

ephemera: theory & politics
in organization



Latin America struggles



What is *ephemera*: theory & politics in organization?

ephemera is an independent journal, founded in 2001. *ephemera* provides its content free of charge, and charges its readers only with free thought.

theory

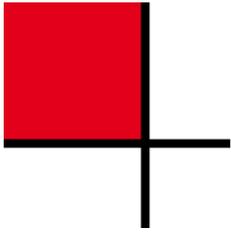
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. *ephemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics

ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively depolitized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization

Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.



ephemera

theory & politics in organization

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**América Latina / Latin
America: Again (and again)**

Maria Ceci Misoczky, Paulo RZ Abdala
and Steffen Böhm

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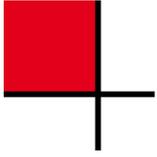


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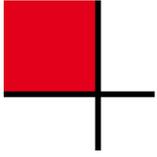
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América Latina / Latin America: Again (and again)

Maria Ceci Misoczky, Paulo RZ Abdala and Steffen Böhm

In 2006, *ephemera* published its first special issue dedicated to Latin America. It aimed ‘to inform readers across the globe about the organization of the ongoing struggles and resistances and the tensions lived and experienced by so many Latin Americans’. We tried to make present the multiplicity of social movements on the continent, avoiding ‘a naïve monovoice and an over-optimistic view of the intensity of movements throughout the continent’ (Misoczky, 2006: 228). Our intention was to bring organisation studies closer to the daily realities of the struggles in grassroots social movements, putting our finger on what we regard as a sore area of neglect in our field.

Perhaps surprisingly, *ephemera*, or any other organization studies oriented journals from the Global North, has not published a special issue dedicated on Latin America nor on any other regions located in the Global South since then. In fact, the only other dedicated issue on Latin America appeared in *Organization* in the same year (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). Our field, it seems, remains as Eurocentric as ever, if we consider eurocentrism as the underlying politico-economic and cultural *modus operandi* of globalization (Dussel and Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

Yet, to make such a statement is perhaps itself Eurocentric. There are plenty of organization studies journals that many Global North readers may have

never heard of. *Administración y Organizaciones* from Mexico and *Organizações & Sociedade* from Brazil are just two examples. The multiplicity of organizational perspectives from around the world is astonishing, if one dares to explore and see it. Yet, academic careers in the North are made on the back of publishing in ‘prestigious’, highly ranked journals, most of which are located in countries of the Global North, edited by those employed in the ‘leading’ universities of the North. The institutional blindness towards academic diversity and otherness is astonishing – even amongst so-called ‘critical’ voices in academia.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some journals, such as *critical perspectives on international business*, have made honest attempts to reach out to the Global South. EGOS has tried to establish the LAEMOS ‘brand’ in Latin America, which, however, ended in controversy and accusations of Eurocentric domination through the back-door (Laemos, 2018). So, the problem of Eurocentrism has certainly been recognised by the field, but ‘we’ are arguably very far away from actually doing anything about it. ‘We’, and any other voice that speaks, has to be problematized right from the start. We, the editors of this special issue, have ourselves been involved in this journal, *ephemera*, as well as the wider, interdisciplinary field of organization studies. We are also to blame, even though, over the years, we have tried to shift the field towards a more equal perspective of organization around the globe. It is not even about blaming. It is about strategies for emancipation.

The call for papers that resulted in this special issue was made in the context of a crisis that started in 2015 and 2016 with the victories of Mauricio Macri in Argentina, the rise of the opposition coalition in the Venezuelan National Assembly, the parliamentary coup against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, and the candidacy of Lenin Moreno in Ecuador, followed by his election and the following rupture with the movement led by Rafael Correa. Stolorowicz (2017) indicates that the understanding of this situation demands an analysis that problematizes the relationship between economy and politics, between economy and the reconfiguration of the social, and between this reconfiguration of the social and its political-ideological effects. Of course, this kind of analysis must consider the internal specificities of each country, as well as the impact of the capitalist crisis. This exceeds the remit of this

brief introduction to this special issue. Instead, what we want to emphasize is that the current political scenario is an evidence that there are political, economic, cultural – and organizational – issues that appear in the Latin American context again and again. Hence, there are obvious connections between the two special *ephemera* issues on Latin America.

Connecting the special issues: 2006 and 2019

Organization, as a necessity to achieve emancipation and liberation, was indeed the underlying connecting theme amongst the articles of the original *ephemera* special issue on Latin America, published in 2006 (Misoczky, 2006). Directly addressing this issue, Mazzeo (2006) criticized the institution / social movement dichotomy, which expresses the opposition between conservatism-bureaucratization and change-horizontality. His paper offered a reflection and practice that allowed him to move towards a dialectic relationship between social organization and political movement, a relationship that transforms each part and gives rise to something different. What this paper and many others in that special issue showed is that ‘organization’ cannot be reduced to a narrow institutionalism, nor can it be simply seen within a social movement frame.

Along similar lines, the original special issue featured an article by Ramirez (2006) who wrote a historical document on the 2003 indigenous popular uprising, known as the Gas War, in the Aymara city of El Alto (Bolivia), when hundreds of autonomous micro-organizations became critical actors in a movement that helped to change the country. Another paper, by Dávalos (2006), addressed the dynamics and strengths of the indigenous movements to put pressure on the neoliberal state, in a context (the Ecuadorian) marked by the absence of proletarian organizations in the field of political dispute. Given such analyses, how can any organizational scholar still insist on an analysis of any institutional setting, whether in the public or private sectors, that does not consider the wider social and political movements that shape its context? Well, there are plenty of institutional theorists who still claim to do just that, focussing almost pedantically on an artificially constructed boundary of ‘the institution’.

Women were another key theme of that issue. Maria Galindo (2006), founding member of the twenty-year-old Bolivian feminist-anarchist movement *Mujeres Creando*, which questions technocracy, the neoliberal vision of gender equality and gendered categories, problematized the relations between the vertical structure of the organization of the State and the demands for participation from horizontal, grassroots organizations.

When we published that issue, the word ‘femicide’ was not yet part of the common language. Unfortunately, and despite women’s struggles all over the world, this word, which was identified with the tragedy of Ciudad Juárez (México), became the widely-recognised name for the unstoppable repeated murder of women. In the article by Pineda Jaimes (2006), we learned about the perverse link of capitalism and machismo in a social phenomenon that made our vocabulary insufficient – the word ‘femicide’ had to be created. To reinforce this critique of the situation of women in Mexico – something that is very much ongoing today – our 2006 special issue also featured a text by Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (NHRC; May our Daughters Return Home), a social organization from Ciudad Juárez.

Another concept that again and again came up in the original special issue was ‘territory’. The articles by Mazzeo (2006) – which was dedicated to the analysis of the praxis and some of the political consequences of the *piquetero* movement in Argentina – as well as Ramirez and Dávalos, all discussed ‘territory’ as a central tenant of the politics of organization. The authors remind us that the native people of America conceive territory as the basis for their continuous resistance and the reconstruction of communal bonds. Such a construction of a collective subject was the focus of Moraes da Silva and Vecchio’s (2006) paper, which focused on the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra* (Landless Workers Movement, MST) and the use of symbolic means to support and stimulate organizational processes.

A lot has happened since 2006. More than 13 years have passed. Many left-leaning Latin American governments have ceased to exist, giving rise to the continent’s ‘new right’, a collection of right-wing governments in Argentina, Brazil, etc. The hope of the 2000s has given way to despair. But the continent has been here before. This is not a new phenomenon. Throughout its colonial and post-colonial history of more than 500 years, the continent

has gone through political cycles of domination, patriarchy, exploitation, liberation and emancipation – again and again.

The publication of this new *ephemera* special issue on Latin America can be read as a renewal and continuation of the themes addressed in the previous one. The key issues remain the same: organization, indigenous emancipation, territory, women's struggles. Yet, the analyses necessarily have to be rethought and renewed. Different approaches are tried out, and a new theme is being brought to the fore: the political context and its impact on science and technology production (specifically in Argentina but presenting a case that has similarities with politics being reproduced all over the region).

In 'The two faces of the common? Communal forms of government from below as counter-hegemonic alternatives', José Francisco Puello-Socarrás and Carolina Jiménez Martín, start by reviewing the processes of critical mobilisations against neoliberalism by which the people of *Nuestra América* rose up to demand justice, dignity, freedom and democracy in their territories. According to the authors, the scope of these popular rebellions was heterogeneous but two main trends can be identified: in some countries, popular uprisings supported by social movements provoked ruptures at government level; in others, it politicised and strengthened autonomy within communities and in certain territories. Ultimately, the rise of a reactionary right resulted in a withdrawal from social mobilisation. However, whatever the scope of the individual rebellions, this decade of struggle opened up a new emancipatory outlook in the region, expressed throughout the multiplicity of communal practices and in popular knowledge that added to a systematic critique of modern, developmentalism, and neoliberal thought. The paper reviews debates that have been developed over the last decade on the commons, such as common goods and communal forms of policies and politics. It aims to further these debates by reflecting about the contribution of social movements, popular organisations and other social and political actors to building new communal forms for living.

The theme of community organization is also present in the paper written by Mariana Affonso Penna: 'Movimento das Comunidades Populares: a Brazilian uchronic utopia'. She presents some aspects of the political action

of a contemporary Brazilian social movement: People's Communities Movement (MCP). Reflecting on the utopian horizon of this collectivity, as well as on what kind of inspirations it seeks in the Brazilian past, the aim is to understand the notion of utopia and uchronia applied to the specific case of the MCP. Consisting primarily of manual workers and focused on urban or rural peripheral areas, the political work of this social movement consists in organizing communitarian areas by creating schools, day care centers, health groups, economic initiatives based on a model of collective and non-hierarchical work (there are no bosses, nor employees), cultural events, parties and celebrations, among other activities. Organizing the communities is therefore considered the essential way to reach their strategic horizon. But to build these communities they also seek inspiration from other social movements of the Brazilian past. These movements serve as uchronias for the MCP, as they represent interrupted pasts that the movement wishes to regain. An uchronia transformed into utopia, and this utopia, in turn, is an applied utopia: a 'concrete utopia', embodied in the political action of this movement that assumes in daily practices the creation of a Communitarian Socialism as their ultimate goal.

Mason Deese, in 'From the picket to the women's strike: expanding the meaning of labour struggles in Argentina', discusses the process by which the new feminist movement emerged in response to the increase in feminicides in the country. She discusses how the tactic of labour movements has been appropriated, which had previously been adopted by the unemployed workers in their struggles. She presents the use of the strike, specifically a women's strike, to challenge this violence, as well as the devaluing of women's labour, which they understand as a root cause of violence. The argument is that both these movements, the unemployed workers and the feminist movement, through appropriating tactics from the traditional movement to organize workers who have often been marginalized, point to both the complexity and heterogeneity of labour today, as well as new ways of organizing these workers.

Johanna Leinius, 'Methodologies of resistance: Facilitating solidarity across difference in inter-movement encounters', analyses how Latin American social movements organize to build solidarity across difference. She asks what kind of organizational practices and discursive resources are mobilized

in the meeting between heterogeneous social movements, by examining the logics of two inter-movement meetings that took place in Peru: the 13th Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (XIII EFLAC) and the 5th Dialogues between Knowledges and Movements (V Diálogos). She gives us a detailed account about how solidarity is built and facilitated in a set of concrete events. Overcoming differences in language, culture and politics is often easier said than done. This paper contributes to our understanding of the importance of encountering others.

Another aspect of social struggles is addressed in ‘Grassroots media activism and counter-hegemonic political narrative’, written by Antonio Claudio Engelke Menezes Teixeira. The paper examines the narrative dispute about *Jornadas de Junho* of 2013, in Brazil. By way of a hermeneutic framing analysis of the corporate media, he argues that Brazilian newspapers managed to put violence at the core of the protests through a double movement that included the naming of a subject-of-violence (the rioter) and the normalization of the state of exception devoted to abort its existence. He also analyzes Midia Ninja’s broadcasting of protests through Twitcam, arguing that, more than just correcting corporate media’s factual mistakes, the polyphonic framing of the protests presented by ‘ninja’ activists publicly debunked the founding myth of journalism, broadened the scope of voices in the public sphere and helped to foster a political subject in the process of representing it.

Finally, Nuria Giniger and Rocco Carbone, revisit the major events of the recent political history of Latin America to situate the Macri government, in Argentina, and its political struggles with the science and technology sector. The paper’s central focus is to reflect on, what the authors call, ‘scientificide’ (a neologism that refers to the murder of science), sovereignty and class struggle. They argue that Macri tried to dominate science in Argentina, making it available for his hegemonic politics. In contrast, the authors present an agenda of science and technology for the 21st century that is part of a larger and collective struggle against hegemonic and imperialist power.

Connecting the special issue with the contemporary Latin American context

Recent Latin American history has been turbulent; in the 2000s we saw the rise of many left-leaning governments in the region, only to be replaced by extreme right-wing, populist leaders in many countries. A detailed understanding and analysis of these developments go beyond the purpose of this editorial introduction. As a starting point, however, we follow the arguments by Stolowicz (2017) who connects the distinct socio-political histories with the dominant strategies of capital to reproduce its power in Latin America. Recent left-leaning development agendas in the region have been superficially named as ‘progressivism’ or ‘progressive governments’ (Gudynas, 2014) or ‘pink tide’ (Lieveslay and Ludham, 2009; Gonzales, 2019), or erroneously named as ‘postneoliberalism’ (Puello-Socarrás, 2015). We agree with Stolowicz (2017) that it can be understood as an ‘inclusive new developmentalism’¹. Of course, each Latin American country has its own specificities. But, nevertheless, with Stolowicz (2017) we can identify common features because these specificities do not operate in a void. There are common historical, colonial antecedents and dominant strategies of capital accumulation that have impacted the continent for hundreds of years.

In terms of their dominant politico-economic model, most Latin American countries are extractivist in nature and exporters of primary products, although there are, of course, many differences regarding local conditions of capital appropriation. For example, the role and ambitions of national economic elites differs across the continent, the extreme case being Brazil where elites have had sub-imperialist ambitions for some time (Zibechi, 2012; Misoczky and Imasato, 2014). Yet, there are many similarities that cannot be overlooked. A shared feature, for example, is that many left-leaning Latin American governments had projects of capitalist modernization, not only in terms of infrastructure and technology, but also in terms of consumption. The massive inclusion of the poor, or the so-called ‘new middle class’, in the consumption market has often been presented as

1 Referring particularly to Argentina, Brasil, Bolívia, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

an indicator of social improvement (Abdala and Misoczky, 2019). Stolowicz (2017) reflects on the political consequences of this policy of capitalist modernization, indicating the replacement of the politicized approach to citizenship rights for the neoliberal policy of individualistic inclusion in the market.

Poverty alleviation policies were another common feature amongst the Latin American left-leaning governments of the 2000s, once again reinforcing individual approaches in policies that followed the World Bank and UNDP prescriptions based on conditional cash transfer programmes (Dornelas Camara, 2014). Once again, this reinforced the logic of social inclusion being implemented through individualistic values and tools of the financial market. This has contributed to social transformations that have seen the rise of a mass of individuals that have been receptive to right-wing proposals. In other words, 'these economic mechanisms, in the name of social inclusion, strengthen the reproduction of capital' (Stolowicz, 2017: 20). The left-wing policies of the 2000s, so to say, prepared the ground for today's right-wing populist agendas.

Of course, the economic meltdown that hastened the demise of the Latin American left governments was not only due to home-grown problems. The international context was important, too. For example, in May 2013 the US Federal Reserve started to reduce its asset purchasing program, which led to a sharp decrease in capital flows to Latin American countries. Also, the slowdown in China's economic growth and the appreciation of the dollar against other currencies played a role, making the region's exports more expensive in relative terms, negatively impacting the export of commodities. Exposing their dependence on extractive industries, many Latin American countries were severely affected by the sharp decline in commodities prices in 2014/15.

These so-called 'progressive governments' clearly did not make any structural break with the neoliberal policies that have been in place since the early 1990s. These included their full orientation toward the world market, with the goal to be fully integrated in global value chains and following a logic of national comparative advantage; a large degree of openness to foreign capital; high levels of job insecurity and informality;

financialization; and high rates of domestic and foreign debt. These policies maintained the historical pattern of dependence, which have reproduced Latin America's subordinated position in the global market, cementing the continent's basic status as a supplier of raw materials, a secondary market, and a source of monopolistic revenue and financial speculation. In fact, this position has been reinforced by these 'progressive governments', which were often celebrated by the Global North Left. Their 'character as an exporter of primary goods has increased, the industrial backwardness and the dependency on foreign capital have deepened, and it has been unable to overcome the steady loss of importance in world trade' (Molina, 2015: 6).

