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# Staple Exports, Accumulation Process and the Global Supply Chain

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#### INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with questions relating to the structural changes in peripheral capitalist regions and the staple exports, accumulation process and the global supply chain.

The latest structural adjustment provoked deep changes in peripheral capitalist regions, and let us analyze the new processes of economic and social development. They have modified and relocated productive activities re-building the local economy. These structural transformations have been imposed by the new processes of international capital accumulation, helped by national policies which adapted themselves to the changing conditions of the global economy marked by the dominant international corporations.

We will try to understand, how the sub-national spaces (regions) are being modified into the new trend; where and how the new organization is shaped; how economic specialization works, and who the dominant actors in the global supply chain are. Then, this work tends to analyze the accumulation process in the staple export economy and the role of the multinational corporations (MNCs) on each step or node in the global productive chain.

In order to understand the global competition in peripheral regions, the accumulation process on staples offers an important overview of the hegemonic and dominant groups working through unequal social relations of production, income distribution and surplus concentration.

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We understand that the analysis will put the strength on the relations <u>which</u> arise out of, and in turn it affects economic processes, particularly the most fundamental economic processes.

The social and economic development as a result of the internationalization of production, the success of exports activities and the competitive specialization of the staples, build up a modernization of the peripheral regions following the shifting conditions of imperial relations. This phenomenon is the turning point to explain the dynamics of capital accumulation, the movement-consolidation of the agents' position on the step in global supply chain, the growth of some economic branches and the role of the state.

#### I. STAPLE EXPORTS IN THE GLOBAL ERA.

Globalization is a complex process of modernization where the market power drives the world-scale economy and transmits its influence over the nation-state relations. It means that while the acceleration of areas in an integrated process and economic apparatus of production takes part in the global economy, the nation-state puts down the constrain and the protective market trade barriers as necessary tools to enforce globalization.

The staple approach not always describes the entire economy but only some selected aspects that constitute its greatest strength as well as its greatest weakness. In regions with resource-intensive production, economic growth is strongly directed toward concentration on staples for export to more highly industrialized regions (INNIS, H.,1940).

Staples represent industries related to the intensive use of natural resources without homogenious technological linkages. When staples are the leading sector of the economy they pave the way for economic growth and lead to a resource-intensive strategy of national-regional development based on external markets.

Demand for the staple states the extents to which economic growth takes place around of which it depends as well as on supply responses, both institutional and technological.

## 1.1. The staple export performance.

This new international relationship prompts the export leading activities to grow faster than economic activities oriented to local market. It is caused by the impulse of economic international exchanges. Staple exports and accumulation process are managed by the multinational corporations (MNCs).

In countries opening to global market turns to have deep structural economic and social changes.

- First, modernization in productive structures introduces technological advances on the productive lines that leave aside workforce.
- Second, the global market impulses the arrival of big firms or multinational corporations, that take profit throught direct investments on successfull staples.
- Third, the big corporations put out to the e small and medium firms from the formal productive system.

Peripheral capitalist regions based on staples have not developed an industrialized economy and that these countries appear to be caught in a circle of economic reprimarization and underdevelopment. The most significant, however, is that staples dependence fosters an "export mentality, resulting in an over concentration of resources in the export sector and a reluctance to promote domestic development" (WATKINS, M., 1963, p. 12).

Instead of promoting economic diversification, multinational corporations strengthen a few specialized productive activities on the peripheral capitalist regions.

Economic transformations have a negative influence on marginal regions because modernization has some effect on them:

- a. Des-industrialization,
- b. Unemployment.
- c. Economic, social and cultural fragmentation.

Transnational corporations have been taking up and controlling the staple export production and natural resourse supplies, becoming leaders the economic regional dynamic. The multinational corporations, from their dominant position transform the productive regional system becoming the owners of the natural resourses and the economic regional surplus.

# 1.2. Staple exports and accumulation process.

There are different approaches to understand regional development. One of them is the regional accumulation process combined with staple approach<sup>2</sup> that permits focusing on the inter firms conflicts and labour force clash.

The export-led growth model and accumulation process introduce to the analyses of uniqual relationships among the agents in the economic process and the role of the

<sup>2</sup> The regional accumulation process has its theoretical basis on the concepts of economic surplus (Marx, C. 1946; BARAN,1968), and regime of capital accumulation and mode of regulation (LIPIETZ, A.1992, 1994; BOYER, R.1990; AGLIETA, M.1976; DOCKES and ROSIER, 1981). For the sake of being operative we incorporate important elements of staple theory that permit to understand regional development in the peripheral capitalist areas.

state backing up and enforcing this new way to rich economic growth in relation with the most successful world economies.

