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The Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA): Territorial coloniality at the service of extractivism

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Abstract. With the expansion of global production chains driving transformations in global capitalism over recent decades, physical infrastructure has once again begun to occupy a central place in development, as a key element in the proliferation, insertion and consolidation of national economies in the world economy. In this context, at the beginning of the new century, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) was created, with the aim of promoting the integration of physical infrastructure in the subcontinent, based on the development of mega-projects such as highways, oil pipelines, gas pipelines, waterways, sea and river ports, hydroelectric dams, electricity and fibre optic cables. At the same time, this Initiative proposed the development of bioceanic corridors connecting the Pacific and Atlantic ports, which were intended to facilitate the transit of export flows and reduce the logistical costs associated with the movement of exportable goods. The aim of this article is to analyse the integration and the development of physical infrastructure in South America, based on an analysis of the IIRSA and the cross-cutting axes into which this Initiative divided the subcontinent. It focuses on the bioceanic corridors created by IIRSA, their effects on export flows and the socio-territorial resistance to the advance of these mega infrastructure projects. To this end, we carried out a bibliographical and documentary review technique. Within the framework of this tool, we used three main sources: Firstly, reports and studies carried out by financial and international institutions, and from the IIRSA initiative itself, which were contrasted and compared with hard data and maps; secondly, newspaper articles, which provide information in relation to the context

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and the debates that existed; thirdly, academic literature and articles by specialists in the field.

Keywords. infrastructure; extractivism; regional integration; bio-oceanic corridors; socio-territorial movements

Resumen. Con la expansión de las cadenas productivas globales impulsando las transformaciones del capitalismo global en las últimas décadas, la infraestructura física ha vuelto ocupar un lugar central en desarrollo, como elemento clave en la proliferación, inserción y consolidación de las economías nacionales en la economía mundial. En este contexto, en los principios del nuevo siglo se creó la Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana (IIRSA) con el objetivo de promover la integración de la infraestructura física en el subcontinente, a partir del desarrollo de mega-proyectos como carreteras, oleoductos, gasoductos, hidrovías, puertos marítimos y fluviales, represas hidroeléctricas, cables eléctricos y de fibra óptica en otros. Al mismo tiempo, esta Iniciativa proponía el desarrollo de corredores bioceánicos que conectarán los puertos del Pacífico y el Atlántico, los cuales tenían como objetivo facilitar el tránsito de los flujos de exportación y reducir los costos logísticos asociados al movimiento de bienes exportables. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la integración y el desarrollo de la infraestructura física en América del Sur, a partir de un análisis de la IIRSA y de los ejes transversales en que esta Iniciativa dividió al subcontinente. Se enfoca en los corredores bioceánicos creados por IIRSA, sus efectos en los flujos de exportación y las resistencias socioterritoriales al avance de estos megaproyectos de infraestructura. Para ello, llevamos a cabo una técnica de revisión bibliográfica y documental. En el marco de esta herramienta, utilizamos tres fuentes principales: en primer lugar, informes y estudios realizados por instituciones financieras e internacionales, y de la propia iniciativa IIRSA, los cuales fueron contrastados y comparados con datos duros y mapas; en segundo lugar, los artículos periodísticos, que aportan información en relación con el contexto y los debates que existieron; en tercer lugar, la literatura académica y los artículos de especialistas en la materia.

Palabras clave. Infraestructura; extractivismo; integración regional; corredores bioceánicos; movimientos socioterritoriales

Introduction

The economic changes that took place from the 1970s onwards configured a process of transformation of national territories into spaces of the international economy, generating the deepening of productive specialisation at the spatial level (Santos, 1993). Thus, today's world is organised in subspaces articulated within a global logic (Santos, 1996), where transnational corporations and capitalist groups

are interested in controlling flows and networks, given that their power is structured through the organisation of an immense articulation of territories (Haesbaert, 2016). In this context, the development and integration of physical infrastructure became a key element, especially those projects linked to transport and logistics.

Gavin Bridge, Begüm Özkaynakb and Ethemcan Turhan (2018: 2) argue that we are currently facing an ‘infrastructural moment’, characterised by the increase and magnitude of current investments and because these infrastructures ‘draw together and advance the material interests of specific actors and groups across multiple scales, including international capital’. The social importance of infrastructure projects is centred to the political and economic effects they generate, as they imply rationalisations of organisation and control, they connect, divide and territorialise, and they serve as meeting points for socio-political action at various geographical scales.