These developments are anything but new, of course. There have been many Latin American theorists that have critically reflected about Latin American political economy and its social development. Amongst them have been Marxist theorists of dependency, such as Marini (1973). His classic thesis, developed in 'Dialectics of Dependence', explains a set of processes that characterise a dependent capitalist country, including: workers are mainly seen as producers (cheap labour) and not as consumers; the constant pressure to produce extraordinary levels of surplus value; the difficulty of transferring accumulation to the field of relative surplus value (e.g. through higher productivity); the transfer of value to the imperialist economies through unequal exchange; the acute form assumed by the processes of concentration and centralization of capital; and a system of production sustained by the overexploitation of labour (Osorio, 2016). Marini particularly emphasises the priority of this last characteristic: 'the basis of dependency is the over-exploitation of labour' (1973: 91). Overexploitation refers to the processes of violating the value of labour power, whether in its daily aspects, or in its overall dimension.

Of course, overexploitation is a generalized resource of capitalist accumulation, not only present in Latin America. In fact, Osorio (2016) reminds us that in any crisis, in any part of the world, capital resorts to overexploitation to counteract the falling rate of profit, as Marx already explained. However, 'the combinations of forms of capitalist exploitation are carried out in an unequal manner in the totality of the system, thus creating distinct social formations depending on the predominance of a determined form' (Marini, 1973: 93). Misoczky, Abdala and Dornelas Camara (2015)

show that in the recent Brazilian context, this overexploitation has been achieved through policies of stimulus of consumption of the so-called new middle class.

A key contribution of Marxist theories of dependency is that, in the context of underdevelopment, developmentalist projects end up producing new patterns of reproduction in which the development of underdevelopment prevails (Frank, 1966), along with new and more acute forms of dependency. This can thus help us understand the failures of the inclusive new developmentalism projects, led by ‘progressive governments’ in Latin America, primarily in the 2000s. The historical antecedents are important here. Osorio reminds us that

the notion of developmentalism emerged during the middle of the last century, under the imprint of an industrial bourgeoisie that entertained illusions of pulling the region out of backwardness, closing gaps, insuring the welfare of most of the population, and ultimately leading a development project. (2016: 104)

After some achievements, such as an improvement of wage levels in Latin America as a whole in the 1960s,

the four decades that followed saw a serious decline in the standard of living for the majority of the population, social inequality reached record levels, and poverty and misery affected millions of families, despite the triumphs touted from time to time in their defence. (*ibid.*)

Latin America has hence always seen ups and downs in terms of social and economic development. Marxist dependency theories help us to analyse these developments as part of a wider relationship between centre and periphery, seeing Latin American countries being embedded in unequal global relations that are marked by multiple forms of exploitation, dispassion and dependency. Hence, in many ways today’s crisis in Latin American is a continuation of the crisis tendencies that have existed on the continent for many decades if not centuries.

Today, we face instability and multiple challenges in those countries that had adopted inclusive, new developmentalist programs as well as in those that are implementing austerity policies in agreements with the IMF. In

Argentina, the economic crisis with high rates of inflation, currency devaluation, increased levels of poverty, impunity and violent repression of popular movements and activists, has produced, in 2019, a dramatic electoral process in which Macri was defeated by a unified Peronist coalition (Alberto Fernández as president and Cristina Kirchner as vice-president).

In Ecuador, a popular insurgence has taken place, which started with indigenous mobilization, forcing the government of Lenin Moreno – with its policy of austerity and liberalization of markets as well as a disciplined obedience to US interests – to review the terms of the agreement with the IMF. Recently, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), consolidating its political relevance and as part of the formal process of dialogue that resulted from the popular insurgence, presented, on 31 October 2019, an alternative social and economic model proposal, which resulted from debates and analysis of the People's, Organizations and Social Collectives Parliament with the representation of more than 180 organizations.

Chile, since 18 September 2019, has been in a situation of nationwide popular unrest. The crisis started with the youth's refusal of paying higher metro prices in Santiago by jumping over the turnstiles. When, in the following days, the government put the army and the military police on the streets, the reaction spread to the whole country. What started as a massive spontaneous protest, has become more organized. The Social Unity (*Unidad Social*), which congregates more than 100 organizations of workers, students, environmentalists and sexual diversity movements, has become a key factor in the demand for a constitutional reform. It has been organizing open citizens meetings (*cabildos ciudadanos*) to produce the guidelines for this reform. Across the country more than 10,000 people have participated in this process. The Social Unity has also been key in the call for massive demonstrations. By the end of November 2019, Chilean political parties have agreed to a referendum on replacing the country's Pinochet-era constitution. In April 2020, a nationwide plebiscite will ask Chileans if they want a new constitution and how it will be drafted. Once the draft is complete, the new constitution will be submitted to a second, compulsory referendum for ratification. However, a significant part of the people who are actively involved in the protests does not support the terms of such

agreement and insist on overthrowing the president. The situation remains volatile and unclear as we write this editorial.

At the same time, massive popular protests started in Colombia with the national strike of November 21st, 2019. The strike was called by the National Strike Committee, made up of the country's biggest unions as well as rural social organizations like *Cumbre Agraria* and Cauca's Indigenous Regional Council (CRIC). But the National Strike, even before it started, quickly grew beyond the organizing committee. The massive participation all over the country is an indication of the popular dissatisfaction with the situation of a country defined by the use of state and paramilitary violence against communitarian and indigenous activists, with almost daily cases of murder, and by the increasing inequality between regions and social groups. Popular protests are constantly facing the repression by the Mobile Riot Squadron (ESMAD) as well as demonstrations of force by the government and its political allies. This is expressed, for example, by the approval of a very regressive tax reform. So far, the protests are continuing and there are indications that the National Strike Committee will call for further mobilizations, insisting on the construction of spaces of dialogue with the government to advance their demands.

Meanwhile, in Brazil, the election of a coalition of militaries and Pentecostalism implements ideas connected to the Chicago school of neoliberalism and a conservative and backwardness agenda in relation to culture and sexual orientation. At the end of November 2019, Uruguay voted for a right-wing president, ending the Broad Front's (*Frente Amplio*) left-wing dominance of 15 years. Venezuela continues to be under attack by the USA and neighbouring right-wing governments organized in the Group of Lima². In Bolivia, the indigenous president, Evo Morales, was ousted from office by the Right and then pushed into exile, while an arrest warrant has now been placed on him.

The current political scenario is an evidence that there are political, economic, cultural and organizational issues that appear in the Latin

2 Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Santa Lucía.

American context again and again. Hence, there are obvious connections between the two special *ephemera* issues on Latin America: the expression of indigenous traditions in organizational practices from below; the territorial organization of communities; the struggle against feminicide, now in articulation with tactics learned from the workers movement as well as the continuous and multiple forms of dependency. What this special issue is hoping to do is to show that there are common features around the region, which, unfortunately, do not get aired enough in Northern media, nor are they discussed sufficiently in organisation studies. To study organisation within the Latin American context means to see and engage closely with the struggles of the Latin American people and their social movements. The current crisis on the continent is only the latest of a long string of crises, and the people are mobilising against forces of dispossession, exploitation and dependency as they have always done, again and again.

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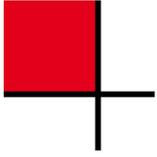
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The two faces of the common? Communal forms of government from below as counter-hegemonic alternatives

José Francisco Puello-Socarrás and Carolina Jiménez Martín

abstract

This paper attempts to analyze rising debates of commons highlighting contrasts between neoliberal's views and new horizons on Communal forms from below as counter-hegemonic alternatives. If (new) neoliberal perspectives of Commons are trying to positioning ideas like 'Common-pool recourses', 'public-private Partnerships', 'governance', a way of thinking embodied by the so-called: Common without Community; in contrast, anti-hegemonic Communal thoughts based on Civilization Matrixes aims to develop popular creative capacities and resistances against neoliberal capitalism through Alternate-and-Native, alternatives propositions, 'Care' of communal property for 'good-living-well', in other words: a way of thinking and living personifying the Commons with Community. In this sense, struggles and debates surrounding the common open up perspectives of reflection on the transition and the construction of a new world that allows for the re-appropriation of socially produced work and wealth that has been systematically usurped by the dominant rationality.

Common(s) or communal? Introductory remarks

It is necessary to differentiate a community practice later turned functional by capital, from one that is created, from the onset, for the capital.

Raquel Gutiérrez and Huascar Salazar.

*Nuestra América*¹, during the first decade of the 21st century, saw an intense process of critical mobilisations against neoliberalism, the current form of capitalism. The people of this region rose up to demand Justice, Dignity, Freedom and Democracy in their territories.

From this perspective of social and popular movements, the implementation of the neoliberal project had: (i) put in question the ethical foundations of life in society; (ii) radicalised violence against citizens; (iii) intensified the devastation of natural ecosystems; (iv) deepened social inequalities, and did not guarantee a dignified life for all².

The scope of these popular rebellions was heterogeneous but two main trends can be identified.

In some countries, popular uprisings supported by social movements provoked ruptures at government level; in others, it politicised and strengthened autonomy within communities and in certain territories. Ultimately, the rise of a reactionary right resulted in a withdrawal from social mobilisation.

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- 1 We prefer to adopt Cuban José Martí's term *Nuestra América* – 'Our America' - (Martí, 1891) rather than the classical reference: 'Latin-America', originally penned by Colombian writer José María Torres Caicedo in his poem: 'Las dos Américas' (1856). At the time, Torres Caicedo was looking for a suitable replacement for the term: "América Española" (Spanish America). In Martí's *Nuestra América* is thought out from the bottom upwards.
 - 2 According to figures provided by OXFAM: "Extreme inequality in the world is reaching unsustainable levels. Today, the richest 1% of the world's population has more wealth than the remaining 99% of people on the planet ... At the same time, wealth in the hands of the poorest half of humanity has been reduced by one trillion dollars over the past five years... by 2015, only 62 people had the same wealth as 3.6 billion people (the poorest half of humanity). Not so long ago, in 2010, it was 388 people" (see OXFAM, 2016: 1-2). Indeed the Oxfam's report: "Time to Care" (2020), outlines that 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa. Similarly, Piketty points out that, "(...) Since the 1970s, inequality has grown significantly in rich countries, especially in the United States, where, in the decade of 2000-2010, the concentration of income recovered - even slightly exceeded - the record level of the 1910-1920 decade ... the increase in inequality since the 1970s and 1980s is largely due to the political changes of recent decades, especially in fiscal and financial matters" (Piketty, 2015: 29-30 and 36).

Whatever the scope of the individual rebellions, this decade of struggle opened up a new emancipatory outlook in the region.

The creative capacity and resistance of the peoples of Nuestra América fed this perspective, and it was expressed throughout the multiplicity of communal practices and in popular knowledge that added to a systematic critique of modern, developmentalism, and neoliberal thought.

Since these times, the subversive dynamics and concrete struggles for the defence of life has continued, transformed and given new meaning to the lives of these people.

Communities have organised crucial rebellions in defence of territory, water, seeds, ancestral knowledge, and work, among other fundamental components needed to build a *Buen-vivir-Bien*, to put it simply: ‘Good life’, or a life that is worthy for all. It is precisely within the framework of this process that these disputes around *the common, the commons and the communal* have taken a strategic place.

In view of these issues, this document reviews debates that have been developed over the last decade on *the common*, common goods and communal forms of policies and politics (see Jiménez et al., 2017). This document aims to contribute to further reflections on social movements, popular organisations and other social and political actors who seek through their efforts and struggles to build new communal organisations for living.

This text is organised as follows. First, general arguments are put forward concerning the centrality of the dispute of the common in the current conjuncture. Second, conceptualisations on the Common and Common goods are presented. Next, certain debates will be presented on issues related to the public, the private and *the Common*. A fourth section in which a critique of (neo)liberal governance is developed and the concept of Communal skills of government (from below) is presented. Finally, there will be a reflection on communal initiatives and the construction of new projects and ways of organising life.

Here, the main objective is to promote theoretical reflections on popular struggles and forms of government today. So, this paper must be understood

in relation to potential alternatives ‘from below’ in the course of recent history of Nuestra América, ranging from anti-neoliberal (defensive) oppositions to anti-capitalist resistance (offensive struggles)³, invoking the need to differentiate a community practice later made functional by capital from social practices that is realized for capital:

The first type of practice can be understood as efforts to produce life beyond capital - even against it – and although it manages to appropriate, through different mechanisms of exploitation and dispossession, the human energy exerted in such practices, insofar as they exist, there is always something else, that is to say, that a material and/or social product is produced or regenerated that is not for capital and that, in one way or another, will fulfil the purpose of reproducing life. (Gutiérrez and Salazar, 2015: 22)

The argument surrounding the Common and the Commons and the defence of life

Arguments related to *the common* (singular) and *commons* (plural) is not novel and, much less, is not utopian. There is a long tradition in social movements and critical thinking in their defence⁴.

However, the intensification and enlargement of the process of dispossession, alienation⁵, and privatisation of *the Common and the*

3 It needs to be stressed that this text could not collect all the ‘emancipatory experiences’ at all levels that already exists in the region. Our analysis is rooted in cases (paradigmatic and representatives) by attempting preliminary findings about such phenomenon in Nuestra América as a theoretical synthesis.

4 We are aware of differences between the terms common (singular) and commons (plural) (see De Angelis and Harvei, 2014). However, in principle, we are agree with the generic use of the word: common(s) to launch this discussion.

5 It should be noted the double connotation that Marx made between alienation (in *The Grundrisse*) and alienation (in *Capital*) which was emphasized by Jameson (2013: 11) when he stated: ‘... the most restricted and ‘legal’ sense of alienation of property ... [and] the broader sense that also includes personal alienation,’ and in the case in which we are concerned, the communal. Echeverría (1986: 44), develops this idea in the following terms: “In the capitalist modality of production in terms of a global social life, the self-production by the community only takes place to the extent that it is subordinated to the satisfaction of the needs of the capitalist system and that are heterogeneous with respect to its own needs: this is determined by the

Commons that has characterised contemporary capitalism has led to a centralisation of projects and social resistance in the current situation,

(...) As Massimo De Angelis says, there has always been *communal movements* “outside” capitalism that have played a key role in class struggle, fuelling radical thinking as well as the physical action by many community members [De Angelis, 2007]. Aid societies of the nineteenth century are an example of this kind of action [Bieto, 2000]. What is even more important is that new types of communal movements continue to emerge because of things like “free software” and the “solidarity economy” movement. A whole new world of social relations is emerging that is based on the principle of communal sharing [Bollier and Helfrich, 2012], reaffirming the observation that capitalism has nothing to give us except misery and division. (Caffentzis and Federici, 2015: 57).

Thus, the dispute around *the Common* usually involves a confrontation with capitalism. It upends the individualistic matrix of societal organisation. It proposes, among other things, the recovery of dignity, freedom, justice, autonomy and the capacity for cooperation (Gutiérrez, 2015) as principles of organising community life.⁶

In fact, this type of human experience, having an ethical foundation in human dignity for the community-biotic, aims to break relationships of exploitation and subordination and instead allow for the organising of

reproductive and cumulative dynamics of capital. ... for the community member to produce in a capitalistic way is, therefore, to realize their own survival, but to do this- and here is the contradiction – the member is exploited (ignored) both in the physical (in his/her right to enjoy the products of his/her labour) as well as specifically human (in his/her autarchy or faculty of self-determination)”.

- 6 Some examples of popular social projects in Nuestra América are illustrative of this issue: community aqueducts, seed custodians, reserve areas run by rural farmers, popular education projects, and economic cooperatives, among others. The network of community aqueducts in Colombia, for instance, it’s a project developed in this way: ‘Community aqueducts are managed socially and publicly ... we come from an ancestral legacy that has been passed on from generation to generation which promotes the idea of consolidating and defending the identity of our territories. We work towards the common good and towards preserving the cultural and environmental heritage of our nation... community water management organisations construct spaces for peace, social and environmental justice, and we demand respect for social and community autonomy in our territories’. (National Network of Community Aqueducts in Colombia, 2016).

various kinds of social and natural relations. Thus, practices associated with the commodification of human life, competition, consumerism, peak performance and individualism are displaced, and they are replaced by practices that focus on the satisfaction, wishes and needs of the community. These kinds of practices focus on respecting life, and on communal enjoyment, among other things.

These kinds of experiences are constituted in alternate-and-native perspectives, that is to say, *alternative*, abstract guides, but also concrete ways of bringing about the materialisation of popular community expectations.

Therefore, this has made the common and commons the main supports for new emancipatory perspectives involving the reorganisation of lives, the building of a new type of sociability, the readjusting the energetic metabolism of nature, and a way of recovering the ethical foundations of *Justice, Dignity, and Freedom*.

The deepening of the current crisis of the neoliberal capitalist system (which has been described as having caused a crisis that is imminent and terminal for human civilization⁷) increases the value of communal perspectives as a basis for organising other forms of government and administration that come from below.

What is the common(s)? A brief review

The epistemological debate on what is *the common* (and what it is not) has a long tradition in political philosophy and other disciplines of the social and human sciences.

7 'When we analyse the multiple causes of the contemporary crisis, we come to the conclusion that the paradigm of the organisation of the economic system, today globalised, goes much further than the simple production of the material basis of collective life. That is why this is a crisis of civilization, which involves all aspects of life, both the nature world and the human race' (Houtart, 2013: 240).

