

# **LATIN AMERICA: AUTONOMIC PROCESSES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE NEOLIBERAL TRANSNATIONALIZATION**

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The following lines are intended to reflect and reassess the validity of the struggles for indigenous autonomy and the political subjects that embody them in the context of the general civilization-wide crisis of capitalism, and, in particular, the state reconstruction caused by neoliberal transnationalization in the Latin American countries. I will focus particularly on the Mexican case, since I have been close to social and political movements demanding indigenous rights.

## **1. Definition and historicity of the concept.**

Based on research carried out in Latin America, I conceive autonomy basically as a resistance process through which the denied, hidden or forgotten ethnic groups are able to strengthen or recover their identity through the assertion of their culture, rights and political-administrative structures. In a general way autonomy or the fact of being self-governed by your own laws, is defined as the ability of individuals, governments, nations, peoples and other entities and subjects to assume their interests and actions through rules and powers of their own, thus opposed to any heteronomous dependence or subordination. Like any other concept, contemporary indigenous autonomy must be understood from its historical context : the struggle of indigenous peoples to preserve and strengthen their territorial and cultural integrity through self-government units practicing participatory democracy and who confront (with an anti-systemic strategy) the rapacity and violence of the capitalist system in its current phase of neoliberal transnationalization. Although in the face of this coercive phenomenon called globalization, the political figure of the nation state is obsolete and cumbersome, it is hard to deny that beyond the market and consumption there are peoples who claim an origin and an identity. They are individuals who want to impart a sense of community to their lives in a time when selfishness, individualism and competition intend to displace solidarity, dignity and fraternity. Today the autonomies in Latin America project themselves as those political-territorial spaces where the oppressed peoples can consolidate at the local, regional and even national scope their community expressions of direct democracy.

## **2. - Democratization and transformation of indigenous life.**

We emphasize the dynamic and transformative character of the autonomies, which in order to become so, modify the actors themselves and in different dimensions : the relationships between genders, between generations, through the promotion in this case of the active role of women and youth ; in democratizing indigenous societies, politicizing and innovating their political and socio-cultural structures. We emphasize the importance of women's participation at various levels and spaces of community and local life ; particularly in the decision-making instances and in the exercise of indigenous self-government, in order to achieve a more just and equitable society, by taking concrete measures to combat all forms of violence against indigenous women. The study of contemporary indigenous autonomies in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, from a comprehensive and comparative perspective shows the transformative nature of these processes not only in their articulation, which is most of the time contradictory to existing nation states, but also within the autonomous subjects.

Thus, autonomy is not only the existence of traditional indigenous self-governments that were developed in various forms throughout the colonial and independent times, and that persist to this day in many communities throughout Latin America. It is not about competencies and powers established from above, administratively or through constitutional amendments ; floors and ceilings of models that do not correspond to concrete realities, and that denote the limits of social science which lags behind the socio-ethnic processes. The current regional autonomous practices go beyond all that. For example, when the Zapatistas transcend self-government and assume their own self-government based on the principles of ruling by obeying what communities demand, ("mandar obediendo") : rotation of persons in the cargo system of authority, revocation of leadership positions, planned and scheduled participation of women and youth, equitable and sustainable reorganization of the economy, the adoption of an anti-capitalist and anti-systemic political identity and the search for national and international alliances with common interests ; there is a qualitative change of autonomies : accompanied at the same time by a transformation of indigenous peoples themselves in their gender and age-group relations, in their processes of political, ethnic and national identity, in their regional appropriation of the territory and the spreading of power from below.

