternautas

The first issue of the new-look indexed *Alternautas* aims to reflect on how the journal arrived at this point and engage with some of the latest critical debates on development in Latin America/Abya Yala. It is an issue comprised of contributions from the editorial board past and present, as well as a select few invited articles. The issue opens with a series of editorials charting the trajectory of *Alternautas*. Ana Carballo, Adrian Beling and Johannes Waldmüller, return to its genesis, what originally motivated its foundation and what it set out to do. From there, the authors trace *Alternautas'* path from a nascent idea to a biannual peer-reviewed online journal. The current managing editors, Gibrán Cruz- Martínez and Angus McNelly, then take up the mantle, exploring the current issues facing Latin America/Abya Yala and axes of debates upon which scholars and activities are currently re-thinking development here. They underscore the ways in which the legacies of the previous generation of debates around neo-extractivism, *vivir bien*, the role of the state in development, autonomy and cooperative forms of living and labouring are being taken up by the latest crop of critical movements and intellectuals in the context of the end of the progressive cycle, ecological and environmental breakdown, and the emergence of

new social movements, most notably the feminist movement.

The bulk of the issue follows from this, as members of the editorial and advisory boards try to grapple with some of the issues outlined above. Diego Silva, Nathalia Hernandez-Vidal and Christina Holmes offer a critical reading of four recently published books on the Anthropocene, relationality and decay, trying together recent debates about how to understand anthropogenic climate change, relationality and the importance of destruction and decay as part and parcel of construction and production (a series of insights that have transformed the way we think about debates on infrastructure and waste within capitalism). In doing so, these authors sketch out some of the terrain over which critical debates on development are operating in Latin America today.

Angus McNelly provides a critical re-reading of the current crisis facing the region through the lens of *lo abigarrado* and *ch'ixi*, exploring the ways in which the work of René Zavaleta Mercado and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui can orientate movements and intellectuals looking to 'harness the storm' currently buffeting Latin America/Abya Yala. McNelly offers a route into debates over crises and how to frame the emergent generation of social movements and assess their transformative potential, a principal task confronting the new version of *Alternautas* and its future contributors.

We also have two contributions from members of our advisory board. Rutgerd Boelens explores the co-constitutive nature of utopias and dystopias in order to evaluate the shortcomings of technocrat and technological fixes to water systems. Starting with Thomas More's *Utopia*, Boelens teases out the violent, colonial and undemocratic undergirding of utopias through discussion of hydraulic projects in Franco's Spain, Pinochet's Chile and Correa's Ecuador. In doing so, he highlights the importance of autonomous water systems and intellectual and political projects that centre hydraulic systems constructed and managed from below.

Daniel Mato outlines the challenges of contesting and transforming racism in monocultural university systems in Latin America. Conceiving racism as a foundational ideology and regime of power in Latin America, Mato examines the initiatives set up within monocultural higher education systems to redress the structural inequalities formed by racism. By looking at the projects of Afrodescendants and indigenous peoples' universities, Mato pushes us to interrogate the ways in which racism is reproduced in higher education settings in Latin America and the tensions, contradictions and challenges projects and programmes have faced through trying to push back against, operate within, and operate autonomously from

Latin American universities and the higher education system here.

We close the issue with two book reviews. Andrea Sempertegui reviews Sebastian Garbe's book: "Weaving Solidarity. Decolonial Perspectives on Transnational Advocacy of and with the Mapuche". Gibrán Cruz-Martínez reviews Mimi Sheller's book: "Island futures. Caribbean survival in the Anthropocene".

What lies in the future?

One of the main tasks that lies ahead is the completion of the indexation process of the journal. Through indexation we aim to make the journal more attractive to scholars, since many universities give greater importance to articles in indexed journals in the teaching and research evaluation processes. Moving to Warwick University Press facilitated the indexation process. We now have an official publisher, a standard format to transmit information to the indexes (Open Journal System), long-term preservation services where the journal is archived, and unique identifiers (DOIs). However, the Editorial Board maintain its independence and complete control over the Journal. We are glad to be able to continue offering a diamond open access journal, with no fees for readers or authors. Now that this issue is published, we will officially submit the journal to the Directory of Open Access Journals, Latindex, MIAR, REDIB, ERIHPLUS, and Dialnet. In the medium run, we aim to be able to submit the journal to SCOPUS in the next five years.

We aim to continue mixing miscellanea issues with special issues on relevant topics to critical development studies in the region. These special issues are generally co-edited by between two and four academics within and beyond the editorial board. The call for papers for the next special issue is open until October 20th 2022. The issue is titled: "Critical Perspectives on Development, State Formation and Extractivism in the Amazon". We invite the *Alternautas* community to submit papers on any of the following themes: the political ecology of the Amazon, state formation in the Amazon, infrastructure in and infrastructures of the Amazon, amazonian indigenous peoples and any of the above topics, alternatives to development practiced in the Amazon. We also encourage everyone to submit a proposal for a special issue in *Alternautas*.

All our team members – Managing Editors, Editorial Board Collaborators and Editorial Advisory Board – work on an entirely volunteer basis. To continue

growing we need more members who are willing to work with us. We are inviting applications for new members in the Editorial Board. Ideally, you will:

- Be interested in bridging cultural and regional boundaries in bringing together and expanding Latin American contributions to global discussions in critical development thinking.
- Be working in Latin American Studies, Politics, Development, Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural studies, Philosophy or a related area.
- Be able to work in English and either Portuguese or Spanish, in order to contribute in writing, translating and editing content for the Journal.
- Be able to commit to work in a flexible and virtual collaborative team. While our workload is very flexible, normally, you should expect that the time commitment will not be more than a couple of hours a week and you should be able to join a one-hour online meeting once a month.

If you are interested in joining us, send us an email with a brief statement of your interest in our work and a CV to info@alternautas.net.

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