It is not the aim of the paper to delve into this debate, nor to revive the multiple conceptualisations that have emerged related to this framework. In this text, we put forward some concepts -elaborated by intellectuals closer to popular movements- that contribute to the discussions on social movements by putting forth arguments for the *the common and the commons*⁸ in order for new emancipatory perspectives to materialise.

In the language of the movements of the '60s and '70s [says Silvia Federici], the concept of "common" did not exist. They fought for many things, but not for the concept of the common as we understand it today. This notion of the common is a result of privatisations, attempts at appropriation and the complete commodification of the body, knowledge, land, air and water. This has caused not only a reaction to present realities but has also created a new political consciousness. In fact, it is linked to the idea of our common life, and it has provoked a reflection upon the communal dimension of our lives. Hence, there is a very strong relationship or correspondence between expropriation, common production, and the importance of the common as a concept of life, and of social relations. (Federici quoted by Gago, 2011)

Federici's approach links *arguments for the common(s)* with the exploitive processes by contemporary capitalism.

This is so because, at present, dispossession is a central feature of the molecular dynamics in the accumulation of resources by global capitalism. Hence the names given first by Caffentzis, Federici and Linebaugh (*The New Enclosures*), and then by Harvey to this new imperialist phase (*accumulation for dispossession*) are key references. Therefore, the movement of common property rights to the private domain, the forceful new waves of enclosures on common goods, the persecution and the criminalisation of community based movements which work towards the organisation of their territories, among other cannibalistic economic practices, has been a threat to the reproduction of the life to these subordinate sectors.

8 Although discursively some social movements do not explicitly refer to the defence of the common and the commons, their struggles are a response to the different types of enclosures that support the accumulation of wealth under the current paradigm. Popular struggles over the course of this century seek, among other things, to curb the process of deprivation and privatisation under the current neoliberal order that limits the management, access and use of certain fundamental goods, which are needed to ensure a dignified and good life for communities and their territories.

These types of actions have resulted in the current situation and struggle by community organisations.

The common(s) is then explained and comes from relational logic. It is not a natural feature of certain objects, nor is it a particular feature of a specific historical moment. Much less is it an attribute of certain social groups. The common is something connected with a kind of vital social relation,

The common is not to be construed, therefore, as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process, but as an ever changing and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and aspects of its existing or yet- to-be-created social and/or physical environment which are deemed crucial to its life and survival. There is in effect a social practice of communalisation. This practice produces or establishes a social relation with a common whose uses are either exclusive to a social group or partially or fully open to all without exception. At the heart of the practice of the common lies the principle that the relation between the social group and that part of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified-as-off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations. (Harvey, 2013: 116)

There are three central findings in Harvey's analysis: i) the common has a substantial relationship in the preservation of life; ii) common goods may be either material or immaterial; and iii) communalisation practices do not have a mercantile character.⁹

From this point of view, it follows that the defence of *the common* is in turn a condition of life for the subaltern classes, and it is seen an alternative model for these people in building an anti-capitalist world. The political and disruptive power of *the common* lies in the creative and productive capacity of society and nature. Hence, it is not possible to characterise the common in a fixed and immutable way, and it can vary according to historical conditions.

The social practice of communalisation firmly places the discussion of the common in the hands of the community. Thus, it would not be a minimalist

9 It is important to outline that before Harvey, Nick Dyer-Witheford (2007) proposed: 'If the cell form of capitalism is the commodity, the cellular form of a society beyond capital is the common' and the notion of Commonism.

interpretation of the common where a group of individuals met to manage a good / an object / or merchandise, but this would allude to a process in which social bonds assume a community character. Therefore, the commons are a product of social cooperation,

The commons are not given, *they are produced*. Even if we say that we are surrounded by common goods- the air we breathe and the languages we use are eloquent examples of goods we share - we can only create these goods through cooperation in our productive lives. This is so because common goods are not necessarily material objects, but can also be social relations, or constitutive social practices. This is why some people prefer to talk about 'communalising' or 'the common'. It is precisely to emphasize the relational nature of this political project. [*own emphasis*]. (Caffentzis and Federici, 2015: 67)

Therefore, the commons refers to a production in and of the community. A community understood in a broader sense¹⁰ including humans, nature, the biosphere, the electromagnetic spectrum and the universe (Linebaugh, 2009).

The approaches hitherto mentioned (Caffetzins, Federici, Nick Dyer-Witford, then Harvey among others) are influenced and encouraged by the Marxist tradition. Therefore, the ideas that they propose concerning the common heads in the direction of an anti-capitalist and class struggle perspective. Neither is the common a matter of making capitalism more human through the recognition of some common good, nor is it to construct a social order in which public, private and common goods co-exist organically as a result of a consensus between classes. Here, the aim is to fight for the collective right to build a new system of social relations and organisation of life.

The discussion here is then a discussion concerning anti-capitalist commons.

10 Communities are not limited to human communities. Communities are biotic communities if we are not talking about other forms of associations. We are talking about richer and more complex forms of community that require vital forms of correspondence (Prada, 2013).

In Latin American thought, the debate around the common has gained momentum over the last few decades.

This can be explained, amongst other reasons, by the richness of popular struggles that took place near the dawn of the 21st century, and in particular, those struggles related to the mobilisation of popular and indigenous peoples. These popular and indigenous struggles include the community proposals for ‘Good living’ (*sumak kawsay* in quechua) and for ‘Living well’ (*suma qamaña* in aymara), as well as other libertarian traditions of the region that have fuelled these movements.

For the purposes of this section, we will look to the concepts that two Latin-American thinkers: Raúl Prada and Raúl Zibechi propose concerning the common.

In the broader sense, the common is not property, not a possession, it is access. Access of all to natural goods, to the products of collective work, as well as to language, general intellect, knowledge, science, and culture, which are also common goods. The common belongs to the community; therefore, it forms part of the territoriality or the territorialities of the community. The common makes us intimately interdependent and complementary. We are integrated in the sharing of what is immediately accessible and without any mediation or cost except for the required energy needed to access it. (Prada, 2013)

From this perspective, the common is defined by the act of sharing in a community, and the intertwining of lives among the beings of the mother earth that collectively construct a territory. In short, the common is life itself, in all its complexity (Prada, 2013). Hence, the common embodies a political power capable of propelling social transformation. In this same sense, Zibechi suggests understanding the common as the fundamental bonds needed in the development of life,

The ties we build in order to continue being, to have life continue being life are links that cannot be limited to institutions or things (water, land, nature). In this sense, the so-called ‘common goods’ are not objects, or separate entities of people, but are bonds (common, communitarian) that make it possible things like water and land to continue to benefit people and/or the community. ‘Common goods’ are what we make for the use of the whole community. (Zibechi, 2015: 76)

Thus, the common expresses the action of the community, and their collective work. Therefore, at the centre of this reflection lies the practices that allow for the organisation and reproduction of life.

The conceptualisations expressed on the common and the commons denote the capacity of transformative action that characterises them. In this case, its defence implies a frontal attack on the necro-economic order of neoliberalism and capitalism. Hence the importance they have in the struggles of social movements over the course of the twenty-first century.

The common and the commons are concepts associated with the ability of: relating, cooperating, sharing, producing, communicating, accessing, complementing, and linking, among other things; these things make it possible to move society to a political perspective of transformation and towards the construction of a good life, a life of dignity and a life of solidarity for all. This movement implies questioning the ways of organising life in and of capitalism.

Radical feminist thinking have contributed significantly to this discussion,

Capitalist markets are not deities; nor are they socioeconomic institutions that articulate power relations that privilege concrete subjects... They are a set of structures that permit a few lives to be imposed upon others as the ones that are worthy of being supported by everyone else, and also as the only lives worthy of being rescued in times of crisis. Capitalist markets are a series of mechanisms that hierarchically place concrete lives and establish as a reference and top priority the life of the privileged subject of modernity, the ones who, following María José Capellín, we will call WBEAHM: the white, bourgeois, entitled, adult heterosexual male. Power and resources are concentrated around him, life itself is defined by him. Faced with this starting point, arises the need for the feminist to put sustainability of life at the centre. (Pérez, 2014: 25)

Therefore, it is a question of radically transforming this system of the organisation of life,

To make a community -produce in common- is, then and in the first place, to de-naturalize the identity imposed by the capitalist configuration of social reproduction. It orients itself towards the needs of the concrete subject, and not to the automatic subject of capital, or of value valuing itself; it is, instead,

oriented towards a value of a basis of a system of needs by the community member. (Millán, 2015: 190)

We can say that recognising that ‘common goods can be produced, protected and used for social benefit’ and managed communally, and they can generate conditions of possibility to resist capitalist powers and to rethink anti-capitalist transition policies (Harvey, 2013).

Neither public nor private, nor common without community

In the debate over the common and the commons there emerges a central issue associated with the relationship between the common, the public and the private.

Some theoretical approaches propose that there is a complementary relationship between these three spheres. For these approaches, there could be clearly delimited fields that could define when a good must assume any of these characters. Moreover, for these postulates, the symbiosis between them could be considered a condition of systemic stability.¹¹

While the commons from a market standpoint can be seen as vestiges of old forms of labour co-operation, interest in the common can come from a wide range of social-democratic forces that are concerned with the extremes to which neoliberalism recognises the advantages of communal relations needed for the production of everyday life. In this context, the commons appear as a possible ‘third’ space in addition to and at the same level as the state and the market economy. (Caffentzis and Federici, 2015: 64)

In this kind of approach, the common does not compromise on genuine communal relationships. These types of perspectives tend to destroy communal relationships and hinder the development of already existing

11 ‘The general objective has to be the reconceptualization of the neoliberal market and the state and to give rise to a “triarchy” with the common: a common market-state, in order to redirect authority and to obtain sustenance from new forms of organization which are more beneficial. The State would maintain its commitment to representative governance and public property management, just as the private sector would continue to own capital for the production and subsequent sale of goods and services in the market’ (Bollier and Weston, 2012: 350).

ones. Of course, it does not seek to create communal ties based on socio-political solidarities or around a general and broad goal of forming a 'unity-in-common' community. These approaches subsume collective social construction in individualism, and in the end, facilitate the subordination of the communal - its production and reproduction - to the needs of the logic of capital.

Other approaches compare the public to the common. In discussing these perspectives, the common has a public character; therefore, it is and must be managed by the state or by actors who are designated to its management¹². In this way, we can witness a common state. These approaches disavow the constitutive features of the common as it is and how it belongs to the community - more so than the state - and does not recognise that the common has a character which is immediately accessible and without mediation.

It is difficult to understand the expropriation of the common by the 'public' if we do not mediate upon its institutionalised representations. These institutionalised representations would mean that one becomes the ruler of everything, the absolute owner of everything, and for that very reason, the giver of everything as the concessionaire. The "public" is then the supreme representative, the sovereign, and the absolute ruler, as the principle basic institution. ... at the birth of these capture devices, will later and retrospectively be called a state, in the broad and not modern sense of the word. The expropriation of the common is the mechanism of the institution and the constitution its form of power which can be understood as the availability and the monopolisation of forces and resources, goods and bodies. (Prada, 2013)

12 This approach proposes a limited interpretation of the public. From this perspective, the public is synonymous with the state, or at best, as the place where the national state and the citizens are intertwined. Unknowingly, as proposed by Múnera (2001: 10), this will result in 'the absorption by the state of what was previously considered as communal and the institutionalisation of collective processes within the limits established by the private dimension of society. Consequently, the public in contemporary societies does not simply refer to the state as a systemic regulator of individual activities, but to the way in which the community and the collective are conserved and transformed under its domination'.

Approaches that tend towards the nationalisation of the common do not consider the way in which the commons are being devastated by public powers and by moneymaking private initiatives. Public-private initiatives and privatisation of common goods are examples of this phenomenon.

This perspective has been questioned on several fronts. Positions like these do not recognise the inability of individualised private property rights to satisfy the interests society at large.

Finally, we find an important number of deliberations that establish a clear distinction between the public, the private and the common. The conceptualisations proposed in the previous section are illustrative of this perspective. The common refers to autonomous spaces that are fundamental for the reproduction of life and are bodies that are beyond the sphere of action by the state.

The elements presented here are intended only to place the debate into the public, the private and the common sphere. In terms of critical thought, both from anarchist and Marxist traditions, there are important positions upon these issues. Arguments referring to the public as a disputed sphere and as a scenario of possibility for social emancipation view this as a possibility if it opens the way to popular socio-political action (Oliver, 2009).

From (neoliberal) governance to Communal skills of government (from below)

Among the debates that have emerged during the 21st century, the issue of forms of government has been subject to different assessments. The notion of Communal Skills of Government (CSG) aims to highlight forms of government from below, associated with modalities of political command and socio-territorial administration based on communal-popular ties.¹³

13 It seems useful to walk-through communal-popular expressions, as a clear allusion to 'community-popularity' (see Linsalata 2015), since, as Gutiérrez and Salazar (2015, 26) state, it is more encompassing and flexible when it comes to thinking; above all, it gives a productive context that is more deeply crossed by capital'.

There are at least two great theoretical paths for interpreting socio-political forms of organisation and contemporary modes of government. We have synthesized both tendencies that are characterised by the contrast between the hegemonic current of conventional options *vis-à-vis* the counterhegemonic potentials of emerging alternatives.

It is important to emphasize that although it is possible to note nuances with respect to the notion of governance, both in a conventional¹⁴ and apparently contentious¹⁵ perspective, gradually ‘sub-types’ of the term *aggiornados* -something old which is adapted for a new use- can be recycled with new adjectives: corporate, good governance, ‘green’, socio-cybernetics. These terms deserve to be deployed in future ontological critiques, that is, the meaning of these words at the root and under ethical-material principles.

It is always useful to remember that as paradigmatically within the field of ideas and debates about ‘development’ and its endless and deceptive contemporary extensions: ‘sustainable in a strictly environmental sense’ *versus* ‘sustainable in a more holistic sense- the crucial challenge for these

14 A well-restrained classical conventional understanding of governance is provided by Kooiman (2005: 74): ‘(...) To put it plainly, it is the private sector (market) that normally takes on the responsibility of governing the primary interactions which are carried out. It is the task of the private parties outside the market to take responsibility for the governing of the more organised interactions that accompany these primary processes. It is the task/responsibility of public organisations to ensure that the problems and opportunities in and around the processes and the primary and secondary structures of these actors are carried out according to the principles and rules that reflect common and the broader social systems/interests which relate to these processes’. [own emphasis].

15 In the Latin American debate, a methodologically erroneous and politically misleading contrast has been promoted between supposedly conflicting currents of governance. On the one hand, conventional interpretations are called ‘governmental and economic-instrumental’, and, on the other hand, those considered ‘critical’ and who self-proclaim themselves as ‘democratic-radicals and citizens’. Within the currents of ‘democratic’ governance, one of the special references is to Democracy fully realized: an alternative progressive thinker which doesn’t seem to notice the ideological affiliation to its author, the neo-liberal-developmental Roberto Mangabeira Unger (1998), who aligns himself structurally with conventional perspectives which were previously denounced.

discussions is not to continue to support, as Misoczky (2010: 16) says: ‘(...) a domesticated criticism, which remains within the limits of management, and at best is only able to produce micro-emancipations that do not put at risk the order of capital.’

It is a question of ‘producing, reproducing and developing human life in a community, and, lastly, the life of all humanity’ (Dussel quoted by Misoczky, 2010: 19) as the guiding ethical-material principle of reflective thinking and as an active praxis which tries to transform what currently exists.

Governance and ‘Common goods’: the hegemonic trap

The first type of government is associated with the foundations of thinking and the practices of the so-called new neoliberalism (Puello-Socarrás, 2008a, 2013) which is supported by pro-hegemonic socio-political, ideological and economic forces, and by global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (although most visibly by the World Bank Group in different machinations of international public policies).

This *neoliberal governmental* mentality is centred around the notion of (polycentric) *governance*.

Recently, the work of Elinor Ostrom (2011) has been playing a crucial role in discursively reviving arguments – which implies influencing different social practices – on how it would be possible to govern common goods ‘beyond the market’ (and their private interests) and ‘Beyond the State’ (and its public powers).

When Elinor Ostrom (2005: 1-2) asks, in whose hands should ‘common property’ be, she insists that:

(...) in the provision of urban services and resources for common use, we have repeatedly found that *communities of individuals* in rural and urban areas who have *self-organised themselves to provide and co-produce* ... local goods and services and given the restrictions they face ... public entrepreneurs work closely with citizens who often find innovative ways of shaping services with a mix between local talent and local resources.

In this ideal type of hegemonic governmental mentality, there is no possibility of constructing a government outside of market dynamics and inter-individualist relations. Interpretations such as this, under the oxymoron: “common goods” gives a bias to the broad notion of the communal and systematically hides contradictions that would occur to mercantile logic in the construction of ‘the common’.