## **3. - Control of the territory and resources.**

Facing the permanent aggression from corporations seeking ownership of land, resources and knowledge of the peoples, autonomy seeks to redefine the relationship with the surrounding environment. Deep within the territory they seek to gather in a complementary way producers and traders to develop a solidarity economy and attain food self-sufficiency, as well as generating

economic projects in the interests of everyone, optimizing all efforts to exert real autonomy as a task for men and women alike. The defense of the autonomous subjects against market forces and state agents means control of the territory from below (communities) and from national and international civil society that sometimes accompanies these movements. It reaffirms the urgent need to regain or develop, economic, productive and food system autonomy of the peoples by strengthening the native maize cultivation (GM free), the use of organic fertilizers (and rejection of agrochemicals), promoting watersheds, and protection and utilization of their own seeds, as well as recreation and strengthening of mutual aid systems, local and regional markets and use of green technologies. In view of the seriousness of the food system crisis that threatens humanity and climate change, autonomy seeks to strengthen food production and to introduce educational programs and plans at various levels encouraging respect for their own agriculture and, in particular, of native maize. The peoples and indigenous communities are the owners and heirs of lands, territories and natural resources in which they live and, consequently, they demand respect and recognition of that right by the state and national and foreign companies that insist on their drive for privatization and commercialization.

Therefore, they are demanding an end to any project, action, and concession that violates the ownership, use, exploitation, and integrity of territories, lands, sacred sites and natural resources of indigenous peoples, as well as laws, decrees and regulations that tend to dispossess and facilitate the exploitation of their natural resources by other than the indigenous communitiesii.

#### 4. - Intercultural dialogue.

The educational and socialization processes also are generated from and by the communities, taking into account the knowledge that is rooted in the peoples and other popular actors and that enriches autonomous subjects, with the understanding that autonomy is strengthened by intercultural dialogue. This is more evident and necessary when two or more peoples are conjoined in an autonomous process (Chiapas, regions of Guatemala and Nicaragua, for example) and the unity of the autonomous subject is essential in confronting the transnationalized state. In the present circumstances, this subject is directly opposed to state actors (officials, police, army, judges, and etcetera) at the service of capital. In these cases there should also be a multi-ethnic representation in the organs of authority, remembering always, as does the Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, that “autonomy is so important that we cannot leave it to professional politicians”iii.

## 5. Alliance policy.

If autonomy is part of national issues, the indigenous movement that practices and promotes autonomy in its struggle to prevail must establish the necessary alliances, first among the indigenous peoples themselves, and from there with the oppressed and exploited groups of the country in question. This means permanent construction of the autonomous subject not only “from below” but also in their alliances with other political actors, and exerting systematic control of their representatives through accountability, revocation of mandate (right of recall), and rotation of cargos (positions).

The indigenous movements have never questioned the reality of the class matrix imposed by capital nor the type of state in which their struggles for autonomy are immersed and, consequently, the need for partnership between indigenous movements and those who propose democratic reforms against capitalism and even the construction of a new type of socialism. Indigenous peoples have not been the ones responsible for the lack of interest shown by leftist parties and other political organizations in establishing agreements for a unified struggle on political, electoral or social mobilization fields. There are examples, some tragic, of the instrumental use of indigenous peoples in political processes and institutional spaces, even during the revolutionary wars that took place in Latin America. Furthermore, indigenous autonomy movements are not obsessed with spontaneous popular resistance. Rather, their movements are usually preceded by long discussions and as evidenced by the 1994 Zapatistas uprising, many years passed before the outbreak of rebellion and so far no steps have been taken arising from spontaneity or political adventurism. This movement demonstrates the value given to the consciousness and organization of the oppressed and exploited in the fight against a state that seeks to contain or even destroy them, politically and militarily.