However, the staple export growth strategy plays a functional role with dominant agents. Meanwhile, the state helps to build up economic concentration following the shifting conditions of imperial relations.

The regional accumulation process offers an important overview of the hegemonic and dominant groups working through asymmetric social relations of production, income distribution and surplus concentration. Hopkings and Wallerstein (1986, p. 159) consider the concept of "a commodity chain", similarly to the staple chain, where the great virtue is its emphasis on process. "Specific processes or segments within a commodity chain can be represented as boxes or nodes, linked together in networks".

The interrelation among fractions of capital varies according to the regime of accumulation<sup>3</sup> impulse by the dominant corporations. The regime of accumulation refers to the way the dominant economic forces operates in a given mode of production, including their trade strategies, their pattern of rasing and deploying capital, and the conditions relating their processes of production to their patterns of consumption (LIPIETZ, A.1994).

The dynamic of accumulation is controlled by the great firms which manipulate the production process and exert the dominance of the main economic branches and staples.

The dynamic of accumulation is based on the process of circulation of social surplus in a specific economic activity or a set of activities that builds up the staple chain. So, the accumulation process requires to consider:

- The generation of surplus at the moment of the production process(Labor force and capital).
- The dynamic of production, distribution and consumption steps shaped by the social relations that permit the achievement of the social surplus.

Inequalities take shape and it is observed in the development of productive forces in the export branches, the hegemony of capital fractions in the staples, and the social division of labour.

The accumulation process takes its modality in the process of production-appropriation-utilization of social surplus. The accumulation has taken different

<sup>3 &</sup>quot;Regimes of accumulation can exist at virtually territorial level: regional, national, or global. The nation-state is the principal unit for a workable set of production and distribution relations and for constructing regimes of accumulation; it is the gravitational force that most tightly binds the class practices and institutional arrangements of politics, economics, and territory" (STORPER and WALKER, 1989, p. 215).

modalities according with the regimen of accumulation and the mode of governmental regulation.

Then, it is important to analyze the function and position of the social agents in each node of the commodity chain. The function of the agents sets up the social division of labour in the productive process. The agent's position determine the ownership of means of production that prompts the economic power of firms in the productive structure.

The dynamic of accumulation is related to the staple-export chains. This means that around the staples are organized modes of regulation and accumulation process. Obviously, this organization depends on the historical moment and the kind of technological innovation imposed to the export economic branches and the economic agents that lead this process.

## 1.4. Staples and the state.

The political life is deeply influenced by staple export-dependent economy because economic wealth and political power are concentrated on business and political elites (often the same people). The business elite is more interested in promoting expanded staples than in acting as entrepreneurs developing an industrialized economy.

The expansion of staple exports helps to explain the state's role in a staples-dependent market economy. Staple exports require large capital expenditures on transportation, communication infrastructure, reduction of running costs (labour, public services, free taxes, subsidies) which business elites could not afford to make. And finally, social and labour public polices that permit to control social conflicts (law of labour flexibility, monetary policies).

The majority of resource industries remain under foreign control even though associated with local entrepreneurs. The staples exports specialization and relative industrial backwardness leave economic development vulnerable, conditioned by the shifting demands of more advanced industrial centers for resources.

This mechanism highlights the conscious decision of the state and business elites to permit the dynamics of the international economy to avoid industrialization. The staple thesis, state actions followed from their functional role in facilitating the staple trade. The nature of the state largely from the needs of the staple commodity. The function of the state include provision of transportation infrastructure for the export of staple; underwriting monetary obligations through the availability of credit guarantees and liquidity; and, as export demand shifts, aiding adjustment from declining to rising staple sectors.

The state follows the requisites of staple exports. The national policies to promote regional economic development are part of the strategies of imperial or continental economic integration.

## 1.4. The global supply chain.

Regions as sub-national spaces are not autonomous and they are closely connected to the international and national regime of accumulation. Production and accumulation circuits are influenced by macro national policies and the international trade. At the same time it is very important to recognize the exchange relations between the sub-national and the national and international spaces in terms of the capital accumulation process.

This is similar to Gereffi's argument that commodity chain has two important dimensions, an input -output structure, and a territoriality ((GEREFFI and KORZENIEWICZ, 1994).

To understand the contradictions and political struggles, it must be focused on the world-economy scenario. Then it must be explained the ways in which the agents alter or preserve a position into the local economic power structure.