In this way, for some decades now, physical infrastructure and its integration at the sub-regional level have gained an important place in the political agendas of some South American countries, given the region’s place in the international division of labour as a supplier of commodities, intermediate goods and natural common goods. In this framework, Brazil— in its role as a sub-imperial country at the sub-continental level —began to promote debates in South American coordination spaces on the need to develop physical infrastructure in order to reduce the logistical costs posed by regional geography.

In the 1990s, then president of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, asked the head of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Enrique Iglesias, to carry out a study to assess regional infrastructure deficits. During the First Meeting of South American Presidents, held in Brasilia in 2000, Iglesias presented the document produced by the IDB, and argued that ‘governments must find effective responses to manage and expand infrastructure, preventing physical infrastructure limitations from becoming barriers to development, integration and more effective participation in the globalisation process’.

According to the document produced by the IDB, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) was born in the framework of this Meeting of Presidents, with the objective of integrating the physical infrastructure in the South American region and improving the connection with the central economies. IIRSA aimed to develop mega-projects such as roads, waterways, hydroelectric power plants and electricity interconnections. However, the advance of the capitalist territorialisation

proposed by the IIRSA met with resistance from the communities that would be affected by the advance of some of the mega-projects framed within the Initiative.

In order to analyse the infrastructure projects outlined in the framework of the IIRSA, we have recovered the concept of territorial coloniality (Betancourt, 2021), which shows that social, economic, political, environmental and cultural devastation/domination/exploitation is linked to a matrix of subalternisation of people and territories in a differentiated manner. The advance of extractivism and domination over territories affects the most vulnerable sectors and regions with greater force and violence. This matrix of subalternisation has been applied not only to many people, but also to nature and its essential elements.

Starting from this framework, the aim of this article is to analyse the integration and development of physical infrastructure in South America, based on an analysis of the IIRSA and the transversal axes into which this Initiative divided the subcontinent. Within this framework, we are interested in analysing the bioceanic corridors that the IIRSA outlined, the export flows considered central and the socio-territorial resistances to the advance of these mega infrastructure projects.

By analysing these physical infrastructure issues, we seek to problematise the idea that these projects aim to integrate the South American region. On the contrary, their purpose is to connect productive centres with international markets, in order to favour local economic groups linked to the export of commodities and raw materials. However, the capitalist territorialisation underlying these projects came into conflict with the existing territorialities of these geographical spaces. In this way, many communities rose up to resist the advance of these infrastructure works, which sought to reinforce the plundering of the territories.

In order to address the proposed objective, we carried out a bibliographical and documentary review technique (Valles, 1999). Within the framework of this tool, we used three main sources. Firstly, reports and studies carried out by financial and international institutions, and from the IIRSA initiative itself, which were contrasted and compared with hard data and maps. Secondly, newspaper articles, which provide information in relation to the context and the debates that existed. Thirdly, academic literature and articles by specialists in the field.

The article is organised as follows. Firstly, we analyse the constitution of the IIRSA and how this Initiative divided South America into Axes, based on the consideration that it was necessary to resolve some 'natural barriers' that existed in the region. At the same time, we outline the transformations that this Initiative has undergone over time. Secondly, we analyse the bioceanic corridors proposed in the framework of the IIRSA, their strategic importance in both economic and geopolitical terms. Thirdly, we delve into the territorial transformations that some

of the IIRSA infrastructure projects would entail and the socio-territorial resistance to the advance of some of the works. Finally, we raise not only some conclusions, but also some uncertainties about the current state of play of South American infrastructure integration.

IIRSA: the Looting Routes

As we have already mentioned, IIRSA arose from an initiative of the Brazilian government of Cardoso and the IDB, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF, now known as the Development Bank of Latin America) and the Financial Fund for the Development of the Countries of the La Plata Basin (FONPLATA). These organisations were responsible for the coordination of IIRSA during the first years, as well as for the definition of the priority projects.

Through these projects, the Brazilian government aimed to integrate the infrastructure network at the South American level, incorporating all the countries of the subcontinent. One of its fundamental objectives was to promote an infrastructure network that would provide efficient and cost-competitive services in the energy, telecommunications and transport sectors. At the same time, it proposed the promotion of sectoral and comprehensive policies that would capitalise on the synergies that could be generated between works (Álvarez, 2018).