Although Elinor Ostrom’s theories have been (self) promoted within the framework of ‘common goods’, they should be rigorously redefined within the topic: *Common-pool recourses* (CPR).

Particularly because it raises different technical and especially political questions. E. Ostrom¹⁶ persists in insisting that it has not been sufficiently recognised that the argument of ‘the shared’ alludes to a partition based on the conjunction of (public) entrepreneurs individuals.

On different occasions Marx has described these types situations thoroughly. In *Capital*, for example, he referred to the *private enclosure of the commons* as an event which is better known as original or primitive accumulation (an idea which was reiterated in the text Rosa Luxemburg by David Harvey which discusses the idea of accumulation by dispossession).

Silvia Federici (2010: 108) describes in detail these types of situations which she says cannot be viewed as archaeological vestiges of the capitalist past, but rather must be analysed as conditions which are constantly being updated and are actively in force today,

In England ... privatisation was mainly achieved through the use of ‘enclosures’, a phenomenon that has been very closely associated with the expropriation of workers from their ‘common wealth’, and at the present moment is used as an example by anti-capitalist militants as an indication of attacks on social rights.

16 Unlike the first (orthodox) neoliberalism that homo economicus (‘economic man’) extols as an anthropological principle, the new (heterodox) neoliberalism promotes the idea of homo redemptoris, entrepreneurial man. Entrepreneurship is the new base that supports different types of contemporary reforms – ideological, institutional, public policies, etc. – to renew neoliberalism as a political class project in the 21st century (see Puello Socarrás 2008a, 2008b).

In the sixteenth century, 'enclosure' was a technical term that indicated the set of strategies used by lords and wealthy peasants to eliminate communal land ownership and to expand their properties. It referred, above all, to the abolition of the open field system, an agreement by which villagers possessed non-adjointing plots of land in a field without fences. Enclosures included the closing of common lands and the demolition of huts of those who did not have land but were able to survive thanks to their customary rights.

For this reason, the perspectives of governance in general, and the polycentric in particular, based on theories of well-known thinkers and intellectuals of neoliberalism such as Friedrich A. Hayek, Vincent Ostrom¹⁷ and Ronald Coase, have been rightly characterised by Caffentzis and Federici (2013) as cases of the *commons without community*.

The main subject, actor and agent in this (new) neoliberal perspective is not community but the entrepreneurs or individuals that although in appearance promote the narrative of 'cooperation', they in fact continue to act and use individualistic logic¹⁸. In fact, they try to 'coordinate' action from a different modality of the price system through regulated negotiations. 'Cooperation' is thus not supported by ties of reciprocal solidarity, or communal identification, but is based on individualistic selfishness.

Here the skills to govern, therefore, depend on individual entrepreneurial abilities and not that of the collectives in the communal and popular meaning.

It is no coincidence that one of the contemporary pioneers of the notion of governance, Ronald Coase (1937), has emphasised that this is a form of 'collective' action that seeks and makes it possible to maximize production for exchange purposes.

17 Co-director of The Vincent and Elinor Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis founded at Indiana University in 1973 with his wife.

18 We must note that recently the notion 'Common' has aroused renewed interest both in the counterhegemonic and hegemonic circles. One of the arguments intended to impose hegemonic narratives on the common is to (falsely) compare the idea of 'competition' to the idea of 'coordination'. Both turn out to be essentially individualistic and do not intend to go beyond the neoliberal ideas that are in force today; Paradigmatic examples of this are, amongst others, J. Sachs's *Common Wealth* (2008: 3) and J. Tirole's *Commons good* (2017).

In this version, governance ignores the dimension of social needs and genuine collective interests but instead operates based on exchange by adjusting the logic of quasi-markets.

This is why the ‘common property’ (Elinor Ostrom’s version) is governed by a set of individual actors who are the private side of the formula. Common property is often uncritically called civil society without explicitly alluding to organised interests in the socio-economic sense. The state, for its part, appears as a background to government action (the ‘public’ side in this story) which is always limited to the mandate of monitoring agreements between individuals and to enforcing the *rule of law* to ensure that the rulings in the management of ‘shared’ resources are satisfactory to private individuals. It also tries to avoid (falsely) what Hardin calls the tragedy of the materialisation of the common.¹⁹

For this reason, the Ostromian motto synthesizes the viewpoint: *neither market nor state* which means public-private hybridization (epistemologically speaking), or ‘public-non-state’ spaces (see Bresser-Pereira, 2004).

19 Federici (2010, footnote 32) is right in referring to the tragedy of the Commons (Hardin, 1968): ‘(...) it was one of the pillars of the ideological campaign to support privatisation of the land in the seventies. Hardin’s version of ‘tragedy’ points to the inevitability of Hobbesian selfishness as a determinant of human behaviour’. Elinor Ostrom interposes, on the one hand, a critique of Hardin’s argument, and on the other hand, enshrines models of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship itself under the ‘public-private’ formula. The latter, in particular, is a caricature of community-based associative relations, and as Garcia Linera puts it in relation to Marx’s Studies on the Ancestral Community (‘Kovalevsky Notebook’): ‘Marx... also pointed out the existence of internal and external antagonistic forces that push for the dissolution of real communal ties: external forces such as capitalist relations that, in the uninterrupted process of incorporating the field into their laws, seek to strangle the community or, in some other cases, formally subordinate community work to capital by transforming the former associative relations into a caricature of itself. Internal forces such as the tendency to control individual and certain lands, inequality in the control of livestock, possession of ‘service Indians’ for the cultivation of lands of communal authorities [sic] before and in the colony, individual work plots or, finally, private property, which push the community to its own dissolution’. [own emphasis] (García Linera, 2015: 119).

Forms of action and use of instruments in ‘public’ policies resulting from the above are, for example, the recurrent public-private partnerships that today are registered in the realities of institutional life and are increasingly frequent in traditionally communal spaces and territories which aim to recreate forms of post-privatisation (see Stolowicz, 2016: 1035-1108).

The key idea of governance is to give incentives so that the state can ‘unite’ individuals who can then find the appropriate terminology needed to coordinate their own interests and actions when seeking particular goals in public spaces²⁰.

Communal skills of government (CSG): Counter-hegemonic potentialities?

In contrast, Communal Government Skills (CGS)²¹ is a second type of government that is far removed from pro-hegemonic choices.

In general, this type of government from below could be based on different alternating and native worldviews²². These differing worldviews envisage the consolidation of historic and currently existing forms of government, and they envision the administration of community territories under an unconventional and therefore counterhegemonic mould.

Many popular movements throughout *Nuestra América* that could be characterised as CSG have been constructed from organisational systems based on values and practices such as the *de-commodification* of social relations (in serious situations such as the Colombian one, this perspective

20 As Laval and Dardot (2016: 19) states: ‘(...) public property is not a protection of common but a kind of “collective” form of private property, reserved to dominant classes, whom can dispose of it... and plundering the people in the line of its desires and interests’.

21 Also: Political Governments from below fostered by Communal forces itself.

22 Our analysis will be to take into account theoretical reflections as a result of a ‘new wave’ of *Nuestra América* thinkers about Commons as a matter for examination. However, this does not suggest that all scholar’s theoretical perspectives and epistemological orientations have been standardised. We prefer to speak about the ‘discursive coalitions’ and refer to the set of (critical) ideas in the Latin-American socio-political Thought.

necessarily implies its demilitarisation) and communal solidarity and reciprocity²³ among others.

They have also been more broadly and more complexly organised around civilizational matrices like the communal *Buen-vivir-Bien* ('Good-living-Well') (Puello-Socarrás, 2015a and 2015b).

The general characteristic of these cases can be translated into a governmental framework aimed at 'the reproduction of human beings within a social and natural home' (Mies and Bennholt-Thomsen quoted by Federici and Caffentzis, 2013).

Solon and Esterman (quoted by Solon 2016: 19-20) summarise the above by specifically referring to *Living Well* (aymara's *suma qamaña*) which is the *Pacha's* conception and criticism of 'development.' Let us look back at an eminently neoliberal idea:

This spiral vision of time questions the very essence of the notion that 'development' is always moving towards a higher point and is always trying to improve. This idea of upward movement is a fiction in the eyes of Living Well. Everything that moves ahead turns, there is nothing eternal, and everything is transformed and is reunited to the past, the present and the future.

In the *Pacha*, there is no separation between living beings and inert bodies, all have life. Life can only be explained through the relationship between all parts of the whole. The dichotomy between beings with life and simple objects does not exist. Likewise, there is no separation between humans and nature. We are all part of nature and the *Pacha* like everything has life.

According to Josef Esterman, the *Pacha*,

(...) 'is not a machine or a giant mechanism that is organised and is moved simply by mechanical laws, as has been said by modern European philosophers and especially by Descartes and his followers. The *Pacha* is rather a living organism in which all parts are interrelated and in constant interdependence and exchange. The basic principle of any 'development' must then be life (*kawsay*, *qamaña*, *Jakaña*) in its entirety, not only that of human beings or animals and plants, but of all the *Pacha*' [own emphasis].

23 Cf. Its what Aymaras calls: *Ayni* (something near to 'mutual aid') as a dimension of complementarity.

The point here would not be to converge on objectives and make them a 'shared business'. On the contrary, it is a matter of organising social life as a whole or living in the framework of collective autonomies while preserving individual nature (not individualism which is a different situation) of people's thought as a natural social metabolic process (Marx, 2015). It is precisely what many popular Latin American and Caribbean communities experience in their own way. They have translated to a *conviviality* -a category developed in its beginnings by Ivan Illich.

García Linera²⁴ invokes this characteristic by condensing it into the notion of "community-form":

Each natural element involved in the natural cycle of the community exists before it is a living being, therefore it is changing, sensitive and treatable. But at the same time, each element is an integral part of a supreme natural being encompassing the totality of the visible and the non-visible. It is a palpable and conceptual natural force which designates each of its parts specific functions within the recreation of life of the nature-total of which the community and its members are acting components. *Each member of nature, including the community*, is thus seen as an active and necessary part of the total natural metabolism. This holistic concept recreates the intimacy and divinity of nature vis-a-vis the human being. While this is impelling, in what we have come to call communal technological ethics, an active understanding of the deep and respectful interdependence of all the elements while working within the natural whole that groups everyone. It is being between what the communal individual does and everything that other living natural components do and need. There is, therefore, in natural scientific thought a unilateral concept of nature that is much less cosmic or able to be usurped, but rather is *agreeable* [Note: in the sense of 'conviviality'], *retributive*, and *utterly-universalistic* [own emphasis]. (García Linera, 2009: 311-311).

At this point, it is crucial to introduce the notion of *Abigarramiento*²⁵ (a category closer to the English word: 'variegation').

24 We appreciate the intellectual contributions of A. García Linera as to avoid ad hominem arguments related with his activity in governmental positions since 2006 in Bolivia.

25 The notion of *abigarramiento*, originally by V.I. Lenin and renewed by René Zavaleta Mercado, can be understood through the following operational definition provided by Antezana (2009: 132): '(...) is the mutual qualification of economic-social diversities in such a way that, in concurrence, none of them

Looking at the arguments of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, it is useful to make a fundamental distinction between the (complex) notion of *abigarramiento* -in her own terms: *ch'ixi*- and the (simple) notion of hybridization:

The notion of *hybridism* as proposed by Garcia Canclini is a genetic metaphor which denotes sterility. The mule is a hybrid species that cannot reproduce. *Hybridity assumes the possibility that the mixture of two different elements can leave a completely new third element*, or a third race or a social group that is capable of fusing the traits of their ancestors in a harmonious but above all unprecedented mix.

...The notion of *ch'ixi* ... is the equivalent to that of the 'variegated society' of [René] Zavaleta [Mercado], and this notion proposes a *parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not merge, but instead, antagonize or complement each other*. Each difference reproduces itself from the depths of the past and relates to the others in a contentious way. [*emphasis added*]. (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010: 70).

In contrast to the models of the new neoliberal syntheses ("public-private" hybridizations), alternative modes of government and authority involve spheres and societal spaces referred to as 'motley plots' or 'community frameworks' (Gutiérrez and Salazar 2015: 21-22).

These modes evolve under 'juxtaposed inter-action dynamics' where individuals and communities in social life co-exist simultaneously while ensuring *unity-in-diversity* without privileging any higher level or subordinating one to the other²⁶.

maintains their form (previous). The reference to concrete societies object of knowledge would allow it to characterise the diverse histories in game, or the diverse degrees of social constitution (relative) involved therein. The evaluation of one another's diversities would result in the concept of intersubjectivity and would recognise in social crises the degree of unity of the diversity achieved in such competition" [own emphasis]. About special logics of the notion of *Abigarramiento*' (see Puello-Socarrás, 2017).

26 Gutiérrez and Salazar (2015: 21-22), for example, understood the communal as 'motley plots' or 'community frameworks' that are 'made visible and become intelligible in indigenous, native, peasant communities, especially in times of struggle or in festivities'.

This also implies creative and not less contentious forms of socio-political autonomy and practices of self-government *from within* and *from below* within communities.

Communal skills of government (from below) could be summarised from the joint proposal of *Buen-vivir-Bien* ('Good-Living-Well' [*suma qamaña* + *summa kawsay*]), as follows:

The administration of the biosphere is understood as 'physical and spiritual care'. 'Care' in the sense of English care in which Arne Naess explains the meaning of 'deep ecology': care, diligence, attention, delicacy, caution. In short, this is a respectful and quasi-reverential relationship of the human being with nature. Torrez uses two concepts to further explain this sense: *Qaman*: 'care in the how of raising life', and *Pacha-qamana*: a responsibility of care for the Earth understood as time/space, and as parity of matter/energy. Thus, the administrator/caretaker works in a territory which is understood as a living dynamic system ('*bewegliche Ordnung*', Goethe, '*Holomovimiento*', Bohm) made up of biotic networks ranging from the cellular world to the *ayllu*, the *marka*, the *suyo*, depending on the particular case. (Medina 2011: 48-49)

And in addition:

(...) Capital (and its heterogeneous processes of its production) abstracts the values that make up social wealth and makes it possible to subject social groups to mercantile relations; only in this way can the value of capital be valued in endless loops. On the other hand, the reproduction of life (human and non-human) or the polymorphic processes of community reproduction are based on the attention and production of an enormous multiplicity of links and values of use that guarantee the satisfaction of a wide variety of human needs. The production of such physical riches and their management are not, at first, split off, but there are multiple ways of attaining balance. Political action then is not necessarily an autonomous activity of reproduction. (Gutiérrez and Salazar, 2015: 25)

Table 1 summarises the contrast between pro-hegemonic government mentalities (*Common-pool* recourses) and counter-hegemonic communal skills based on the categories discussed above (*Communal*).

	COMMON-POOL RECOURSES Pro-hegemonic	COMMUNAL Counter-hegemonic
<i>Emergency</i>	New neoliberalism	Civilization Matrixes
<i>Origins</i>	Semantic dispossession and ideological ‘recycling’ Hegemonic and conventional	Alternate-and-Native, <i>alternative</i> pro-positions
<i>Spaces / Spheres / Logic</i>	Public-Private Partnership [Hybridism]	Communal <i>Abigarramiento</i> [Variegation]
<i>Types of Government</i>	‘GOVERNANCE’ (polycentric) of common assets of <i>shared</i> use [“common-pool recourses”]	‘CARE’ of communal property for <i>good-living-well</i> [<i>suma qamaña, summa kawsay</i> worldviews]
<i>Horizons Visions Development</i>	Common <i>without</i> Community Conjunction (‘Inter-individual community’) “Neither State nor Market”	Commons <i>with</i> Community Live-together (<i>Con-vivir</i>) (‘Communal-units’) “Another form-State, another type of Market”
<i>References theoretical practices</i>	Neo-liberal synthesis (Conventional ‘renewed’ thinking)	Discursive Coalitions (Critical Latin-American Thought)

Table 1. Pro-hegemonic COMMON-pool recourses *versus* Counter-hegemonic COMMUNAl. Source: authors.

The presence of alternative perspectives and varied CSG experiences are certainly linked to the recent recovery of coalitions based on indigenous and local knowledge, says Fals Borda (2013), in convergence with different currents of critical thinking and, particularly, in the processes of the reconstruction of popular resistance in the middle of the so-called anti-neoliberal wave at the regional level.

Using different rhythms and intensities, counter-hegemonic forces have generated, in the words of Gutierrez and Salazar (2015), ‘trans-formations’

in many places and times in the Global South and in *Nuestra America* from the socio-political reconfigurations of government and to what we call in this text: CSG.

Communal initiatives and a new organisation of life

The extensive field of resistance and rebellion that has been woven into *Nuestra America* over the last two decades demonstrates the transformative political power of the subordinate social classes and sectors that have been systematically excluded and humbled under the dominant mode of social organisation.