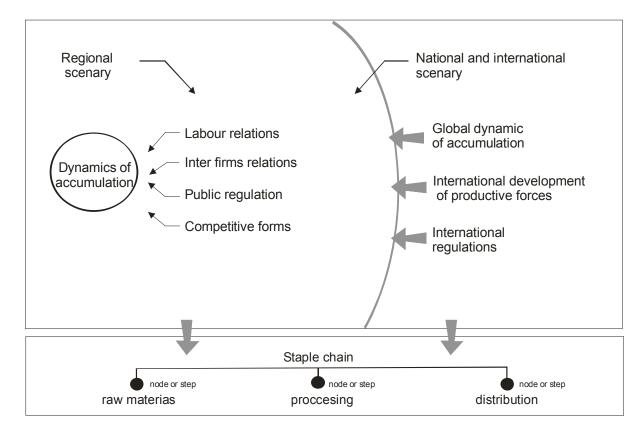
Modernization means that the permanent development process is based not only on regional economies but on economies of centralized countries. In fact, the industrialized economies are the most benefited since they can arrange before hand their export goods production because of their high technological level, capital accumulation and the access to the economic information network which allow them to organize the world market<sup>4</sup>.

The national-international dynamic of accumulation drives the sub-national and local economic process of development. The international dynamic of accumulation is reproduced with its own modalities in local territories. The national-international dynamics of accumulation influences local development through the mode of regulation system and the regimen of accumulation. This is a dialectical process in which both the productive forces and social relations represent the conflict-integration process of the economic agents. In this way, the state synthesizes the power relations through laws, decrees and regulations in an attempt to adapt the behavior of social agents to changes in the international economy.

This diagram shows the local, national and international external forces acting on the staple chain.

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<sup>4</sup> The tendency to international specialization has been accompanied in Cuyo's region by higher levels of importation which penetrate the local economy.



# II. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN CUYO'S REGION<sup>5</sup> DURING THE LAST DECADES AND SPECIALLY IN THE GLOBAL ERA?

Since the middle of the 70"s to the 90's Cuyo's region and Argentina have suffered from a great economic recession not only due to economic causes but also due to political events (Military cop, Malvinas war)<sup>6</sup>. One of the features of this critical period was the stagnation of regional economy including the abandon of agroindustrial and mining activities that conformed the most important productive network.

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<sup>5</sup> The economic structure of the Cuyo's region is mainly based on the agro-industrial activities (specially in grape-wine), metal mechanic industries, petrochemical industry, mining, all related to natural resources. On the stage of "export Base" (1885-1960), Cuyo obtained its basic socioeconomic structure. The behaviour of the external demand both national and international, and the resource endowments, created determinant conditions to develop the staple produced in Cuyo. Lack of competition in the national market permit to develop the staple product: "grape-wine" production. With the "broadened export" (1940-1970) other products were exported, like fruit, vegetables and oil, but with grape-wine maintaining predominance within the Cuyo's region (GAGO, A, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Cuyo's region entered in a recession-stagflation process in the 80's and started the new open strategy in the 90's. The last decade shows modifications in the relationships between state and market, national state and provincial states, and capital and labour, which are producing strong territorial impacts in the sub-national spaces.

The economic policies implemented by the national government were oriented to the domestic market. The recession generated a decreasing of internal demand, overproduction, high level of goods stocks that became more serious with the stangflation phenomena. The impacts of the recession turn to be the disappearance of small firms with of obsolete technologies. Only the biggest firms could maintain an acceptable technological level. These facts shows why big regional enterprises can overcome the accumulation process during and after the crisis.

In the 90s, has the initial the national model of open economy, adjustment and deregulation based on fragmentary and unarticulated policies. It means that Cuyo's region get in under uncertainty in the way of globalization and supra-regional integration of MERCOSUR.

The regional economic reactivation initiated with Cavallo's national economic plan drives to public services privatization and public entrepreneurs with the highest concentration and centralization of capital in the hand of agents that are interacting inter-economic branches and with complete control of the linkages of productive phases (row material activities, transformation and distribution).

The expectation of the local agents to reactivate the regional economic structure sends a positive signal to enter into the neoliberal model provoked by globalization and Cavallo's the convertibility Plan. The adjustment policies seemed to fulfill the international foreign debt rather than to improve long term development strategies.