## 6. Uneven development of autonomy.

Clearly, all these processes don't take place simultaneously in the ethno-regions and in all the cases where indigenous self-government is exerted. We have to highlight the depth of some of them that for specific reasons have been able to develop organizational forms – even political-military – such as the EZLN, which give coherence and integrity to autonomous practices. There are situations, for example, where economic or political dependence of the indigenous peoples on market mechanisms or the state apparatus undermine the autonomy process, as in the case of the Yaqui, which is distorted even in the eyes of the actors themselves, who state that their autonomy “is relative”. In other situations, patterns of boss rule (caciquismo) or paramilitaries directly threaten autonomy with widespread repression and the criminalization of those who stand out in the process, as in the case of Xochistlahuaca, in the state of

Guerrero, and among Triqui people in Oaxaca. Therefore, we insist on the intrinsic character of change, adaptation, reaction and innovation of the autonomous processes according to the international, national, regional and local context with which indigenous peoples are confronted. Hence, the meaning of the term autonomy is multiple and versatile, and some movements even refuse to use it, such as the community police (CRAC) in Guerrero, which seeks to “govern and impart justice according to their own standards”, that is, in essence, the common denominator of all autonomous processes.

#### **7. Indigenism is antithetical to autonomy.**

The construction and strengthening of the autonomous subject also need to break with the old forms of indigenous policies implemented for many years by the State to keep control over the indigenous peoples and communities through paternalism and clientelism. The indigenous movement independent from the state reveals that indigenism (that is, a state’s top-down policy for controlling indigenous groups) and autonomy are antithetical concepts.

#### **8. Autonomy and political parties.**

We also found that the interference of political parties in most cases damages and even thwarts the exercise of autonomy. In the Mexican case, the reservoir of votes that the ruling party (in the days of the dominant party state control, the PRI) used to impose through the indigenous chiefdoms, was seriously affected by an indigenous movement that even rejects the current state parties system, calling into question the damaged components of tutelary democracy, and also imposing as an alternative another collective way of doing politics. From the ethnocentric standpoint of the national society only representative democracy is possible, which denies any experience of direct democracy among the indigenous communities that have developed a political culture of resistance which is the very basis of existing autonomous processes.

#### **9. Autonomous subject, multiethnic network versus community conflicts.**

The Zapatista experience and other processes in Latin America show that the development of a consolidated multi-ethnic network of communities and regions, which even includes diverse peoples, is another significant change in the current autonomy projects, in which intra-communal tension caused by secular, boundary or resource conflict can be overcome, and that it is possible to respond together to the violent intrusion of states and capitalist corporations. All internal transformations, ruptures, and redefinitions at the community, regional and national levels are impossible without the formation and strengthening of an autonomous subject with an inward capacity for hegemonic

assertion, so that it can contribute to internal cohesion through building consensus, participatory democracy, tolerance and the overcoming of religious, ethnic or political differences, the fight against corruption and against attempts to co-optation by the state and its agents. This subject attracts the mobilization of peoples and communities to defend their rights and demands, and has support for a legitimate representation toward the outside world.

#### 10. Pluriethnic and plurinational autonomies and their contribution to the democratic nation.

Contemporary indigenous autonomies are far from the stereotypes predicted by their opponents which saw autarky as inherent to this phenomenon. On the contrary, as seen in many Latin American countries, the emergence of indigenous peoples in the political events of their nations is undeniable. These autonomous processes seek substantial changes in the nature of these nations as plurinational, pluriethnic, pluricultural and plurilingual entities, and reaffirm indigenous peoples as political subjects of inalienable collective rights in their character as peoples and nationalities. In this sense, one of the key findings of Latautonomy's investigation was:

Rejecting both modernizing acculturation and traditionalist withdrawal, denouncing their historic exclusion and domination, the peoples and indigenous movements historically reaffirm themselves for the first time with their specificities in public spaces to claim recognition of their potential contribution to the construction of future society and to "another possible world". The claims of indigenous peoples, the values they defend –the common good and solidarity, respect for nature and the notion of balance, rejection of the logic of consumerism and the preeminence of intangible values, the search for harmony and consensus – go beyond narrow communal interests. They represent the affirmation of values that allow a universal adherence and which transcend the boundaries of ethnicity. (Monique Munting, "Radiography of Multicultural Autonomy in Latin America", in Leo Gabriel and Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. *The Autonomous Universe: Proposal for a New Democracy*. Op. cit.).