The transformative, and in some cases, clearly anti-capitalist character of these counter-hegemonic spaces depends on the meaning given to their disputes. This text is in the defence of a good and dignified life for all. Visions of prosperity will never materialise as a result of necro-economic streams of thought that drive capitalism, and these necro-economic streams are responsible for the crisis of civilization that is happening in the planet today,

The multiplicity of acute crises in recent times are the result of the same basic logic: (1) a conception of development which ignores 'externalities' (i.e. natural and social damage); (2) the belief that the planets resources are inexhaustible; (3) allowing exchange values to predominate over the value of a good in use; and (4) relating economic success with profit and the accumulation of capital and thus creating enormous economic inequalities. The model that has produced spectacular growth in world wealth has come to its historical functional end due to its destructive nature and due to the social inequalities it has caused. In short, this system cannot be reproduced, nor is it sustainable. 'The economic rationality of capitalism,' writes Wim Dierckxsens (2011), 'not only tends to ignore the lives of large majorities of the world population but also destroys natural life around us'. (Houtart, 2014: 269)

The fundamental ecological and political process of resistance in the region expresses a systematic rejection of the predatory and unnatural characteristics of capitalistic social relations. For these postulates, there is a critical consensus in favour of life and a recognition of the organic link that exists between the human and the natural world.

The understanding of the natural world as a fundamental dimension of vital activity and as a material and symbolic support of human praxis allows us to understand the critique of capitalism brought by the socio-territorial movements of the region. In this sense, it is not simply a matter of superficially questioning the way life is organised under capitalism.

These are substantial questions which challenge the commodification of life; it is a rejection of the multiple risks - biological, military and economic - that threaten the reproduction of human life and nature, in short, it expresses the vital need to build a post-capitalist way of life from other places and on other budgets.

The goal cannot be to reform the current system, it is perverted in a multitude of ways. This system perverts the very notion of a life that is worth living and denies ecological vulnerability and eco-dependence as basic conditions of human existence. It imposes an ideal of self-sufficiency that is not universally attainable because the very system is only achievable by managing interdependence on the bases of exploitation. It perverts the proper functioning of socio-economic structures by placing the majority into a servitude of a process of accumulation where only a few individuals merit consideration and are guaranteed economic security by the whole of society. In the face of this crisis, we do not want employment, we do not want a salary, and we do not want a welfare state. We want to question the salary relationship itself, and the capitalist structure as a whole. There is no going back; there's a potential future to build. (Perez, 2014: 53).

Betting on a new democratic organisation of society, nature, and life, is central to the defence of the common and the commons in social and popular mobilisation today. In fact, the commons, as a material and social dimension, greatly assists in the reproduction of life in the community and is fundamental axis for social commentary and in the construction of a new way of organising life.

There is no city, nor viable society, that has not benefited from the goods, knowledge and wealth and even life that has been made possible by the common. These communal goods are essential to the maintenance of life. These goods include natural elements such as land, water, forests and air, as other resources managed, thus far, by public and private entities who have little respect for their conservation or improvement in areas such as public spaces, health, education, collective care, culture and knowledge. (The Charter of Commons, 2011)

The struggle for the common is a movement, which is built on ethnic, secular, sectoral, cultural, civic, popular and gender diversity present in the regions mentioned. This struggle is, on the one hand, a rejection of mercantile and imperialist forms of appropriation of life, and, on the other, an affirmation to a commitment to forms of solidarity and community management where everyone belongs. In this way, the dispute is usually, as suggested by Raquel Gutierrez (2014), 'a re-claimant perspective of material wealth which is created and preserved socially' that has been systematically deprived under the forms of capitalist domination and accumulation. The common, as a perspective of possibility, is a way of recovering *the capacity to do* what has been alienated and made impossible by the molecular dynamics of capital.

Therefore, it is not only a struggle against neoliberalism or, much less, a struggle against the triarchy of the state-market-common. It is a question of recovering what is common for the community and thus advancing the perspective of good living. Therefore,

The commons we intend to build are aimed at transforming our social relations and creating an alternative to capitalism. They are not only focused on providing social services or buffering the destructive impact of capitalism, but also are much more than a communal management of resources. In short, they are not paths towards a capitalism with a human face. The commons must be the means for the creation of an egalitarian and cooperative society, or they risk deepening social divisions by creating havens for those who can manage it and would, therefore, easily ignore the misery of those by whom they are surrounded. (Caffentzis and Federici 2015: 66)

This *alternative-and-native* proposal which is in contrast to the inescapable neoliberal model, implies bringing together the common and the community, as suggested by Federici and Caffentzis:

The common requires a community. This community should not be chosen on the basis of some privileged identity but, rather, on the basis of the work that has been done to support and care for the reproduction of the common and also what has been done to regenerate what is taken from it. The common in fact presupposes rights and obligations. Thus, the rule has to be that those who belong to the community must contribute to its maintenance, its reproduction ... when we say, '*There is no common without community*'. We need to think about how a specific community establishes the relationships of

production and how the common will come into being and how it is to be maintained. (Federici and Caffentzis, 2015: 68)

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to take into account the communal skills needed to preserve the living-common, and the living-with.

Thus, the struggles and debates surrounding the common open up perspectives of reflection on the transition and the construction of a new world that allows for the re-appropriation of socially produced work and wealth that has been systematically usurped by the dominant rationality.

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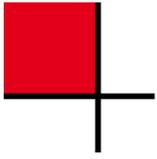
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Movimento das Comunidades Populares: A Brazilian uchronic utopia*

Mariana Affonso Penna

abstract

This article presents some aspects of the political action proposal of a contemporary Brazilian social movement: The *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* (People's Communities Movement), MCP. Reflecting on the utopian horizon of this collectivity, as well as on what kind of inspirations it seeks in the Brazilian past, this paper sought to understand the notion of utopia and uchronia applied to the specific case of the MCP. Consisting primarily of manual workers and focused on urban or rural peripheral areas, this social movement develops its action through the creation of what they call 'People's Communities'. Its political work consists in organizing these areas by creating schools, day care centers, health groups, economic initiatives based on a model of collective and non-hierarchical work (there are no bosses, nor employees), cultural events, parties and celebrations, among other activities. Organizing the communities is therefore considered the essential way to reach their strategic horizon. But to build these communities they also seek inspiration in other social movements of the Brazilian past. These movements serve as uchronias for the MCP as they represent interrupted pasts that the movement wishes to regain. An uchronia transformed into utopia, and this utopia, in turn, is an applied utopia: a 'concrete utopia', embodied in the political action of this movement that assumes in daily practices the creation of a Communitarian Socialism as their ultimate goal.

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Introduction

Deep inequality is a well-known characteristic of Latin American nations, founded under European conquest in modern times. The 'New World' created extremely hierarchical and violent societies, established through domination and enslavement of both native population and foreigners kidnaped from Africa (Galeano, 2012). Social conflict and the desire for change is an essential part of the continent's relatively recent history. Brazil is undoubtedly part of this social reality as its society was originally constituted to meet the demands of European trade, which, according to Caio Prado Júnior, created the "sense of its colonization" (Prado Junior, 1996). Therefore, slavery, conflict and violence shaped the countries' history. Within this reality, and beyond it, desires for change led to attempts to end or to minimize these long term tragical inheritances. Oppressed social groups faced their unfavorable situation in numerous different ways: indigenous confederation united against enslavement (Cunha and Monteiro, 2009), runaway slaved workers founded independent communities – quilombos (Reis and Gomes, 1996), messianic peasantry movements tried to end inequality and to establish the 'Lord's Fraternal Kingdom'¹ on Earth (Weinhardt, 2002; Queiroz, 1966; Queiroz, 1976), general strikes were organized by anarchist and socialist workers who dreamt about Social Revolution (Mattos, 2009). In different places and different times of the country's history, hope incarnated in practices, and some of those practices still influence nowadays social movements.

A starting point to reflect upon a broader frame in which the nowadays Brazilian social movements are spatially and temporally inserted would be the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 – an event hegemonically interpreted as the failure of socialism as a viable model of societal organization. This event spread a significant disbelief in socialism as an alternative project to capitalism. However, on the other hand, the criticism of bureaucratization and authoritarianism among the left gained new breath. In this context, in 1994 the Zapatista struggle in the Southern Mexican state of Chiapas made public the proposal to build socialism in other ways and gained wide

1 It refers to the messianic idea of stablishing heaven on Earth through a society without oppressors nor oppressed.

international support. The Zapatistas rejected the seizure of power as the main purpose of a transforming project for the society. Instead, the zapatistas sought to organize their communities in an autonomous and democratic way (Holloway, 2003).

The development of new information technologies, such as the internet, in passage of the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries, played an important role in some political behavior changes. Many social movements start to use this technological tool to boost their organization, to spread their agenda and gain supporters to their causes. Mexican zapatismo is a clear example of this (Figueiredo, 2006), followed by the intense but ephemeral 'antiglobalization movement' in the late 1990s and especially in the early 21st century that spread in many different parts of the planet, including many Latin American countries (Henning and Queluz, 2016; Ortellado, 2002; Van Der Walt, 2002). This phenomenon drew worldwide attention due to their huge demonstrations in the cities where the management agencies of global capitalism, such as IMF and WTO, had their international meetings². Protests were result of a complex network that articulated activists from many different countries. These events were at the same time originated from virtual communication networks, as well as diffusers of the same ones. Indymedia emerged during this period and served as an organization tool of various demonstrations worldwide, as well as meetings and exchange of ideas among social movements' activists (Juris, 2004; Figueiredo, 2015).

In Brazil, the influence of this international context was not insignificant, but the popular movement composed of the most impoverished classes of the population was not a vital group in this new wave of mobilizations. The urban movements analyzed by Eder Sader such as the massive factory workers' strikes, the mobilizations in the areas of housing in peripheries, among other popular struggles that shook the 1970s and especially the 1980s (Sader, 1988), have seemingly reduced since the 1990s. According to some sociologists, the autonomous underprivileged movements from the previous decades were substituted by the institutionalization and growth of non-governmental organizations (Cardoso, 1994; Doimo, 1995). Apparently, only

2 Many demonstrations occurred in different cities such as Seattle, 1999; Nice, 2000; Quebec and Gênova, 2001; Porto Alegre, 2003; Bombain, 2014.

in the countryside, with the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), the winds of counter-hegemony seemed to lift the dust of apathy reigning in that decade (Maçano, 2000). The 'new subjects' that Eder Sader pointed out as 'having entered the scene' in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s, one decade later seemed like myths buried in the past.

But behind the scenes, a lot of things happened in terms of social struggles, even if, several times, without the media spotlight. The historical continuity of the movement that is the object of this research – *Movimento das Comunidades Populares, MCP*, (People's Communities' Movement) – demonstrates that some of that past still remains in this experience. In this sense, it is possible to observe that the MCP seems almost like an anachronistic movement, for carrying much of what was apparently lost after the weakening of the impoverished people's movements of the 1980s. Among these elements, I highlight the protagonist role played by the inhabitants of the periphery, by manual workers from both the countryside and cities. They correspond not only to the rank-in-file but also occupy the positions of coordination and strategic elaboration in the movement. Even the principles advocated by Liberation Theology, that as Sader highlights, spread around 80 thousand Ecclesial Base Communities³ all around Brazil in the 1980s, still animate the horizon of the MCP nowadays, manifested in its idea of a 'Liberating Religion'.

Regarding the anti-capitalist mobilizations and demonstrations in Brazil in the late 1990s and the 2000s (commonly known as 'anti-globalization movements'), even if their social composition was basically of youth movements with an expressive presence of urban middle social strata – who could access the 'new' digital technologies – the values guiding those struggles were centered in the valorization of horizontality in decision-making and the independence from governments and political parties. It was not uncommon to identify Anarchism sympathizers in those movements,

3 The Ecclesial Base Communities emerged as a proposition of living the Church experience as a community by stimulating the direct participation of ordinary people in the Catholic Church. Consequently, concrete bonds of solidarity were established, as well as the collective search for better life conditions.

who were also very fond of the EZLN's communitarian struggle in southern Mexico.

However seemingly apart from these activisms, during this period the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares*, object of the analysis further developed in this paper, walked a path guided by similar principles, such as the valorization of political autonomy, independence from official government and, mainly, the valorization of what we may call a Community based model of socialism. Even without these references that animated the global struggles that also 'popped' in Brazil: notably the influence of Zapatismo; MCP's utopian goal followed a quite similar path.

Thus, marked by reminiscences of the past from popular struggles, especially from the 1970s and 1980s, and carrying values and criticisms shared with the anti-capitalist movements of recent years, the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares*, far from being an anachronistic movement, is in line with other current social movements' tendencies. Recently the MCP has attracted the attention of some academics, and this is not incidental. This social movement for almost two decades chose to 'hide among the people' to erect communities, later it decided to slowly break the ice that separated them from other social circles. In 2006 it launched a newspaper called *Jornal Voz das Comunidades* (Communities' Voice Newspaper). Its target readers were not just their own militancy, but people outside the movement. Through this communication vehicle, little by little, the movement found sympathizers and slowly opened its history – and its archives – to a larger audience. Consequently, some researchers, most of them activists themselves, considered MCP's collective experience relevant enough to instigate analysis and reflections about it.

Most academic works developed in the recent years addresses some aspects of the MCP's experiences, which are diluted in a broader scope of investigations (Freixo, 2010; Barthol, 2016; Tramontani, 2012). The first academic research aiming to understand the historical constitution of the movement as a whole was my monograph of Specialization in Urban Sociology developed in Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro in 2013 (Penna, 2013). Later, my PhD thesis in Social History in Universidade Federal

Fluminense deepened this preliminary research, widening the investigation (Penna, 2016).

This movement will be the object of the reflections presented in this paper, which will focus on understanding its social change projects and the influences and inspirations that encourage the search for a new society, in a communitarian way. Initially, I will present in the first section of the paper a little bit about its historical formation trajectory, in order to further understand MCP in a broader conjunctural panorama, marked by political transformations and by the formation of contestatory social movements, among which the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* emerges and changed itself during this process. I will also point out how the movement understands itself in the midst of these transformations and in what way the idea of stages as a cumulative development process aiming a better future is much more valued as a tool to comprehend their political trajectory than the idea of ruptures and deep changes (Penna, 2013). The second section of the article consists on a brief presentation of the central concepts applied for the understanding of the form of political action and strategies of social transformation advocated by MCP. Utopia and uchronia are fundamental terms for analyzing the political endeavor of the movement. By utopia I will adopt a broader conception, which encompasses every projection of a better future (Dianteil and Löwy, 2010), also, utopia can be embodied in concrete actions aiming this improved society (Manheim, 1972; Dinerstein, 2015, 2016), as it is the case of the social movement studied. If utopia implies projects and actions desiring a transformed future, these, in turn, are also enthused by influences from the past. It is by the communitarian past of the Brazilian popular movements that the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* will get the necessary encouragement to build its own utopia. Nonetheless, as these past movements have been defeated, they become an interrupted past which is projected into the future, so that it may be rescued through the activists' efforts. Therefore, the concept of uchronia is an important tool to understand this relationship between past, present and future, essential for analyzing the political experience of MCP. By uchronia we mainly assume the conceptualization proposed by the Italian historian Alessandro Portelli (1991), who assumes the original meaning of the word, pioneered used by Charles Renouvier in his *Uchronie*, of 1857. The term implied the idea of an

alternative history, result of a change of course in the past, or a nonfactual history (Rosenfeld, 2005, Studiorum, 2013, Adam, 2016). After a brief presentation of these concepts, comes the fourth section of this paper that will reflect upon the meanings of utopia and uchronia applied to the specific case of MCP, by analyzing the data produced by the movement itself – such as newspapers, music, photos, cultural events. The perceivable conclusion is that utopias and uchronias merge in the midst of a social transformation project that has in the proposition of building and strengthening community bonds, a link that connects past, present and future plans (Penna, 2016).

Movimento das comunidades populares: Formation and political work development

Land of some of the world's largest social movements, such as the MST – Landless Workers' Movement – (Mançano, 2000), Brazil also gave birth to *Movimento das Comunidades Populares*, MCP – People's Communities' Movement. Present in 14 states of the Brazilian federation, the movement assembles approximately 15 thousand people who are engaged in organizing or benefiting from the variety of communitarian work developed in around 50 locations where the movement takes root (favelas and poor rural communities). Among the initiatives that flourish in different areas from north to south Brazil, we may identify numerous community schools, day care centers, health care groups, youth groups and economic enterprises. To generate income for the movement and the community members themselves, was created what they call 'collective economy groups'. That is how since 2000 its activists gradually developed a mini people's bank, small production workshops, small commercial ventures and service provision collective groups. All of them operate as informal cooperatives nurtured by the movement, in which there are no employers nor employees, the earnings of the work are divided among the participants according to worked hours and a part of the profits is sent to the movement's funds so as to foment and encourage new initiatives in other areas throughout Brazil.

Hence, many people commit their time, effort and energy to this project. In a society where the quest for individual financial success gives the tonic of motivation to work, such collective endeavor may seem incomprehensible.

