La teoría marxista en la geografía ambiental
Semestre 2018-2: La dialéctica materialista

*Introducción al curso*

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**Points to mention**

¿Qué es el marxismo?

- Difícil cuestionar para dos razones:
  1. “Marxismo” no fue usado en la vida de Marx, y las escrituras de Marx no indican que estaba promoviendo una “visión del mundo”, sino
     a) una crítica de la economía política desde el punto de vista del proletariado revolucionario
     b) una concepción materialista de la historia (Fetscher, 1992)
  2. En el enfoque dialéctico, los conceptos “no deben ser encapsulados en definiciones rígidas, sino que deben desarrollarse en su proceso de formación histórica o lógica” (Engels, 1991, p. 103) — no decir que no se permiten definiciones, sino que son necesarias provisionales y relativas

- Marxismo no es una religión ni un dogma
  - Aquí se ha rechazado a algunos grupos que se autodenominan marxistas por su rechazo de los fundamentos básicos del marxismo (e.g., Stalinismo)
  - Partidos son generalmente formados alrededor de un conjunto de principios o programa político que consideran coherentes con el marxismo

El marxismo y el socialismo

- Marxismo es frecuentemente, y correctamente, asociado con el socialismo y el comunismo. Aunque el movimiento socialista moderno se considera generalmente originado en la publicación de *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, escrito por Marx y Engels (Marx and Engels, 1978), el socialismo predecemos esto por siglos. Marx y Engels re-conceptualizaron el socialismo como el resultado de la lucha de clase de los trabajadores, con su forma específica determinada por el desarrollo histórico y los trabajadores que la construyen, en lugar de estar determinado de antemano.

- Marx utilizó el comunismo para describir la lucha revolucionaria de la clase trabajadora en la sociedad capitalista (el socialismo también fue frecuentemente utilizado por Marx y otros en este contexto) y de hecho la forma de sociedad que la clase trabajadora estaba luchando para traer acerca
Lenin distinguished between socialism and communism by proposing that the former corresponds to the first phase of post-capitalist society suggested by Marx (1978) as a transitional phase from capitalism to communism characterized by:

- Private ownership of the means of production abolished
- Workers replace the ruling class and establish a workers state under the dictatorship of the proletariat to guard against a resurgence of the bourgeoisie
- Bourgeois ideologies and practices continue to influence social thought
- Income calculated according to labor performed rather than need, but no longer derived from property ownership
- Access to the means of subsistence still mediated by exchange

Communism, in turn, would correspond to what Marx referred to as a higher stage of communism, characterized by:

- Elimination of classes and division of labor both necessary preconditions
- Abolition of private property and human self-alienation
- Each produces according to ability and receives according to need
- The state, no longer necessary, withers away

Marx and Engels did not necessarily consider socialism nor communism as ends in themselves, but the conditions under which humanity can achieve its emancipation from need and transcend its alienation.

El marxismo y el socialismo “realmente existente”

Substantial debate over the response to countries (e.g., Soviet Union, China, Cuba) that identify themselves or are frequently described as “socialist” exists. At a fundamental level, such claims can be evaluated by asking whether such countries indicate movement towards communism, which tends to yield four groups of responses (Sweezy, 1992):

- Nominal socialist countries are genuinely socialist and moving towards communism in a manner consistent with Marxist theory
- Nominal socialist countries are genuinely socialist, but progress towards communism has been impeded by the rise of a bureaucracy
- Nominal socialist countries, if they were ever genuinely socialist, have regressed to capitalism (dominant Marxist interpretation; Arnow et al., 2003)
- Nominal socialist countries have developed into new types of class-exploitative societies that are neither capitalist nor socialist

Most Marxists hold that provision of services by the state, state ownership or control over the means of production and central planning do not constitute socialism, or even a move towards socialism, especially when the tax burden of supporting them is primarily extracted from the wages of the working class.
El marxismo y el capitalismo

- As a historical phase, capitalism consists of complex social formations and involves economic, social, and political behavior and attributes of different groups that do not necessarily break into two simple classes (capitalist and worker) (Harvey, 2006, clave: Harvey2006);

- As a mode of production, capitalism has a more theoretical and formal designation of two basic classes (Marx [1991] ends volume three of *Capital* with a discussion of the three basic classes in capitalist society: worker, capitalist, landowner) and wage labor-capital as the defining relation, in addition to other general attributes variously considered (Desai, 1992):
  1. Production for exchange rather than use by numerous producers
  2. Market where labor-power is bought and sold
  3. Predominant mediation of exchange by the money commodity
  4. Control of the labor-process by the capitalist or its managerial agent
  5. Competition between capitals

- Mode of production (Harvey, 2006, clave: Harvey2006)
  - Technical — methods and techniques used in the production of a particular type of use-value (e.g., mode of production of cotton)
  - Abstract — abstract representation of a reasonably narrowly defined set of relationships (e.g., capitalist mode of production, characteristic form of the labor-process under the class relations of capitalism (including production of surplus-value) presuming production of commodities for exchange)
  - Holistic/comparative — whole gamut of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption relations as well as institutional, juridical, and administrative arrangements, political organizations and state apparatus, ideology and characteristic forms of social (class) reproduction

La dialéctica materialista

- Materialism: what exists is, or is dependent upon, matter (Bhaskar, 1992)
  - But not reducible to matter, contra mechanical materialism
  - Dialectical aspect vis-à-vis materialism posits matter and ideas in oppositional unity, with primacy of the former

- Historical materialism
  - Society rooted in relations of production and contradiction between these and forces of production (Harris, 1992) and mental conceptions of the world (Harvey, 2006) — i.e., how humans come together and develop methods to meet their needs, primacy of material needs over ideas, but contradictions between these (Shaw, 1992)
  - Dialectical, materialist and historical approach to society; explanatory as well as descriptive
  - Class struggle as the historical fulcrum of social change and revolution between modes of production
    - Definition of what constitutes class struggle, however, extends beyond the workplace and includes struggles over housing, education, health care, and numerous other issues
    - Under capitalism, the working class is the only class with both the interest and the capacity to overthrow the capital system and move society to socialism
• “Materialist dialectic” frequently used in place of “dialectical materialism” to distinguish the former from Stalinist doctrine (but see Clark and York, 2005, clave: Clark2005a)

  – Fundamental terms of dialectical approach: totality, change, contradiction and mediation (Rees, 1998)
  – Three laws of dialectic useful reminder of forms in which dialectical contradictions sometimes work themselves out, but not the only means of dialectical development, even in the Hegelian system:
    1. Unity of opposites
    2. Transformation of quantity into quality
    3. Negation of the negation (transformative sublation)
  – Two key points of intense debate in Marxist theory:
    1. Relationship between Marxian and Hegalian dialectic (Rees covers this thoroughly)
    2. Scientific status of Marxism vs. Marxist “world view” and the status of dialectics in the nature (Rees briefly addresses this)

References