#### 11. Towards the comprehensiveness of autonomies and their regional dimension.

From the comprehensive perspective of autonomy as expressed in the political, legal, economic, social and cultural fields, which supports the implementation at community, municipal and regional levels, we reaffirm the value and importance of political practices which are materialized in community assemblies, cargo systems, the tequio (collective free work) and, in general, obligations and community contributions. Emphasis is placed on the

importance of coordination and interaction of indigenous communities and municipalities for the exercise of autonomy at the regional level, as guaranteed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which has been adopted, and also, in the San Andrés Accords of 1996v.

## 12. Autonomy opposes the hegemonic political culture.

Autonomy is constructed from a different logic from the hegemonic political culture, to which it is opposed by definition. It has nothing to do with ethnic cleansing, ethnic superiority or autarky ; it looks self-critically at its own surroundings to eradicate the reproduction of political clientelism and corporate practices. It tries to build and give a new meaning in its deeper connotation to a democratic culture, including : tolerance, dialogue, rational choice. These are turning out to be their most valuable tools for settling disputes arising from their diverse ethnic backgrounds, their different identities and different cultural and religious standards.

## 13. Autonomies seeking the construction of an anti-systemic civilization.

It is important to discuss and nurture these Latin American experiences of autonomy, with those in other countries and continents, in other cultures, since the struggle for autonomy has as its goal to lead to a civilization different from the existing one even in the remotest corners of the planet. I mean the “hegemonic civilization of capital” in which the production and reproduction of human life is subordinated to the production and reproduction of commodities ; where there are natural resources, scientific knowledge, technologies to ensure food for all mankind, but where an instrumental rationality prevails in which hunger, exploitation and ecological disaster are justified in the name of a constant enrichment of a fifth of the population that holds 86% of global wealth.

## 14. Autonomies, transformative resistance and imperial projects.

To think of autonomy and its relationships with Latin American nation states implies a theoretical and political responsibility to a revolutionary and transformative resistance against the hemispheric project of the United States and its allies which intends to impose on Latin America what we can call a new expression of the globalization of capital. Latin America is being affected by projects, agreements and regional programs of U.S. origin such as SPP (Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America), the Plan Colombia, the Merida Initiative, the U.S. Northern Command and Southern Command, and various free trade agreements. All these projects in their various economic, political and military forms are part of the new global architecture which

transnational globalization brought, and represent an enormous obstacle for the development of indigenous peoples and citizenships.

#### 15. Indigenous peoples facing the regional restructuring of capital and the sovereignty of nation states.

The so-called new world order that emerged, among other factors, from the crisis of “actually existing socialism” and Keynesian economic models in the capitalist countries, not only redefined the spheres of influence and intervention between the countries in the north and south (formerly called developed and developing), but even among the northern countries. The European Union and its predecessor, the European Economic Community and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), emerged as a new paradigm of regional restructuring of capital. This has changed without any doubt, at least in Latin America, the redefinition of the essence of the nation-states involved. Fundamental concepts of nation-states such as sovereignty and independence have been undermined by the current economic model, and indigenous peoples are helping to envision changes and effective ways of defending national sovereignties. Thus, the scope and role of autonomy in Latin America countries have also been affected by the global reconfiguration of capital and its borders. In fact, the scope of the discussion of autonomy today should encompass the analysis of how the project of U.S. hemispheric dominance – in its Obama-Clinton variant – is intended to hinder and even destroy the existence of autonomy projects as possible expressions of cultural, political, economic and administrative resistance.