However, for the militancy of the movement it is an investment, once they believe that it is through their actions that they will achieve an ideal society, a utopia. Through all these initiatives, especially the economic ones, the militancy of the People's Communities Movement believes to be laying the foundations of a new way of production and, consequently, of a new society. This new society would arise precisely from the communities: favelas and poor rural areas where the movement develops its political work. Once articulated among themselves through the movement, people would be able to conquer a popular government and, later, through the generalization of communitarian life, they would overcome class society, replacing it for a Communitarian Socialist Society. That would summarize MCP's political strategy. A political strategy that, as they emphasize, is in tune with other social movements developed by oppressed social groups from the past. Learning from those experiences is a prerequisite to succeed, a lesson that MCP considers other progressive movements should learn from:

The left has to do a deep self-criticism and convince itself once and for all that it is necessary that 'before teaching the people, to learn from them'. What does that mean? It means we need to search for the history of the Brazilian people, Indians, blacks, peasants and workers what is the way to their liberation. Then we will discover that the masses have always pursued the solution to their problems in community practice, their politics in direct participative democracy, and their religion in liberating faith. The best-known examples are the Guarani Republic, Quilombo dos Palmares, the Peasant Community of Canudos and the Popular and Working Community of Nova Lima.

Only then we will create the People's Power to one day conquer a People's Government starting from the bottom. A government that will modify the current economic model to a collective economy based on a community ideology. (Voz das Comunidades, 2006a)

The practice of developing communitarian work, as well as the strategy of 'collective action' as the essential means to achieve the 'People's Power', the utopia, results from a long historical trajectory, marked by changes and permanencies. The current configuration is a process of around half a century. In the various documents collected, as well as in the interviews

conducted for my doctoral research (Penna, 2016)⁴, the official memory of the MCP attributes its origin to *Juventude Agrária Católica*, JAC (Catholic Agrarian Youth), part of the Brazilian Catholic Action. The Catholic Action has its origins in the 1920s both in Italy and Brazil, being officialized in 1935 by Pope Pius XI (CEDIC, 2018). The goal of the Catholic Action, worldwide and in its Brazilian chain, was to seek the collaboration or even the direct participation of lay people in the apostolate of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, conveying Catholic principles to daily life, living and workspaces. In the midst of the Brazilian Catholic Action, I highlight the presence of youth groups, such as agrarian, worker, independent, high student and university groups (Cedic, 2018, Souza, 2004; Löwy, 1991, 1987, 1989, 1996). Since 1964, Brazilian democracy has been overthrown by a military coup supported by corporate groups associated with multinational capital (Dreyfus, 1981). Nevertheless, it was mostly at the end of 1968 that the regime's hardest aspect was established, generalizing the persecution, torture and murder of opponents based on Institutional Act No. 5. In 1969, JAC activists, motivated by the approach to Marxist thought and the changes in the Brazilian political conjuncture, marked by the expansion of repression, discussed the need to organize a movement with a clearly anticapitalist proposal. This was a similar process followed by other groups of the Catholic Youth, especially the Catholic Student Youth, the Catholic Worker Youth and the Catholic

4 Sources were obtained in two main collections: one from the direction of the movement and located at its headquarters in Feira de Santana, the other from a group of people who left or were expelled from the movement in the 1980s, preserved and shelved by one of its militants in São José dos Campos, as well as various materials made available by individual militants. Part of this documentation was digitized for the purposes of this research, constituting more than 4 thousand pages, totalizing 949 documents ranging from pamphlets, newsletters, newspapers, photographs, videos, reports and notebooks. In addition to these, there are also printed materials: 2 memoirs books, 4 political training booklets, 32 copies of the collection of *Jornal Voz das Comunidades* (2006-2017), 15 of *Jornal Voz da Juventude* (2009-2014). Among the material provided by the NGO Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (which supports the MCP) at its headquarters in Luxembourg City, I accessed various pamphlets, accounts, newsletters and a booklet on social movements supported by the institution. In addition to the printed and digitized materials, 23 interviews recorded in audio were produced with militants, in different positions of power and with different attributions and performances inside the movement, as well as three interviews with ex-militants, totaling 26 people interviewed.

University Students Youth (Ridenti, 1998). The *Movimento de Evangelização Rural*, MER (Movement for Rural Evangelization) thus emerged from *Juventude Agrária Católica*, focusing its work on the organization of *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*, CEBs (grassroots ecclesial communities) and rural unions.

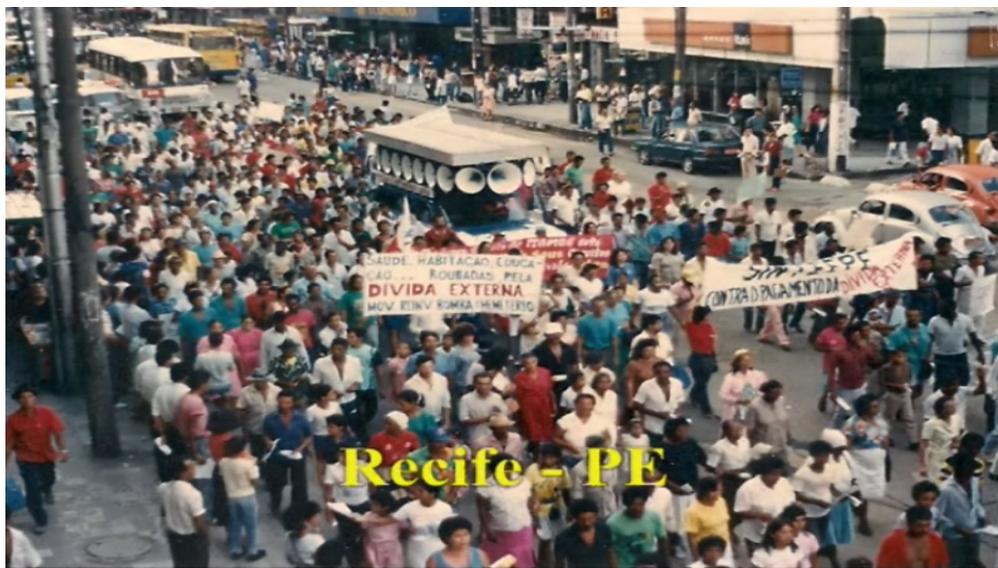
After a meeting of the National Movement Council, held in Bahia in July 1969, the movement began to change. With an assessment of people with more scientific view of reality, it was discovered that the movement used to be idealistic. It didn't have an answer to the ongoing political struggle in our country. A major decision was to turn JAC into a real peasant movement. The goal was to participate in the process of transformation that was happening among the people (Voz das Comunidades, 2009a).

The political involvement in both CEBs and unions allowed MER activists to develop various struggles related to land disputes in favor of tenure workers and landless rural workers. They also engaged in communitarian work in order to improve the lives of small landowners. MCP nowadays presents this period as the 'first stage' of its history, in an elaboration of memory that understands the collective experience as a continuous and cumulative journey towards the communitarian utopia. It is implied in the quotation from the movement's newspaper that MER marked a time in which they wanted to walk alongside with other groups of the Catholic Left in this 'process of transformation that was happening among the people.' As some scholars observe, strong mobilizations of opposition to the military regime have intensified since the 1970s, through different forms of social struggle and resistances (Scherer-Warren, 2005, 2008; Carvalho, 2004).

This 'stage' was followed by others, result of revaluations of strategy, which, in turn, are attributed by the activists to the conjunctural transformations that Brazil underwent during the trajectory of the collectivity. Thus, a decade after the foundation of MER, the movement explains the proposition of strategical change as follows:

After 1979, due to the redemocratization process that began in the country, MER militants resolved to prioritize actions in unions and associations. In order to do so, *Corrente Trabalhadores Independentes* (CTI) [Independent Workers Group] was created, and later replaced MER. Under CTI, the movement ceased to be just a peasant movement (of small producers) and

began to expand into the rural employees' areas, the peripheries of the cities and into the factories. [...] Unionist activity and in the associations was priority until 1989. (Voz das Comunidades, 2009a).



Demonstration in the 1980s against the payment of Foreign Debt in Recife, Pernambuco. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.

If, in the beginning, MER was mostly involved in organizing unions and ecclesial communities (CEBs) in rural areas, from the 1980s on the labor unions became the only privileged space. At the same time, there was an expansion to urban areas. This would correspond to the 'second stage' of the movement, characterized by the gradual change of nomenclature: *Corrente Trabalhadores Independentes*, CTI, (Independent Workers Group). During this period, many militants abandoned their small farms and became rural wage earners. Others left the rural areas and went to work in factories, as a true test of bravery and dedication to the cause defended by the movement in its expansion process. Among them, former nuns and priests abandoned their religious life and became manual workers. As *boiás-frias* (informal temporary rural wage earners), factory workers, they organized trade unions, assumed control of these entities' directions, mobilized strikes and other struggles to conquest labor rights. It was a remarkable period in the history of the collectivity, marked by the organization of large mobilizations, such as the

struggle for retirement and social security rights for the rural workers, that took over the country in massive demonstrations between 1980 and 1983.

As Maria da Glória Gohn points out, ‘the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s in Brazil contributed decisively, through demands and organized pressures, to the conquest of various social rights, which were enshrined in the new Federal Constitution of 1988’ (Gohn, 2011: 23). Certainly, the movement studied was an important protagonist of these struggles. However, the disputes surrounding the Constitutional Assembly in the late 1980s, did not interest the majority of CTI’s activists, who preferred to focus their concerns in promoting campaigns to fight against the Brazilian foreign debt, as proposed the Trade Union Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Workers on Foreign Debt in Havana in July 1985⁵.

The 1980s was called the lost decade for the Brazilian economy because the collection of interest on foreign debt forced the economy to stop, generating inflation and unemployment. At the beginning of the 1990s, the situation worsened with the total opening of the market, causing a breakdown of industries and an increase in unemployment. [...]. The trade unions lost their power of mobilization, their strength. They began to form bureaucratic negotiation committees, to maintain rights already won or to negotiate fewer layoffs.

Based on the analysis of this reality, the National Assembly decided to prioritize the most suffering sectors of the people - unemployed, factory workers, residents of urban peripheries, rural wage earners and poor peasants. (Voz das Comunidades, 2006b).

It’s important to notice that the 1990s in Brazil is a time of neoliberal policies hegemony. Therefore, a high level of unemployment and the reduction of investments in public services are marks of the period (Tavares, 1999). In tune with this new social reality, the movement organized another meeting to evaluate the conjuncture. The militants opted to focus their work on the urban and rural peripheries, moving from the workspace (labor unions) to the living space. They set up ‘Commissions of Struggle’ and,

5 Minutes of the Trade Union Conference of Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean on External Debt. Havana, July 18, 1985. Available at <https://www.marxists.org/english/tematica/1985/07/18.htm> Accessed on 04 Feb 2018.

through surveys, identified the problems of poor neighborhoods and favelas. Once the problems were identified, they conducted demonstrations and requested employment, infrastructure and public services to the authorities and public agencies. Subsequently, the movement assumed a new name: *Movimento das Comissões de Luta*, MCL, (Movement of Struggle's Commissions) and in this new "stage" they were interested in what they called the 'strong fight'⁶: occupations of land and abandoned buildings, as well as street demonstrations, among others mechanisms to exert direct political pressure, targeting specific interests of the poor areas where they lived and conducted their political work.

Gradually, however, they considered it necessary to take root in the regions where they lived and worked, firstly by creating groups of sports and leisure. As these initiatives expanded, they adopted *Comunidades Populares* (People's Communities) as a locus of effective social transformation. More than demanding from the authorities, they now want to do it by their own hands. Hence, the movement became the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* and little by little developed its features and current strategies. The new name was formalized in the National Assembly, on August 11, 2011, in Feira de Santana, Bahia, headquarter of the movement.

This is the way the movement currently presents its historical constitution and development – in successive stages characterized by the change of focus, actuation and nomenclature. And it is at the present stage that communitarian utopia assumes its greatest importance, launching the model of the desired society not only to the future, but, with eyes focused on past community experiences (uchronias), MCP builds in the everyday life a communitarian socialism, a utopia in action, a concrete utopia.

Past and future: Utopia and uchronia

Part of the current vocabulary in various social circles, utopia assumes sometimes a positive and sometimes a negative connotation. To say that

6 The idea of "strong struggle" as a strategy adopted by MCL appears in the sources from the 1990 National Activity preparation script, in which it was pioneered as the main proposition to be adopted by all militancy.

someone is a utopian person can mean both someone with strong aspirations and ideals as well as an excessively dreamy and unrealistic person. That is because utopia signifies equally a distant horizon that inspires social changes and an imaginary world, to where people who cannot fit in as it truly is, try to escape imagining, but not actually living, an alternative reality.

The origin of the term is relatively well known. Created by Thomas More in his book 'The Utopia' (2010), it consists in a criticism of the social context of the author's time – England in the passage of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century – by presenting an imaginary Kingdom of peace and social harmony. Therefore, Utopia is a dream erected in denial of the present. However, it is not only a 'non-existing place', as routinely understood, but a non-existing place to which one aspires, to which one seeks as a counter position to a concrete reality.

Associating fiction to realism, more implicitly stands for overcoming England's *status quo*. Not surprisingly, by the time of Industrial Revolution, several thinkers who criticized the cruel effects of capitalist development over the working class, such as Saint-Simon (2014), Robert Owen (1979), and Charles Fourier (1967), also elaborated proposals (or projections) of Societal models where those problems would no longer exist. They did not consider themselves utopian, but, at the end of the nineteenth century, the advances of scientific thought among the political ideas concerning the working-class struggles led Engels to diffuse an opposition between scientific socialism and utopian socialism (1880). For this author, scientific socialism could surpass utopian socialism due to its correct analysis of social reality, an idea also shared by Karl Marx. According to Engels, that would be the only route to viable proposal of a new society. As a result, his ideas propagated a negative, or at least ambiguous, interpretation of utopia in socialist thinking, relating it to unrealism. However, depending on the meaning attributed to utopia, it is possible to consider the communist horizon itself, advocated by Marx and Engels in their scientific socialism, as utopian without any intention of disqualification. That is because both socialist perspectives present projections of desired future societies as opposed to the actually existing ones. In these terms, it is possible to consider Engels'

polemic as a dispute of utopias in order to legitimate and develop the one considered by him more achievable.

In any case, side by side with the pejorative sense spread by Engels, utopia still holds a more positive meaning. Even when understood as an imaginary place, a non-existent society, it keeps within itself a will to become true. That is the most important attribute for the purposes of this paper. Therefore, I will adopt a certain positive and even broader understanding of Utopia, incorporating any projection, desire or image of an improved future society. Thus, it is possible to suppose that there is no progressive thought free of utopian elements.

Utopia might have a practical meaning as well. The sociologist Karl Mannheim considers that this concept serves only to the idea of an applied utopia, embodied in actions and motivated by the interests of oppressed classes and social groups (1972). In other words, utopia would only manifest itself as such once a social group adopted it and, as a result, it became a tool in the struggle for social transformation. According to Michael Löwy, this interpretation has some problems because implies a narrow conception of utopia, since it is unpredictable when ideas of an imagined future society can animate any social group and have a practical effect. Nonetheless, Mannheim's understanding of Utopia as applied utopia presents an interesting analytical potential for thinking about the political practice of communitarian social movements or even of social movements in general (Dianteil and Löwy, 2010: 28). Following a similar path, Ana Dinerstein reflects upon contemporary utopian thought and action. She engages with the intellectual production of Ernst Bloch to develop the idea of 'concrete utopias' (2015, 2016). I developed a parallel notion, presented in the doctoral thesis as 'utopia in action' (PENNA, 2016).⁷ Both 'concrete utopia' from Dinerstein and the 'utopia in action' notion developed in my PhD thesis refer to the political approach in which effective changes are resulted from the quotidian political work developed by social movements.

7 Rafael Augusto Vecchio also uses the expression 'utopia in action' in his master's dissertation, but to refer to an ongoing cause (2006). Therefore, it differs from the use I made of 'utopia in action' in my thesis as it refers to a social movement committed to a wider proposition of societal transformation.

Therefore, these transformations are ‘small parts’ of a broader process committed to renovate the current society as a whole.

Envisioning a renewed future – and building it through daily political practice – does not dispense searching for inspiring models in the past, though. After all, according to the historian Eric Hobsbawm: no matter how seemingly contradictory at first, the stronger the intention to innovate, the more one seeks inspiration for it in the past (2013: 36). Maria Ceci Misoczky and Rafael Kruter Flores, while reflecting upon the intellectual contributions of the Peruvian revolutionary José Mariatégui, state that:

... he is convinced that the future can only emerge from what the past has inscribed in the present in terms of unsolved problems. This process does not accept the abandonment of what once existed; at the same time it is selective of what to recover from the past, drawing only on elements in which the present is recognized. (Misoczky and Flores 2012:8)

Hence, at this point, the idea of utopia connects with another concept: that of uchronia. Both are fundamental conceptual tools for understanding the movement studied here.