In line with Bridge, Özkaynakb and Turhan (2018), David Herrera Santana (2019) proposes the concept of infrastructural power to refer to these large-scale projects. These projects have a strongly geopolitical sense, given that they make it possible to logistically articulate what is fragmented, as well as the territorial appropriation of areas or regions of high strategic value by different capitals for their reproduction.

According to Herrera Santana, these works sought to logistically link production centres with international markets. To this end, the IIRSA proposed the need to develop some projects that would help them to overcome some ‘natural barriers’ (Zibechi, 2006), such as the Andes Mountain range, the Amazon jungle, the Amazon River, the Central American Isthmus and marshlands. In response to this, Integration and Development Axes (EIDs) were established, covering 97% of the South American geographic space. Within the framework of the IIRSA, these axes were defined as:

a multinational strip of territory that includes a certain endowment of natural resources, human settlements, productive areas and logistical services. This strip is articulated by the transport, energy and

communications infrastructure that facilitates the flow of goods and services, people and information both within its own territory and to and from the rest of the world (IIRSA, n.d.).

In this way, 12 development axes were outlined throughout the subcontinent (as can be seen in the image below). Within each one of them, the main projects to be promoted were proposed that would favour the circulation and interconnection of commercial centres with the exit points to international markets. On the other hand, the construction of energy infrastructure works was proposed that would have the capacity to supply the main centres, interconnecting regions energetically, which would allow the economic growth of some countries, especially Brazil, to be sustained.

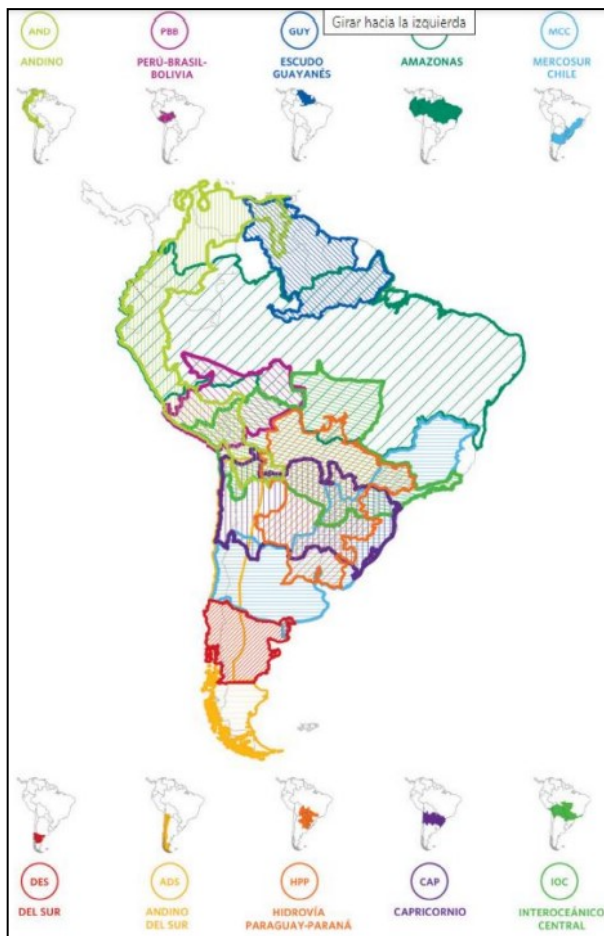


Image 1: IIRSA Axes of Integration and Development. (Source: IIRSA, 2017)

The IDB document (2000), which was used as a starting point for the creation of IIRSA, analysed the economic flows within the subcontinent, seeking to identify the problems linked to regulatory and infrastructure deficits, and to promote the deepening of these flows. Although the Inter-American Development Bank's central argument in the definition of the EIDs and the construction of the corridors was the need to favour existing relations within the region, international trade and export flows to international markets played a key role (Álvarez, 2018).

As Bernardo Mançano Fernandes (2008) argues, the Axes of Integration that were established in the framework of IIRSA can be considered as transterritories, which are understood as sets of territories that are governance spaces at various scales. Thus, they establish an 'integration for exclusion, which could also be seen as an integration from above for an exclusion/disintegration of those from below' (Betancourt, 2014, p. 448).