#### 16. Constitutional reforms and legal limits for the development of autonomies in Mexico.

The constitutional reforms in the area of indigenous rights made in April 2001, contain legal impediments, for example : all rights recognized or guaranteed have a precautionary note which restricts, limits and precludes full application of the laws and the effective exercise of those rights, unjustifiably referring them to other articles of the Constitution or to secondary legislation. These reforms refer to local laws recognizing indigenous peoples and the characteristics of autonomy, which is not favorable for them given the correlation of forces in these areas and the existence of powerful chiefdoms or cacicazgos still alive in the ethno-regions. Also welfare and patronage programs are established as part of the Constitution, which expresses once more a contradiction in the essence of autonomy by condemning once again the indigenous peoples to a passive role in the decision making action by the state. They deny communities the status of entities enjoying public rights, and on the contrary, communities are defined by state policy as “public interest” entities or protected groups ; they



do not recognize the scope of autonomy at the municipal and regional levels in which it is exercised by indigenous peoples, as established in the Agreements of San Andrés and thus, the possibility of their reconstitution. This reform also introduces inconsistencies in social and political issues that even constitute a step backwards compared to other existing indigenous laws in other states of the country, such as Oaxaca, where they manage to clearly define the concepts of peoples, community, territory, self-determination, autonomy. Specifically, the reform introduced in 2001 violated the San Andrés Accords and became a virtual counter-reform by establishing the following : a) replacing the notions of land and territories with “places”, which in fact deterritorializes indigenous peoples, and removes them from their material basis of reproduction as peoples, which even represents a step backward from what is established on the Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization ; b) replacing the concept of “peoples” by “communities,” thereby eliminating the subject of law recognized in the San Andrés Accords and in Convention 169 itself, and limiting local and regional powers of these legal-political entities ; c) introducing, outside of the framework of the accord between the parties to the conflict, the neoliberal counter-reforms to Article 27 of the Constitution, which allows the sale of the ejido (communal land) ; and d) limiting the possibility for indigenous peoples to acquire their own communications media. The Mexican nation is in its origin, development and composition a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural one. A new constituent assembly should be based on this historical reality endorsed by the will of indigenous peoples and their organizations to defend their collective rights on the basis of the establishment of multiple forms of indigenous self-government as part of their autonomy, the administration of justice derived from their normative systems, the validity of their forms of social organization, the recognition of their territories and resources as their basis of material reproduction for their cultures, and full access to all forms of popular and national representation.

## 17. Autonomy, national project and rights of indigenous peoples.

Also, in the case of Mexico, the struggle for autonomy is part of a national project that has been developing over many decades of exclusion, poverty and discrimination against indigenous peoples. These autonomies are part of a national project, in which autonomous peoples have sought to integrate with other sectors of Mexican society. In particular, the EZLN has addressed students, peasants, workers, housewives, intellectuals, small businesspeople, employees, professionals of all races, all religions, all ethnic groups to form a distinct nation where, as they say, “quepan todos los mundos” (all worlds can fit). They don’t demand autonomy to continue the structural marginalization that is rooted in the colonial era and is also functional for neoliberal globalization. The demand for autonomy and self-determination are ways to achieve greater democracy, gender equality, to combat discrimination, to join a fair market

where they can freely sell their products and where indigenous peoples are considered citizens and are recognized as political subjects capable of participating in national processes. Therefore, autonomies express an alternative reformulation of national forms imposed from above by the oligarchic groups that were based on integrationism – assimilationism, or differentialism – segregationism that established equally provocative policies of ethnocide and denial of citizenship and collective right of indigenous peoples and communities. Thus, autonomies are processes of democratization, national articulation and political coexistence – “desde abajo” (from below) – between groups that are heterogeneous groups in their ethnic-linguistic-cultural composition.

## CONCLUSION

18. Autonomy : something more than just self-government. In Latin America, since the imposition of policies of neoliberal transnationalization and coinciding with a resurgence of the struggles of indigenous peoples to assert their secular forms of self-government, the autonomies contribute to the defense, empowerment, recovery and redefinition of their ethnic identities, cultures, institutions, knowledge, sense of belonging, heritage, lands and territories, all of which are based on the deepening, restoration, recovery or rehabilitation of communal property forms ; dominance of decision making in assembly cargos and duties for the government considered as a service ; tequio (collective free work), solidarity, mutual aid and commonality as basis of social relations ; celebrations also as social-cultural cohesion ; the conception of territory as a sustainable relationship with nature and material and cosmogonic reproduction of the peoples.