Uchronia is certainly a much less popularized term than utopia. The word uchronia comes from a neologism elaborated in 1857 by Charles Renouvier that in 1876 gave title to his book *Uchronie (L'Utopie Dans L'Histoire): Esquisse Historique Apocryphe du Développement* (2013). In this book, Renouvier presents an alternative history (allohistory) within the past. This will be the predominant meaning of uchronia, as defined by Gavriel D. Rosenfeld:

At the most basic level, however, tales of alternate history – or what have been termed “allohistorical” or “uchronian” narratives – investigate the possible consequences of “what if” questions within specific historical contexts. What if Jesus had escaped crucifixion? What if Columbus had never discovered the New World? What if the South had won the American Civil War?

In posing and answering such questions, alternate histories assume a variety of different narrative forms. Those produced by historians and other scholars usually take the form of sober analytical essays, while those produced by novelists, filmmakers, and playwrights assume a more overtly fictional form through the use of such familiar narrative devices as plot development,

setting, and character portrayal. What links such “analytical” and “fictional” alternate histories is their exploration of how the alteration of some variable in the historical record would have changed the overall course of historical events. (Rosenfeld, 2005: 4)

Other possible interpretation of uchronia is presented by Alma Studiorum, who points out that uchronia can be understood not only by meaning an alternative history, but also as a time-shifted utopia (Studiorum, 2013: 320). Rather than manifesting itself in a better future, it would mean ‘a better time’, ‘corresponding to an imagined past of a time when life would be better than at the present’ (Adam, 2016: 106).

In one of the most relevant studies in Oral History, ‘The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories’, Alessandro Portelli borrowed the idea of uchronia from science fiction to understand and analyze the narratives of several of his interviewees (1991: 99-116). If utopia means the non-place, uchronia would mean the ‘non-time’. As the historian explains, in science fiction it portrays a past that did not actually happen or an imaginary present, resulted from a fictional past. Stories such as: ‘What if the Nazis had won World War II, what would reality be like?’ represent well the idea of uchronia in science fiction. But Portelli stretches the concept of uchronia, broadening his understanding beyond the science fiction literature. Analyzing interviews with former rank-in-file elder militants of the Italian Communist Party, the historian specialized in Oral History observes imaginary narratives, delusions about past situations that did not really happen. However, he considered that they were not mere lies or simple senile hallucinations. It was necessary to go beyond this simplistic observation. He realized that these narratives of old people actually revealed the desire that events had followed another course, that the party had taken another path. Uchronia therefore arises out of disagreement with the course of the past. It manifests the desire for an ‘alternative history’ in which the route considered correct and in accordance with those desires and hopes prevailed. It thus corresponds to an image of what did not truly happened, but had events occurred otherwise, it could have been real. It is an exercise of imagining situations in the past that had the potential to reverse the position of historical ‘winners’ and ‘losers’: an envision of how the present would be if a given project, which was actually defeated, had, on the

contrary, prevailed. In this way, uchronia corresponds to the imaginary extension of a past that was interrupted, aborted.

Following the line of thought initiated by Alessandro Portelli, who extrapolates uchronia beyond the tales of science fiction to these imagined pasts that express, in the individual narratives, collective frustrated desires, it is also possible to extrapolate the meaning of uchronia beyond the fictional narratives about the past. This paper considers that if a certain circumstance understood as favorable in the past was aborted for some reason, frustration due to its interruption may manifest itself through imagining how it might have been but may also materialize in a project for the future. In this case, uchronia becomes utopia. In other words, this past that failed to become truth, or rather has been interrupted, the uchronia, becomes a projection for the future, the still non-existent, which is utopia. Thus, we may consider the nostalgia of past experiences as that which characterizes the uchronic thinking, whether it is manifested in actions or merely ideas.

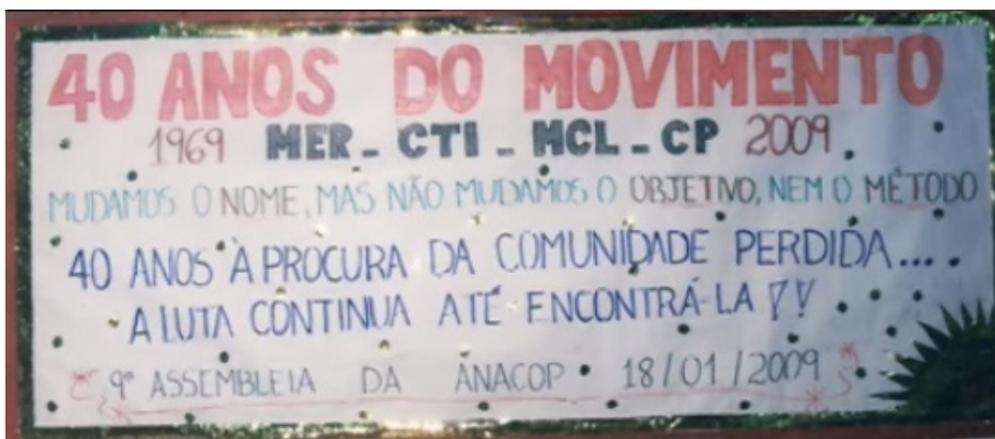
An important example of an uchronic way of relating to the past would be the cultural manifestation of Romanticism, which began in the eighteenth century and can be considered, in its revolutionary aspect, the cradle of socialist thought. Characterized by Michael Löwy as a broad cultural movement of nostalgia for pre-capitalist societies, Romanticism would manifest the frustration in the face of capitalist reality (Löwy, 2008, 2013; Dianteil and Löwy, 2005, 2010). Therefore, it took place in different ways from reactionary, such as Catholic nostalgia of medieval times, to even revolutionary ones – which, for the sociologist, constitutes the ideological matrices of contemporary socialism and, although inspired by past societies, indicate projects of a transformed future.

In order to think about the reality of Latin American social movements in the present world, it is still worth to bear in mind the considerations of Justin Paulson for whom the recent memory of a pre-capitalist past in the continent stimulates interrogations about the limits of current progress and points out alternatives referenced in previous social experiences:

Popular movements in Latin America thus draw on history and imagination differently – at least, they have a more substantial ability to do so. The participants often have a collective historical memory that is already ‘negative’; movements are able to begin by saying ‘this isn’t progress, at least not for us’, which opens a space to imagine what real progress might look like. So radical imagination might spring from a reaction to something in the present, but it is rooted in a memory of difference that offers a set of resources for imagining the future. (Paulson, 2010: 36)

Past and Future in MCP’s political action and strategy

In 2009, *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* had its 40th anniversary. Several festivities marked the ephemeris, celebrated in several headquarters of the People’s Communities spread by 14 Brazilian states. The slogan used for the occasion was: ‘In pursuit of the lost Community ... the struggle will continue until we find it!’. It is written in dark blue color in a commemorative poster prepared for the occasion:



Commemorative poster. Photo reproduced from the video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010 to prepare the National Meeting of 2011.

The chronological line from 1969 to 2009 representing the different names adopted during this trajectory is noteworthy. Despite the different acronyms, the idea is to highlight continuity. The period when the photo was taken was the CP (People’s Communities). Two years later, in a National Meeting, the militancy would formalize the new name: *Movimento das Comunidades Populares*. Just below this timeline we have the phrase: ‘We

changed the name, but we did not change the objective, nor the method’, reaffirming the importance of continuity. And what would this continuity consist of? Precisely in the affirmation of the pursuit for the ‘lost community’.

Let us look at another source, this time extracted from *Jornal Voz das Comunidades* published two months later:



Source: *Voz das Comunidades* (2009b)

The movement journal, *Jornal Voz das Comunidades*, JVC, regularly focus its articles on important events from the past that marked the formation of the MCP, as well as to present its strategic politics and its future projects. The cover of the commemorative edition of the movement's 40 years anniversary is quite emblematic in this rescue of the past, both the past from the movement itself and the past of other social movements that serve as reference for them. As the text reproduced next to the image and the slogan says:

The same way that the people of Moses walked for 40 years in the desert in search of the promised land, we, for 40 years, have been looking for the ‘Lost’

Communities: Indigenous, Quilombolas, Peasants, Factory Workers and Popular. (JVC, 2009)

By this statement, the movement seeks to present the reader the idea that for 40 years they have been struggling to find the community, the maximum manifestation of the utopia they wish to reach. But to do so, they need to rescue a communitarian past, the 'lost communities', a uchronia.

The reason for searching for the community both in the future and in the past is explained in another source, dated from 2004, elaborated for the internal formation of the movement's militancy (Boletim das Sobrevivências Coletiva, 2004):

- 1) WHY DO WE NEED THE COMMUNITY?
- 2) Because the individual life is against nature.
- 3) Humanity was born in collectivity: this is said by the Bible, symbolized by PARADISE (Garden of Eden), as by science (historical materialism), written by Marx, which speaks of PRIMITIVE COMMUNITIES.
- 4) In Brazil, invaded by the Portuguese in 1500, the Portuguese found the Indians living in COMMUNITIES.
- 5) The black people when they fled from slavery formed QUILOMBOS, a type of COMMUNITY.
- 6) Peasants, who are a mixture of Indians, blacks and poor immigrants, besides solving public problems through *mutirão*⁸, created independent and autonomous communities like CANUDOS in Bahia, MUCKER in Rio Grande do Sul, CALDEIRÃO in Ceará, among others. Besides the collective economy, these communities organized other aspects of life such as: Health, Religion, Art and Self-Defense, etc.

The factory workers also had a communitarian tradition, both in factories with their MUTUAL HELP FUNDS, and the MUTIRÕES to build their shacks, especially when they built the house rooftop. There were experiences like Nova Lima where workers and residents created a PROLETARIAN POWER.

8 Mutirão is a collective effort to carry out a specific work, for example to build a house.

The need of the community is attributed to nature itself, therefore, according to the movement's understanding, it is frontally opposed to the individualism of capitalism – a fundamental mark of the present times. The explanation for these conclusions relies on both religious and scientific elements. In Christianity, the main religious matrix of the movement⁹, they also find the inspiring community model as instituted by Jesus, although later distorted by the rich and power-hungry Romans:

'I came to the poor', said Jesus Christ in his preaching in Palestine. His twelve resolute followers, the apostles, were simple workers. After the death of the Master and his resurrection, the groups grew and became communities, in which all put in common the material possessions they had and "there were no needy among them" (Acts of the Apostles). The Christian religion extended to the Roman Empire, among slaves and poorer citizens, who learned to live in community, though hidden, because they were persecuted by the rich, who used them in the circus to feed the lions and serve as entertainment for the powerful. Unable to bend Christians by violence or to diminish their influence, as the number of followers always increased, the powerful, through the emperor Constantine, made Christianity an official religion. The bishops began to be treated as noble, the priests became public servants, and the rich adhered to the new religion, introducing in it their vices, their selfishness, and destroying the communities, replacing the sharing of goods, the donation to the collective, into distribution of charities. (Voz das Comunidades, 2006c)

As the quoted text demonstrates, the basis of an uchronia is at the very origin of MCP's religious belief. It shows the nostalgia for a communitarian past in which the mark of social inequality was inexistent, even though it was later disrupted by the powerful, creating the uchronia.

As a socialist movement, the MCP assimilated a lot of the cultural broth produced around romanticist thinking. Nostalgia for the pre-capitalist past is most remarkable in the political thinking and practice of the movement. But the way in which the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares* manifests its romanticism is specific, besides this primitive Christian reference: it seeks, first and foremost, in the Brazilian past communitarian movements, the models for the future society.

9 Even though it has recently opened up to other religious matrices such as Africans and Indigenous traditions.

To analyze MCP's political strategy and its specific kind of utopia, I established a parallel between Alessandro Portelli's understanding of *uchronia* and Michael Löwy's analysis of the Romanticism cultural phenomenon. That is how I recognized, in MCP's experience, a specific kind of Romanticism: a 'Brazilian Grass-roots Romanticism'. Throughout the investigation, several sources indicated that the actual utopia of MCP was not only inspired by communitarian life experiences from the past, but also that these *uchonias* took place mainly in the territory that nowadays corresponds to Brazil (Penna, 2016:271-283).

The references to the past experiences of the 'Brazilian people' is omnipresent in the official media vehicle of the MCP, *Jornal Voz das Comunidades*, published quarterly since 2006, as well as their youth periodical, *Jornal Voz da Juventude*, published quarterly between 2009 and 2014. Societies from the past that developed a communitarian way of life are presented as sources of inspiration for developing their work in the communities. As the data shows, these experiences in general englobe the community life of the indigenous and quilombola¹⁰ peoples (Reis and Gomes, 1996) as well as communitarian societies organized by messianic movements such as Canudos and Caldeirão (Weinhardt, 2002; Queiroz, 1966; Queiroz, 1976). Morro Velho's movement, in Nova Lima, Minas Gerais state, from the 1930s to the 1960s, is also considered an example of a social movement that was able to overcome the limits of 'pure' trade union activities. Their participants had a wider concept of their political involvement that embraced cultural activities, mobilizations around the residential spaces, creating commissions to make improvements for the community and many other actions that surpassed the 'world of work' in a narrow sense (Grossi, 1981).

Not only the newspapers, but also other documents accessed during the investigation as well as the observations during field work and interviews with activist, indicate that these models of society that have taken place at some point in the 'Brazilian' past are embraced as inspiration for the movement. They animate the quotidian practices and serve as themes for

10 Africans and Afro-Brazilians who escaped from slavery and formed their own communities throughout centuries of slavery in Brazil.

the parties and commemorations. Songs, dances and theater presentations animate the meetings and assemblies of MCP. They celebrate the achievements of the communitarian societies in Brazilian history, as well as the reminiscences expressed in solidarity among the people.¹¹ Therefore, their purpose is not only to entertain but to reinforce the movement's political strategy which searches for inspiration in the indigenous, quilombolas, messianic and unionists who lived before us.

Here we have a picture of an event in homage to the indigenous peoples. It was organized by MCP's youth group called *União da Juventude Popular* (People's Youth Union) in Bahia state. In general, these cultural activities (dances, plays, songs) intend to exalt the memory and teachings of the communities from the past:



Video commemorating the 40th anniversary of the movement, launched in 2010 as preparation for the National Encounter in 2011.

11 The 'June Parties' are a homage to the peasant people, the 'May Day' celebrates especially the urban workers struggles, the 'Indigenous People Day' is also an important celebration, as well as the 'Black Consciousness Day'. Beyond these commemorative dates, all national encounters and even simple meetings are marked by the use of songs and dances that refer to these experiences.

The songs used by the movement in its meetings and various events also serve as reinforcement in the construction of these references as fuel for the present actions. The communitarian past is honored and it invites the activists to transform the actual world and prepare it for a better future, for Utopia. An example is the song "Let me live" composed by Enoque Oliveira, who had been a priest in the city Monte Santo in Bahia and led the *Movimento Histórico e Popular de Canudos* (Popular and Historical Movement of Canudos), that resulted in his removal from priestly functions in 1987 by right wing Catholic authorities (Araújo Sá, 2008). The song is about the messianic movement that established a Christian community, known as *Belo Monte* (Beautiful Mountain), in the sertão¹² of Bahia between 1896 and 1897. Approximately 25,000 people lived in this community before it was smashed by the newly established Brazilian republic at the end of 1897 (Cunha, 1984). Although destroyed, the community of Canudos continues to stimulate utopias, especially among some sectors of the Catholic Left. Enoque Oliveira's song was reproduced in MCP's book of songs organized for the National Encounter in 2014. The intention of rescuing this 'lost community' was sung with enthusiasm at the 3-day gathering of approximately 300 organic participants and special guests from the movement:

Let me live

Let me live, let me speak / Let me grow, let me organize!

When I lived in the sertão / On the feet of those who ruled me

I moaned the pain in my hands / The burden was heavy to carry

Then it appeared in the sertão / A mountain that began to captivate

So beautiful that it gathered the brotherhood / no boss nor oppressor lived there.

Canudos will bloom again / Life as a branch will grow

The fight for land generates bread / Loves will start again

Canudos spread throughout the country / Although sharks want to bite it

12 A dry region in the Brazilian Northeastern countryside, not exactly a desert, also known as caatinga.

In the countryside and in the cities, they say / Organized people will win!¹³

As the song makes clear, this ‘best time’ manifested in the Canudos experience, though defeated, ‘will bloom again’ and ‘organized people will win’ in the future. Uchronia thus becomes Utopia, both in Enoque Oliveira’s song and in the strategy proclaimed by the MCP during its Second National Encounter.

The sympathy for the uchronic past is easily perceived by whoever may arrive in one of the movement’s ‘People’s Communities’. That was the case of the Uruguayan writer and activist Raúl Zibechi when he visited *Comunidade Popular Chico Mendes*, in Rio de Janeiro at the end of 2015. In his article, he highlights some aspects that called his attention, in particular the theoretical and historical references to animate the present struggle of MCP:

When it comes to theory, Gelson claims Marxism and Christianity. He does not hide his sympathy for Mao Tse-tung. The movement has four historical experiences of reference: the resistance of the Guarani people, the Quilombo of Palmares, the Canudos Movement and the struggle of the miners of Morro Velho in the 1930s. In short, the synthesis of indigenous, black, working class and popular struggles. (Zibechi, 2016: online)

This passage shows how the movement’s activists made explicit their political theory and historical references to Raul Zibechi during their conversations. Among these historical references, the Brazilian people’s communitarian experiences are presented as the movement’s source of inspiration. Their protagonists were ordinary people, underprivileged, just like the MCP activists themselves: black, indigenous, peasants and manual workers.