In line with Mançano Fernandes and Milson Betancourt, we argue that, within these spaces, there are other types of territorialities—understood as the process of appropriation or domination of space by human groups in an exercise of power (Haesbaert, 2011)—which come into tension with the development and infrastructure plans proposed 'from above'. In this way, conflicts arise from the tension between opposing territorialities: on the one hand, territorialities of domination (Ceceña, 2007), and, on the other, territorialities of resistance. This latter form of territoriality can be analysed by considering the struggles carried out by communities in the face of the advance of a development model that threatens the ways in which life is reproduced in these territories. These struggles involve resistance, opposition, defence and affirmation of the territories (Escobar, 2015).

Thus, the EIDs cannot be considered as 'neutral' infrastructures, since they constitute spatial devices of modern capitalism and the penetration of global capitalism in peripheral territories. The territorialities of resistance were revealed in some cases in which the populations realised that, despite official discourse that sought to emphasise the benefits they would bring, these infrastructure megaprojects would have negative impacts on the communities, environment, regional economies and the populations settled there.

The EIDs were defined during the first decade of IIRSA's emergence. In this period, the Initiative's Technical Coordination Committee was in the hands of the IDB, CAF and FONPLATA. Thus, between 2000 and 2010, the results achieved by IIRSA were basically technical. An agenda was drawn up with more than 500 infrastructure projects linked to transport, energy and telecommunications, gathered in the Axes of Integration and Development. This

was complimented by the creation of an implementation portfolio of 31 priority projects.

In 2009, during the 3rd Meeting of Heads of State of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the South American Council for Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN) was created. In this meeting, the IIRSA Technical Coordination Committee was placed under the orbit of this Council, sparking further debates and discussions between the bloc's member states. On the one hand, there was a position, led by the then president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, who associated IIRSA with a neoliberal past and proposed the need to refound the Initiative through COSIPLAN. On the other hand, a group of countries promoted a vision that stressed the need to take up the tools developed by the IDB, CAF and FONPLATA and put them at the service of this new bloc. The latter view was defended by Argentina and Brazil (Barrenengoa, 2019).

During the years of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first two governments (2003–2010), Brazil was one of the most important promoters of IIRSA. Firstly, it was the main target of the infrastructure projects to be carried out, with 50% of IIRSA-related projects undertaken in its national territory (Barrenengoa, 2019). Secondly, it was one of the main financiers of some projects, through the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) and the national treasury. Thirdly, most of the projects were built by large Brazilian engineering companies, such as Odebrecht, Camargo Corrêa, OAS, among others—firms which formed part of the ruling bloc during the years of the Workers' Party (PT) government. Finally, many of the projects sought to reduce the so-called 'Brazil cost'; that is, the expenses that large Brazilian companies attributed to deficits in relation to physical infrastructure. The central idea behind these projects was to facilitate the flow of Brazilian commodities and industrial goods to global markets.

In this way, IIRSA-COSIPLAN took, to a large extent, the direction advocated by Brazil and Argentina, continuing with the guidelines established during the first years of the Initiative. In fact, during the Second Ordinary Meeting of COSIPLAN, held in Brasilia in 2011, a Strategic Plan 2012-2022 was drawn up, incorporating all the projects that had been proposed by the financial institutions that led the IIRSA coordinating committee until 2008.

In this Strategic Plan, in addition to incorporating IIRSA projects, numerous projects were proposed. This led to a 75% increase in the project portfolio from 335 in 2004 to 600 in 2015, resulting in a four-fold increase in investment. (Álvarez, 2018). However, as Raúl Zibechi (2012) argues, this did not translate into greater integration of South American countries, but rather continued to prioritise and deepen interconnection with international markets. This was evidenced by the promotion of projects linked to the exit to the Pacific Ocean, following China's growing intervention in the region.

Thus, although this transfer generated greater participation by UNASUR member states in decisions on the works to be carried out—which were previously in the hands of the financial institutions that played a central role in the creation and development of IIRSA—the discourse on integration continued to be linked to visions connected to developmentalism and the central role that infrastructure projects could play in terms of economic growth. IIRSA's regional corridors continued to operate and maintained a direct relationship with the demand for transport, energy, land and other services at the service of the extractive industries, in a context of rising commodity prices and international demand for primary goods, linked to agribusiness exports, mega-mining and the hydrocarbon industry.