Therefore, we have insisted that autonomy : a) is more than the traditional indigenous self-government b) is expressed beyond a decentralization of powers, resources and jurisdiction of states ; c) transcends frames of “nationalitarian” processes monopolized by the ruling classes ; d) does not mean legal and administrative arrangements that may be established by decree, or through formal recognition of the constitutional order ; e) in most cases it is implemented through practice, or beyond the established institutionality ; and f) represents a holistic phenomenon in which the dimensions of economy, culture, ideology and politics tend to integrate and determine themselves, mutually and reciprocally, in what we call “integral whole of the autonomous subject”.

19. Autonomies are not a formula.

The forms of political organization of direct democracy emerging from indigenous autonomous processes cannot be applied as a formula to organize national society nor the state in its multiple levels and complexities. However, it

is precisely the lack of participation of society and particularly workers in the exercise of power and state control that characterized and in part ruined –the experience of “actually existing socialism”. For example, by highlighting the participation of all the people in the “Juntas de Buen Gobierno” (Good Government Councils), we do not intend to generalize or idealize these forms of self-government, ignoring their limitations and constraints imposed by the counter-insurgency and the encroachment of neoliberal expropriation.

On the other hand, its existence in Zapatista areas is a reality that should motivate further analysis to conceive ways of organizing and promoting participation of citizen and popular sectors, to replace the bureaucratic machinery that ignore the mandates of the majority. In this sense, how can it be damaging to the struggle for the construction of socialism to defend self-organization and highlight the values of solidarity and community ? Particularly in the case of the Maya Zapatista, we do not make an apology for this experience, nor do we propose it as a “role model” for the edification of the present and future society.

Indigenous autonomies don’t ignore the state or the power it exerts based on the legalized monopoly of violence within a juridical framework and “legitimized” by class hegemony. Based on this premise, autonomies are considered forms of resistance and construction of an autonomous subject which becomes an interlocutor facing the state against which it imposes a negotiation, but at the same time if that doesn’t work, a de facto autonomy is built. Therefore, autonomies are not granted, they are achieved through bloody uprisings and huge demonstrations. Self-governments are not considered as “libertarian islets within the capitalist universe”. In “Leer un video” (To Read a Video), the Zapatistas clearly point out : “our territory is not a liberated one, nor a utopian commune. Nor is it the experimental laboratory of a nonsensical situation or the paradise of an orphaned left”. Indigenous peoples don’t disseminate an idyllic image of their movements “believing that these groups progress overcoming all their difficulties”, a critique that doesn’t seem to be based on empirical investigation or on a deep knowledge of indigenous autonomy.

## 20. Contradictory processes and constant attack.

These processes are not linear or harmonious and as a result, they are expressed by their contradictions, imbalances, advances and backward steps in different forms, extensions, and depths, provoking changes in the very nature of the ethnic groups. It is all about a reconstitution of peoples, which necessarily implies the construction of an autonomous subject that modifies relations between genders, age groups and collective institutions ; who also suffer from the impacts of migration, labor exploitation, drug trafficking, racisms and deep deterioration of living standards of the working classes in our countries. Because of its anti-systemic nature, the indigenous presence on territories

coveted by capital, and the characteristics of its current globalization, these processes of autonomy confront directly or indirectly the state, its institutions and repressive forces, counter-insurgent strategies, the political, ideological, military and intelligence structures of imperialism, economic corporations that seek to open up, occupy and take possession of their natural, cultural and strategic resources, as well as religious groups, parties and political mechanisms aimed at penetrating, interfering with and destroying self-governments and collective forms of organization and decision making. Thus its marginality and constant struggle to survive and develop itself, to extend its intra-community, local, regional and national levels of articulation, as well as to amplify the spaces of resistance, solidarity and international coordination.