Cavallo's open market strategy infers in the economic expansion of the 90's. Firstly, because of the new opportunities of the world market, secondly, because it allows to import equipments that increase competition among the leading firms. The instability of the economic plan and MERCOSUR integration are reasons that influence the economic regional expansion. On the other hand, the regional public policies favour the introduction of technological advances on export base activities. These technological advances impact directly on the workforce shifting unnecessary employees to the marginal belts of urban centers.

The economic strategy impulses the traditional activities related to natural resources such as agriculture, agro-industry, mining and oil all of them connected with natural resources. MERCOSUR integration also backs up this kind of development.

The dynamic of accumulation in a region, was being controlled by big firms that articulate capital on different economic branches (agro-industries-finance). This situation provoked strong devaluation on other segments of capital which was producing high social cost with obsolescence and massive unemployment.

Small-scale firms are at a decided disadvantage as they became caught up in a vicious circle which makes it difficult for them to attract innovative managers, to invest in the modernization of their plant and equipment, and implement new

technological advances. Then, they are in a process to be forced to survive in informal sector in a continuous deteriorating condition of labour, unemployment and self-business

In Cuyo started a process of concentration and centralization of foreign capital along the productive phases of production and among economic branches. The big capital <sup>7</sup> and multinational corporations control the distribution and commercialization phase (national and international).

The global era changed the relative importance of the phases of productive process setting forth on the distribution-commercialization control. The regional export base and natural resources have been appropriated by national and international holdings. This explains partly the presence of foreign capital in agriculture, wineries, mining and oil industries.

At the same time this economic strategy pulls down the small and medium-scale firm. They can not invest on the modernization of their plant and equipment, implement new technological advances because they have growing debt burden and do not have enough guarantees to take financial credits.

Mining and oil have been the most attractive economic branches focused by foreign capital (MNC)allowing the state reform policy. The investment of international capital and MNC produce new impacts. Having in mind YPF (Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales) privatization, it is seen that small and medium-scale firms are driven out of business as consequence of the organization of the new set up corporations which owning the natural resources supply the services offered by these firms. Recently, this favourable impact was over agro-industries and tourism sector which behaviour was the same of the staple exports.

This economic trend drives to a process of hipper capital concentration. A clear impact of this structural transformation is the great capital concentration and centralization in the region. There appear the economic Holdings. The novelty of these groups is that they interact with different economic branches (agro-industries, financial sector, beverages, etc) and command the leading economic and social new strategy.

The process of restructuration resulted in the opening and closing of firms in the commercial sector. This phenomena is closely connected to the withdrawal of the small and medium-scale entrepreneurs which are left aside from the economic structure, and the employees dismissed of the privatization of the public sector. The majority of these agents shift to the commercial sector and them to informal sector

<sup>7</sup> In some cases, big firms widen their economic activities in different branches within the same sector, i.e. some firms drive the domination of beverages activities: they deal not only with wines but also with beer, soft drinks, mineral water, fruit juice. In other cases, firms place their economic activities in different economic sectors such as agroindustries, construction, metal industries, automobile sale, banking and finance.

and they engross the mass of impoverished people. This process can be called "labour force rotation with loss of the small capital".

This situation is due to wrong public policies enforced by the governments to get in the strategy of open market economy, adjustment and deregulation based on solving the present problems of integration to world economy no matter which the social cost is.

Cuyo's region entered in a stangflation process in the 80's and started a new open strategy in the 90's, with globalization process. The last decade shows modifications in the relationships between state and market, national state and provincial states, and capital and labour, which produced strong territorial impacts in the sub-national spaces.

The nation faces strong political crisis accompanied by high economic instability that ended up in "default". The final result was devaluation of Argentine currency leaving aside the "plan de convertibilidad" (1 peso = 1 dolar). This process meant a violent change in the model of development. Later the domestic economy entered in high economic growth but following the increasing staple exportations. These facts accelerate the commodities expansion and trade linkages with MERCOSUR and markets.

Nestor and Cristina Kirchner's government are still trying to modify the neo-liberal economy seeking a new model of development. They parcially succeed in solving exclusion and poverty but they do not solve the structural conditions of the economic concentration. One of the main policy was to increase export base activities and another complementary policy was to arise export taxes to collect money for public expenditures (public infrastructure and social welfare).

Nevertheless, these policies are not enough to answer to the economic and social structural problems, wide income gap and the des-industrialization. On the contrary the big fraction of capital is increasing its power and domain on the domestic economy.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

The combination of staple theory and the accumulation process is a turning point to understand regional development in the peripheral capitalist regions. This approach develops an proper methodology connecting economic, institutional and social aspects and shows the movement-consolidation of the agent's position in and among economic branches, the realignment of the labor market, the market forces and the governmental regulations that influence the socioeconomic crises and changes.