Despite the paralysis of UNASUR—with the withdrawal of seven countries—many integration projects outlined in the IIRSA continued their course. In fact, the governments of some of the countries that left the Initiative have promoted policies and programmes to carry out the works within the framework of the bi-oceanic corridors. Therefore, the practice of advancing on the territories—and on the territorialities that are located there—for the development of roads, hydroelectric dams and the deepening of the extractive industry remained in force. This situation triggered processes of territorial reconfiguration, the undermining of regional economies, impacts on the environment and socio-health effects on the communities settled there, which generated the advancement of conflicts and the establishment of struggles and resistance in many geographical spaces (Melón, 2022).

Bioceanic corridors

As Henri Lefebvre (1974: 223) puts it, 'it is in space and through space that capitalist relations of production are reproduced, and in this sense space (and territory) becomes more and more an instrumental space'. Today's world is organised in sub-spaces articulated within a global logic, configuring spatial circuits of production (Santos, 1996). In the face of this, transnational corporations and capitalist groups are interested in the control of flows and networks, given that 'their power is structured through the organisation of an immense articulation of territories, from the zone-territories in which they build the infrastructure of their productive and/or circulation bases to the networking around the world' (Haesbaert, 2016: 123).

In this framework, the development of bioceanic corridors becomes central. These corridors constitute a reconfiguration of the sub-regional space at the service of a development model based on the extraction of commodities and natural common goods for export to central markets, thus deepening a pattern of

accumulation centred on extractivism and the reprimarisation of the economy. These corridors are understood as:

a strip of territory within which a road, rail and waterway system is developed with strategic economic, social and political objectives. These are aimed at achieving a space with a comprehensive transport infrastructure that facilitates the flow and movement of goods and people and allows the realisation, at the lowest cost, of internal and external trade operations, through communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific (Consejo Federal de Inversiones, 2014: 20).

In this way, the articulation of the territories is sought, generating synergy between the infrastructure projects that are developed within the framework of the corridors. These networks ‘enable the general metabolism of wealth by feeding and draining the economic fabric of the planet’ (Barreda, 2005: 16). Thus, the development of bioceanic corridors involves three key dimensions: (1) the territorial reality of the regions it crosses; (2) the multimodality of infrastructure projects; and (3) sub-regional integration policies and strategies (Inostroza Fernández and Bolívar Espinoza, 2004).

Within South America, the development of three bioceanic corridors was proposed: the Northern, Central and Patagonian corridors. Below, we develop the territories that each corridor seeks to articulate, as well as the economic and geopolitical importance that each possesses.

Northern Bi-Oceanic Corridor

This corridor is part of the Capricorn Integration and Development Axis. It involves Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay, and connects the port of Paranaguá in Brazil with the port of Antofagasta in Chile, crossing the northwest and northeast of Argentina, including the section of the Paraguayan railway Presidente Franco-Curupayty, which represents a link between the ports of Brazil and the ports of northern Chile via the Jama Pass, in the Andes Mountains (Álvarez, 2019).

The region through which this corridor passes is one of the most important stretches. This territory includes part of the metal deposits in the Andes Mountains of Chile and Argentina; the industrialised south of Brazil; the agricultural area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay; the Itaipú and Yaciretá hydroelectric dams; and the Guaraní aquifer, the third largest in the world and the largest in the continent (Ceceña et al., 2007). Much of the ‘lithium triangle’, the largest lithium deposit in the region of northern Argentina and Chile, and southern Bolivia, is located in the area crossed by this corridor. This chemical element plays a central role in the energy transition, as it is used in batteries, vital to the storage of green energy. For

this reason, in the context of the environmental crisis and the need to advance in processes of de-fossilisation of the energy matrix, this is an area of great interest worldwide.



Image 2: Northern Bi-Oceanic Corridor. (Source: Álvarez, 2019)

Central Bi-Oceanic Corridor

This corridor connects the port of Porto Alegre, Brazil, with one of the three ports of the region of Coquimbo, Chile. Along the 2472 kilometres it covers, it crosses the IV Region of Chile (Coquimbo), the Argentinean provinces of San Juan, La Rioja, Cordoba, Santa Fe, Entre Rios and Corrientes, and the State of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil. It also crosses two border crossings: the Agua Negra Pass between the Coquimbo Region and the province of San Juan; and the Paso de los Libres between the province of Corrientes and the State of Rio Grande do Sul (Centro de Estudios y Servicios, 2019). It includes land transport routes, waterways and international airports, and articulates the Paraguay-Paraná and the Paraná-Tietê Waterways.