## 21. The meaning of autonomy in other sectors of society.

In an important text based on autonomous indigenous peoples' experiences, called "Con los pobres de la tierra" (With the Poor of the Planet), which was presented on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of La Jornada (Mexican newspaper) on September 16th, 2009, Pablo González Casanova has insisted on the extension of the concept of autonomy to other exploited and dispossessed sectors of society as an answer to the capitalist occupation in our countries. Similarly, the group called "Paz con Democracia" (Peace with Democracy) in its text "Llamamiento a la Nación" (A Call to the Nation) emphasizes that : The organization of autonomous communities all around the country is necessary and cannot be postponed ; where people identify themselves and exert self-government in a democratic way focused on production, exchange and defense of food, basic items, education and consciousness raising among children, women, elders and men for the defense of life, public patrimony of the peoples and the nation, also for environmental preservation and strengthening of secular spaces and spaces of dialogue ; which bring people together within their ideological differences around their shared values (La Jornada, November, 2007). In some Latin American countries, autonomies have turned into a strategic way for ethnic subjects to vindicate their identity, claim their differences and build alternative ways of life. Autonomy is a strategy of resistance and, in this sense it is also a strategy of national social struggle. If we take a step forward in the discussion of its meaning, of its different natures, of its political use, we will be contributing to generating conditions for the critical transformation of the current reality. The egalitarian, participatory, self-managed and collectivist principles of indigenous autonomies transform themselves into one of the few current strategic approaches to confronting capitalism successfully, to preserve humankind from self-destruction and to democratize our societies.

## Noticias

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[ii] I refer to the project with the acronym Latautonomy which took place from 2001 to 2005 under the coordination of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Latin America, Vienna, Austria, with the central hypothesis summarized in "Multicultural Autonomy in Latin America: A Necessary Condition for Sustainable Development". This project was funded and sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology of the European Union and carried out on eight countries: Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Spain and Russia. Leo Gabriel and Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. *The Autonomous Universe: A Proposal for a New Democracy*. Mexico: UAM-Plaza y Valdés, 2008.

[iii] In this regard the Latautonomy hypothesis states: "Territoriality Hypothesis: The greater the control of an autonomous system or a particular subject area, the lower the risk of massive destruction of natural resources and, therefore, the greater sustainability of the system. The most important factors leading to the appropriation of land for the autonomous subject are: a) Specific knowledge on the use of natural resources ("local knowledge"), b) Social cohesion based on a common good culturally defined ("local capital") and c) Political autonomy in decision-making processes. Investigated relationship: Territoriality-Autonomy. Brief formula: Territoriality = Political autonomy + Culture". Leo Gabriel and Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. *Op. cit.*

[iv] Latautonomy develops its hypothesis: "Intercultural Hypothesis: The greater the degree of multi-and inter-culturalism, the greater the possibility of consolidating the autonomous subject as a force to achieve ethnic and political and legal autonomy by way of negotiation with the national state. Intercultural dialogue is both condition and consequence for political dialogue, which should eventually lead to legal recognition of autonomy by the national state. Relationship Investigated: Interculturality - Politics. Brief formula: Interculturality = + Legal Recognition". Leo Gabriel and Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. *Op. cit.*

[v] See chapter on the subject: "Anthropology and indigenous peoples of Mexico" in Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. *Autonomy: Democracy or Counterinsurgency*. Mexico: Editorial ERA, 2005. Pp. 13-28.

[vi] Latautonomy maintains that: "Hypothesis of the network.- The sustainability of a regional system depends on its ability to link the level of local communities with a regional structure horizontally and interactive. Through a process of integration from below, you must create participatory structures economic policies that are articulated in the interior of the autonomous multicultural and outwards, creating an alternative social project. This hypothesis is not in favor of any ethnocentric localism and against hierarchical

representation that prevent the development of participatory mechanisms in policy making. Investigated relationship : Politics – Culture (Participatory Democracy). Brief formula : Local Community Network = Regional Structure”. Leo Gabriel and Gilberto Lopez y Rivas. Op. cit.