The strength of this approach lies on that it pays attention to the explanatory power of international dynamics as well as internal social relations. Internal factors, such as the characteristic of the staple itself, are identified as constrains, but with the same criteria gather

the social relations of production (class) and the power of relations of the social agents (groups and state).

The staple tradition was constructed on a systematic account of staples exploitation, transportation, and market demands, but it is necessary to emphasize the distribution of social surplus among firms, the distribution of surplus among classes and the distribution of power to explain the economic modality of development.

This approach focusses on the circulation of social surplus on each node of the staple chain and the agents' position to find out the form of surplus distribution and the character of the dynamics of accumulation process. Obviously, it is necessary to link the firms' relationships with the units of capital valorization (banks) and with other economic branches where the same agent participates to describe how the dynamics of accumulation operate.

Finally, showing the importance of the staples (with the elements analyzed) and the dynamics of accumulation, the global commodity chain and the mode of government regulation, we will build up a different outlook of the socioeconomic development of the regional-local territories

The mode of regulation refers to the formal and informal rules established within a political system. It explains the relationship between labor and capital and regulates social forces within the boundaries of the state.

'The analysis of a commodity chain shows how production, distribution, and consumption are shaped by the relations that characterize the secuencial stages of input acquisition, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, and consumption" (GEREFFI and KORZENIEWICZ, 1994, p.2).

The social surplus created in the production of one commodity will often be realized in the sale of the commodity, and that surplus will often accumulate through investment. It means capital expanded. These phases constitute a full systemic cycle of accumulation.

The governmental structure is essential to the coordination of transnational production systems, in terms of mode of regulation and to promote location of the large transnational corporation which usually plays the central role in coordination production (producer-driven commodity). Actually the main functions of the core enterprises in the trend of global era is to observe a movement from producer-driven to buyer-driven commodity chain. But most of the times they are related among themselves and belong to the same lobby, i.e. In the case of Cuyo's region, the new paradigm of globalization has changed the relative importance of the phases of productive process setting forth on the distribution-commercialization control. The regional export base and natural resources have been appropriated by national and international holdings. This explains partly the presence of foreign capital in agriculture, wineries, mining and oil industry. This process of globalization is favored by the state reforms and deregulation policies (GAGO, A.,1995).

The expectation of the local agents to reactivate the regional economic structure sends a positive signal to enter into the neoliberal model provoked by globalization (1990). However, the national model of open economy, adjustment and deregulation is based on fragmentary and unarticulated policies. It means that, the sub-national space - Cuyo's region- is under uncertainty in the way of globalization and supranational integration of MERCOSUR.

The adjustment policies seem to fulfill the international foreign debt rather than to improve long term development strategies. The regional economic reactivation initiated with Cavallo's national economic plan drives to public services privatization and public entrepreneurs with the highest concentration and centralization of capital in the hand of agents that are interacting inter-economic branches and with complete control of the linkages of productive phases (row material activities, transformation and distribution).

This panorama is completed with the shift of other agents as consequence of the lack of capital valuation in their firms. Small-scale firms are in disadvantage as they become catch up in a vicious circle which makes it difficult for them to attract innovative managers, to invest in the modernization of their plant and equipment, and implement new technological advances. Then, they are forced to survive in informal sector in a continuous deteriorating condition of labour, unemployment and self-business.

The state regulation mode puts emphasis on adjustment, the banking fussion, and promote physical infrastructure in export base expansion that constrains social budget. Expenses in technological centers, high complexity medical centers, etc, are available while welfare services are destroyed by unfair policies.

The model of globalization works out for a reduced social groups while the majority of the population cannot access to the basic welfare services.

Modernity is represented by the so-called "bubbles of wealth" placed in common grounds to keep ordinary people away in an effort to avoid social conflict. It is also observed the increasing growth of condominions and private residential neighborhoods, that are highly controlled areas by security apparatus. An opposite phenomena is the withdrawal of producers and workers from the rural to the urban areas, and unemployed workforce which contribute with their presence to from precarious settlements creating the so-called "bubbles of poverty".

Oppose to the new neoliberal trend there appear active social movements, trade union strikes (producers and workers), students mobilizations, the total close up of local commerce in urban centers, closing of routes and high morosity.

To sum up, the globalization-modernization process provokes increases <u>inequality</u> and social polarization. If there are no changes in public policies involves in the distribution of social and economic resources, social conflicts remains for ever.

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