In the region covered by this corridor, there is a large presence of metalliferous minerals, as well as energy and forestry goods. At the same time, it includes a large part of the Argentine and Brazilian soybean nucleus, and fruit and vegetable cultivation and wine production activities stand out (Hermida, 2017). Finally, this corridor connects the city of Sao Paulo, the sixth largest industrial park in the world, with the ports of the Pacific Ocean (which becomes central with

the irruption of China in South America, becoming one of the main trading partners of many of the countries in the region).



Image 3: Central Bi-Oceanic Corridor. (Source: Sociedad Rural de Rosario)

This region is home to the major centres of Genetically Modified (GM) soya production (Round-up Ready (RR) soya, resistant to the pesticide glyphosate), as well as some of the ports through which this cereal is exported, which, after its introduction into the region in the mid-1990s, has become one of its main export goods. This occurred in a context that Maristella Svampa (2013) has defined as the ‘commodity consensus’, characterised by a new economic and political-ideological order, sustained by the boom in international prices of raw materials and consumer goods increasingly demanded by the central countries and emerging powers.

This new stage implied the deepening of the dynamics of dispossession (Harvey, 2004), with the commodity consensus the dispossession and concentration of land, resources and territories by large transnational capital (Svampa, 2019). The common elements of this model are the large scale of the enterprises, the tendency towards monocultures, the limited economic diversification and the implementation of a destructive logic of occupation of territories, which tends to consolidate export enclaves. In this framework, South America acts as an ‘adaptive economy’ in relation to the different nuclei of accumulation, which tends towards the acceptance of the place that this region occupies in the international division of labour, placing the state as producer and regulator and transforming it into a guarantor of the reproduction of capital (Svampa and Viale, 2014).

together with assemblies and environmental movements, the regions they inhabit ancestrally in the face of the advance of polluting activities and the dispossession of their territories. The response of the governments of both states has been the criminalisation and repression of the Mapuche people.

Socio-territorial conflicts and resistance

The concept of territory enables the introduction of the political variable, given that it allows us to think of constructed space as a product of power relations, domination and resistance (Torres, 2011). It synthesises spatialised power relations (Manzanal, 2007) and enables the exercise of power over geographical space linked to the different forms of territorial appropriation (Porto Gonçalves, 2003). Thus, the transformation of a space into a territory occurs through conflict, through confrontation between political forces that seek to create, conquer and control their territories.

Capitalism advances over territories by transforming aspects of the previous territory—that is to say, by territorialising itself. This territorialisation produces two processes: on the one hand, the deterritorialisation of the territory transformed and replaced by capitalist territoriality; and, on the other hand, the reterritorialization of capitalist abstract space required for capital accumulation, that is simultaneously homogeneous and divisible, and differentiable. In this way, power relations interact between spaces and scales, leading to a process that Doreen Massey (1993: 66) defines as the ‘geometry of power’. Thus, geographical scales are a product of the dynamics of capitalism and are configured through the networks and relations between actors.

In this way, territorial conflict is given ‘by the permanent state of conflict in the confrontation between political forces that try to create, conquer and control their territories’ (Maçano Fernandes, 2005: 7). In this framework, the movements that arise in opposition to the IIRSA can be considered socio-territorial, given that their *raison d’être* is territory, understood as a space appropriated by a social relation that produces and maintains it through a form of power (Halvorsen, Maçano Fernandes and Torres, 2019). Many projects included in the IIRSA have advanced by appropriating large portions of territory and thus confronting existing territorialities, deterritorialising communities and destroying community ties and regional economies. This has led to the emergence of multiple resistances in the territories that this Initiative crosses.

One of the most visible socio-territorial struggles around IIRSA was the one that sought to stop the construction of the Villa Tunari-San Ignacio de Mojos highway, which would connect the departments of Cochabamba and Beni (Bolivia), crossing the TIPNIS (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-

Secure), a region inhabited by the Mojeño, Yurakaré and T'siman indigenous peoples. The project entails the deforestation of thousands of hectares, the change of watercourses, the impact on natural drains and the loss of biodiversity, in addition to the negative cultural effects on the communities located there. The indigenous communities that inhabit the TIPNIS—together with the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB) and the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ)—carried out mobilisations to oppose the project between August and September 2011. The TIPNIS protests culminated in the 8th March to the city of La Paz, which, despite being harshly repressed, ended with the mobilisation of 500,000 people. Faced with increasing conflict, the Bolivian government at the time backed down on the construction of this connection road (Féliz and Melón, 2020).

Furthermore, within the framework of the Central Bi-Oceanic Corridor, the project for the construction of National Route 38 is strongly opposed by large sectors of the communities in the Punilla region (province of Córdoba, Argentina). The construction of this dual carriageway, intended for heavy and high-speed transport, will involve the installation of at least 20 bridges and will extend over eight water basins. At the same time, the route will involve the clearing of areas of native forest and the displacement of at least fifty families. In recent months, in response to the announcement of the start of construction, mobilisations by socio-environmental assemblies and social movements have increased. The state's response has been to criminalise protests, bring charges against activists, and repress the encampments that have been set up in an attempt to halt the project's progress.

Another of the socio-territorial struggles being waged within the framework of the Central Bi-Oceanic Corridor is linked to the defence of the Elqui River Basin in the face of the expansion project of the port of Coquimbo (Chile) and the improvement of International Route 41, which links the region with the Aguas Negras border crossing between Chile and Argentina. The collectives and organisations that make up the Assembly in Defence of the Elqui have been carrying out mobilisations and activities to make visible the multiple impacts that this set of works could generate: the deforestation of some areas, water contamination, and the destruction of some regional economies, such as small-scale livestock farming.

In the face of the multiple conflicts that have been articulated around physical infrastructure projects, the Assembly Against the Sakeo Routes was created in 2022. The assembly brings together socio-environmental assemblies, popular communication collectives and social movements from Argentina, Brazil and Chile, who seek to jointly resist the advance of these infrastructure

megaprojects, understanding that the way out of this model, centred on extractivism, has to be done collectively and regionally. The official launch of this space took place on 12 October with a radio broadcast on community radio stations in these countries, where information was disseminated about the IIRSA and the infrastructure projects that are being carried out and which imply the contamination and plundering of these geographical spaces. The construction of a network of these characteristics implies recognising that the conflicts in each of the territories have a common matrix, independent of the borders imposed by the nation-states, and to fight jointly against an extractivist model that implies the deepening of the place that South America occupies in the global production chains.

Conclusions

Following the process of expansion of global production chains, physical infrastructure has begun to occupy a central place in the development of global capitalism. In this new stage, the integration of infrastructure can be linked to the proliferation, insertion and consolidation of national economies in the international economy. Thus, these works possess infrastructural power (Herrera Santana, 2019), given that they make it possible to articulate territories that are disjointed, as well as enabling the territorial appropriation of diverse capitals in areas or regions of high strategic value for their reproduction.

In the South American region, the IIRSA sought to outline a regional infrastructure integration project at the service of global production chains. The multiple projects proposed in this Initiative aimed to interconnect the regions producing intermediate goods and commodities with international markets. Within this framework, the bioceanic corridors took on a fundamental role, given the importance of the export flows. Despite the paralysis of UNASUR, many IIRSA-COSIPLAN works continued their course, especially those that make up the bi-oceanic corridors.

In this way, the capitalist territoriality promoted by the IIRSA is carried out through a process of dispossession for accumulation (Rodríguez Wallenius, 2019). This process translates into the modalities developed by economic groups with the aim of appropriating natural and community goods, as well as public goods, which allows them to obtain extraordinary profits when these goods are valued as commodities in international markets. In this way, the territorial coloniality underlying the global chains of production and environmental racism (Pulido, 1996) characteristic of the current stage of capitalism is evident.

However, the projects included in the IIRSA-COSIPLAN and the bioceanic corridors have not advanced without resistance from the communities

in these regions. From the struggles against the development of highways, such as that of Punilla in Córdoba, Argentina, to the resistance of the assemblies of Elqui, Chile, who are fighting against the expansion of the port of Coquimbo which could have devastating consequences for the Elqui region. Thus, these struggles confront the advance of a regional development model centred on extractivism and the plundering of territories, which only reinforces South America's place in the international division of labour as a supplier of commodities and common natural goods.

Thus, in the face of the advance of capitalist territoriality over the South American space, territorialities of resistance are being activated, fighting to defend the territories and the ways of reproducing life that are woven there. The socio-territorial movements that are being articulated not only raise a dispute over the use of geographical space, but also over regional integration. Not only do they question the type of economic regionalisation promoted by governments, but many of these movements are intertwined with others that are beyond the borders of nation-states, on the understanding that these types of conflicts are not national but regional in nature, and that resistance and alternatives must necessarily be collective.

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