The inspiration in this community past is evident in the strategic elaboration of MCP, including in its conception of political and State organization, revealing the strategic elaboration of this collective. An article from JVC is emblematic to reflect upon this issue. The title is ‘The State we

13 Song ‘Let me live’ in the booklet held for the 2nd National Meeting of the MCP ‘Book of Songs’ held in Feira de Santana between August 15 and 17 (2014: 70).

have and the State we want – Fifth Brazilian Social Week. How to participate?’ and consists in a dialogue with the theme proposed for the Fifth Brazilian Social Week in 2013, promoted by the Catholic Church. It presents MCP’s understanding of the state, as well as the movement’s own utopia. According to the idea expressed in the article, the State, although inevitable in the medium term, is incompatible with the future society they want to create. The state would necessarily have to be abolished to give place to the Community. The explanation for this is in the following quotation extracted from the article:

How did the state arise?

The state, as we know, was born when social classes emerged. In primitive communities, there was no state. There was coordination to articulate the communities and to direct the decisions taken in popular assemblies.¹⁴

The extract suggests, implicitly, that the state would represent a rupture of the correct model of social organization. Therefore, the state is wrong since its origin. It broke the democratic character of the previous social organization, when the decision-making was collective, even though articulated by a ‘coordination’. The state would mean, therefore, the interruption of this primordial past, implicitly presented as an ideal (uchronia). At the same time, this past seems to be a direct reference to the way of organizing the movement nowadays (‘coordination to articulate communities’).

Further, in the same JVC article, the inspiring character of past societies that had no state becomes more explicit. However, these societal models were interrupted due to certain historical events. Nevertheless, their economic, political and ideological model of organization are noteworthy:

In Brazil, before the [Portuguese] invasion, there were experiences of collective organization of indigenous peoples. When African slaves arrived, new experiences emerged, such as the Quilombos, and later there were the peasant communities.

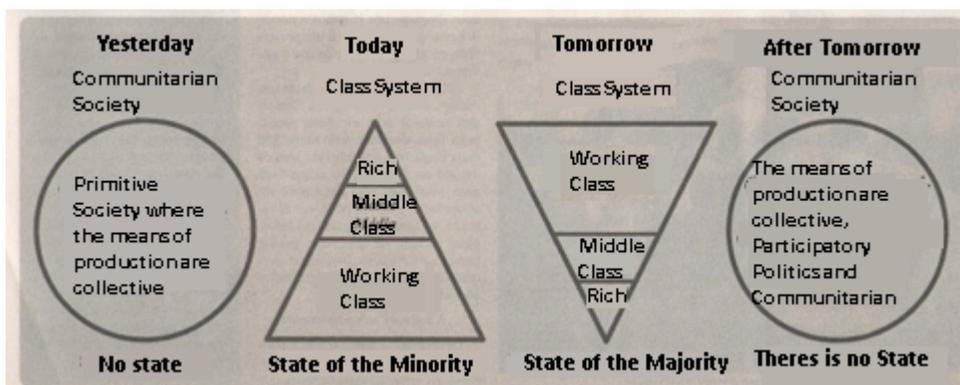
The classic examples are the Republic of Guarani, Quilombo dos Palmares and the peasant communities of Canudos and Caldeirão, among many others.

14 Jornal Voz das Comunidades, ano 8, nº 19, Brasil, abril a julho de 2013: 4.

In these communities, the economy was collective (the means of survival belonged to all). Politics was participatory (meetings and assemblies to make decisions) and ideology was religious (communitarian).¹⁵

Here they are the common and central elements of these inspiring experiences: all these communities – the primitive societies of the prehistoric past, the indigenous, quilombolas and peasants in Brazil – had their social relations established in economic equality and direct political participation. Although perhaps some members of these communities had to perform some executive functions (which the movement associates with its own ‘coordinations’). Quoting the text itself, in that societal organization the ‘means of survival belonged to everyone’, everyone could ‘make decisions’ and the reality perception (ideology) was based in a logic of communion between the components of society, which they call a ‘religious’ or ‘communitarian’ ideology.

Therefore, it is possible to identify the bases of the model of society aspired by the MCP: communitarian socialism. This kind of socialism manifests itself not in preparing the revolution and living the utopia only afterwards. Instead, trying to practice the utopia, to materialize it little by little, corresponds to the essential means to reach it indeed. The final goal is only achievable by accomplishing utopia gradually, in ‘stages’. Despite aiming for the future, this desired society is, somehow, a return to the past – or an imagined past, as we can see in the graphic representation presented in the same article:



¹⁵ Jornal Voz das Comunidades, op. cit., p. 5.

Graphical representation of the historical relationship between State and society for the MCP (original and English version for paper). Source: *Jornal Voz das Comunidades* n° 8, ano 19, de abril a junho de 2013: 4.

What is most interesting about this graphic representation is to observe that the 'After tomorrow', the utopia manifested in the 'Communitarian Society', resembles 'Yesterday', the uchronia, perceived as an interrupted past that they wish to redeem in the future. In this future 'there is no state'. In the 'Tomorrow' society, when the 'Class System' still exists, the 'State of the majority' is still a necessity, but the Community of the 'after tomorrow' will be based on the 'Participatory Politic'. The means to move from the today 'society' to 'tomorrow' society, as well as from 'tomorrow' society to 'After tomorrow' society (the final utopia) would be precisely the organization of the Communities.

In this sense, the organization of communities would be indeed the fundamental way to build 'People's Power', which, in the practice of the movement, consists in the creation of means for the underprivileged to govern themselves. Knowing how to govern, organizing economic life on an egalitarian basis and developing values and beliefs consistent with these proposals: that is the path they need to tread to achieve the communitarian utopia. However, as long as a class society is still a reality, it would be necessary for the movement's communities to conquer a 'people's government'. This would help to spread, generalize and establish definitively the Communities as a new way of life. This shows that in addition to the beginning and the end represented in the graphics, the community is also the means for the transitions. Being, therefore, the means of change, organizing it and expanding it is the motivation of the whole political practice of the MCP. The communitarian life that the activists put so much effort to implement in their daily political action can be understood as the collective live carried out to the maximum social spheres as possible. The objective is to achieve the totality of social relations, starting from what they call 'the most felt needs' of the people. These necessities might be related to economic, emotional, entertainment, and many other types of human needs. In other words, it is incarnated in quotidian practices such as celebrating Christmas together; to work and divide the profits in their cooperatives; to teach and learn in community schools; to share children

care in the community daycare. It is the collective lunch when people bring and share food every month and eat together at the community headquarters. Is to trust and deposit your money in the community bank, knowing that when you need it, you will also receive trust from your fellows to borrow. In short, the idea of Community takes place in the many concrete practices that are part of the routine of the political making of the MCP today, aiming at the goal of overcoming the individual by the collective. The following pictures may illustrate a little about the daily communitarian activities developed in the last decade by MCP:



Picture of a sewing group, where the members learn and produce the goods, there are no employees nor bosses. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.



Picture of one of the several football teams organized by MCP, this is from São Paulo. They do local, regional and national tournaments. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.



Photo of the sale of collective production goods at a Fair in Feira de Santana, Bahia. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.



Photo of a health group in Pernambuco. Among the activities of the health groups are preventive activities of diseases such as gymnastics for the elderly, promotion of healthy eating and production of homemade medicines. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.



Photo of a school for young children in Maranhão. Source: video commemorating the 40 years of the movement, launched in 2010.

To conclude: An uchronic utopia in action

Utopia [...] it is on the horizon. I come two steps closer to it, it walks away two more steps. I walk ten paces but the horizon runs ten paces beyond. No matter how much I walk, I will never reach it. So, what is utopia's purpose? There it is: to make us walk.¹⁶

As the sources presented in this article, as well as several other sources raised for the development of this research and its subsequent analysis, could attest, MCP is very concerned about knowing and studying its own past. No wonder the activists create an evolutionary interpretation of their history, and understand their different periods and nomenclatures as stages of a cumulative process towards utopia. However, utopia for them does not mean a whole and complete innovation, instead, it is a reclaim of the past: 'the pursuit of the lost communities'. The 'better past' is source of inspiration, legitimacy, and indicates the correctness of their own present actions. Therefore, producing collectively, as it is done in the movement's informal cooperatives, where there are no employees nor bosses, signifies to follow the example of the *quilombolas*, the native peoples of our America, and the communitarian social movements that took place both in the countryside or in the cities of our country. These collective actions are understood as a recover of true human nature, corrupted by the 'System of Classes'. Moving forward into a better future would necessarily mean to rescue the communalism from the past. This rescue is incorporated in a daily practice that, as described in this paper, since the end of the 1990s has given the tone of the political work developed by MCP through the creation of football groups, community markets, community schools, health groups, gymnastics groups for the elderly, community parties and celebrations, communitarian bank, craft workshops for producing simple goods for the community, among others.

The utopia, the non-place that the MCP seeks to consolidate in the 'After Tomorrow' society is muddled with non-places of the past, their uchronias.

16 'Utopía ... ella está en el horizonte. Me acerco dos pasos, ella se aleja dos pasos. Camino diez pasos y el horizonte se corre diez pasos más allá. Por mucho que yo camine, nunca la alcanzaré. Para que sirve la utopía? Para eso sirve: para caminar'. Fernando Birri, quoted by Eduardo Galeano (1994: 310).

The movement's political action is not limited to 'desiring' a different reality; their militants are actively engaged in building it through everyday communitarian works. Due to this characteristic, it is possible to distinguish a specific kind of utopia: a 'utopia in action' or a 'concrete utopia'. According to Ana Dinerstein, this would be an important form of utopian manifestation nowadays:

Clearly, today's utopia is no longer an abstract idea elaborated by the vanguard of the party to be achieved in the 'future'. Today's utopia is a concrete and daily practice of millions of people committed to creating a plural and dignified world against and beyond global neoliberalism. (2016: 352)

Dinerstein considers that today's utopia is no longer an 'abstract utopia', created by a vanguard who intends to implement it merely in a distant future. The 'present utopia' is rather 'a concrete daily practice'. In this way, it's possible to sustain that the MCP is in tune with the social movements 'against and beyond global neoliberalism' that she refers, as well as against capitalism itself. MCP may be characterized by a 'utopia in action' or 'concrete utopia', since its utopia is not stagnated in projects, neither in fiction literature nor in the post-revolutionary socialists' plans. Similarly, the communitarian movements that serve as uchronias to MCP were 'concrete utopias' themselves: Canudos, Sete Povos das Missões, Quilombo dos Palmares, the miners of Nova Lima and many other examples of struggles that inspires the *Movimento das Comunidades Populares*. All of them characterized by an active utopia as they sought to materialize the desired future in their present moments (Penna, 2016).

Although it does not have the magnitude of the ultimate goal, to which they understand to be walking to, the 'utopia in action'/'concrete utopia' has the power to concretize utopias and, even though they are necessarily partial, they constantly transform what one wishes to conquer. The utopian project in the classical sense of the 'not yet existent' changes and deepens its goals as the social movement tries to approach it. Thus, as something that did not seem possible – such as the creation of a small communitarian bank – becomes reality, new horizons, new utopias can be formulated, serving as historical engine in this search for concrete social interests.

Like the idea expressed in Galeano's quoted passage at the opening of this section, the utility of Utopia is that, even if it is unreachable, it has the potential to set us in motion. However, it is not so obvious that the movement, each step towards utopia, modifies itself. If, as the writer says, every ten steps we take towards utopia, it moves away ten more, it shows that utopia is constantly changing every time actions are carried out with the aim of realizing it. In other words, every partial realization of utopia is the creation of a new one. In this journey towards a new society, new uchronias also arise as new ways to visit the past and to seek inspiration in it. Uchronias and utopias dialogue with concrete social realities, with experiences, with specific interests of social groups. They are generated by them and at the same time they influence and feed them with new possibilities and objectives.

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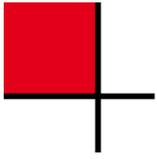
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From the picket to the women's strike: Expanding the meaning of labor struggles in Argentina

Liz Mason-Deese

abstract

In the 1990s, during the height of neoliberal austerity measures in Argentina, the unemployed workers' movements emerged to challenge the growing unemployment, and, in the process, played a crucial role in the country's 2001 uprising. From appropriating the tactic of the picket from the labor movement, and blockading major highways, to creating 'work with dignity' in self-managed cooperatives, these movements redefined the meaning of labor itself. In the following years, the movements of the unemployed became an important political force and, in a large part, many of them became incorporated into governing structures. More recently, a new feminist movement has emerged in response to the increase in feminicides in the country. This movement has used the tool of the strike, specifically a women's strike, to challenge this violence, as well as the devaluing of women's labor which they understand as a root cause of violence. This paper argues that both these movements, the unemployed workers and the feminist movement, through appropriating tactics from the traditional labor movement to organize workers who have often been marginalized, point to both the complexity and heterogeneity of labor today, as well as new ways of organizing these workers.

Introduction

Fifteen years ago, Argentina was known for the destituent social movements that overthrew the neoliberal government in an uprising marked by the

emergence of new social subjects and unprecedented alliances. In this uprising, the movements of the unemployed played a central role in questioning the premises of neoliberalism and mobilizing the poor across the country through the use of the roadblock. By politicizing the issue of unemployment, these movements highlighted the productive capacity of the unemployed and challenged the definition of work itself, pointing to the myriad forms of work carried out by heterogeneous subjects across multiple spaces. Along with a new generation of human rights activists, horizontally-organized neighborhood assemblies, workers occupying and self-managing factories, these movements were marked by a commitment to a way of doing politics otherwise, eschewing the traditional organizational forms of the party and the union, and instead opting for non-representational, directly democratic and territorial forms of politics (Sitrin, 2012). In this sense, these movements were also especially well-suited for the post-Fordist, neoliberal conditions, responding to dispersed and networked forms of power and capital with equally dispersed and networked forms of resistance (Colectivo Situaciones, 2012).

However, during the twelve years of Kirchner governments, many of those movements were incorporated into governance strategies, administering unemployment benefits, receiving state subsidies, or by having activist leaders directly join government agencies (Colectivo Situaciones, 2014). These movements were also, in many ways, at the heart of the country's 'recovery' from the crisis, as the cooperatives and other community-based enterprises became one cornerstone of the Kirchner economic development strategy (Gago, 2017). For those reasons, many of those movements have now found themselves less effective and versatile at resisting the right-wing government of Mauricio Macri or responding to the growth of precarious forms of work under this economic recovery.

However, recently, despite right-wing electoral victories, a new wave of feminist mobilizations has taken the country by storm, providing a new face and form to resistance to neoliberal and neo-extractivist capitalism. Emerging in 2014 first as a response to a series of brutal feminicides in the country, the *Ni Una Menos* [Not One Woman Less] (NUM) movement soon began addressing a series of other issues at the root of violence against women. Their analysis directly links violence against women to economic

exploitation and colonial power structures, organizing two national women's strikes in October 2016 and March 2017. While NUM has many differences from the movements of the 2001 era, emerging in a different institutional context, it also reflects an important line of continuity: challenging what is considered work and who are considered laboring subjects. By organizing explicitly around women's reproductive labor and proposing a women's strike, NUM challenges the very definition of what is understood and valued as work. In doing so, they have not only challenged the country's male-dominated trade unions, but the entire governing structure that depends on women's unrecognized labor as well as violence against women as a strategy (or pedagogy) of domination (Segato, 2016). Taken together, these movements have been able to re-appropriate the tools of the traditional labor movement to generate profound opposition to neoliberal capitalism in the region on the part laboring subjects that are often considered to be marginal or external to processes of capital accumulation.

By putting the unemployed workers' movement and NUM in dialogue, I am not attempting to make a direct comparison between the two, very distinct, movements, or to say that there is a linear connection between the two. What I am interested in is specifically exploring the question of labor: how these movements challenge traditional understandings of labor and thus push labor organizing in new directions. In times in which there is much lamenting about the impossibility of organizing contemporary forms of labor, due to its precarious nature and spatial and temporal dispersion, these movements in Argentina point to the potential and the necessity of organizing precisely those apparently un-organizable forms of labor. Specifically focusing on the forms of protest adopted by these two movements – the *piquete* (picket) of the unemployed workers' movements and the women's strike of NUM – will demonstrate how these movements politicize labor in new ways.

I start with an overview of the debates around the contemporary composition of labor, specifically focusing on questions of unemployment, informal and precarious labor, and reproductive labor. I then turn to the movements of the unemployed, exploring their use of the tactic of the *piquete*, as well as the movement's composition and their struggles to

redefine the meaning of labor. In this section, I draw on extensive fieldwork with two Unemployed Workers' Movements or MTDs (*Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados*) in the urban periphery of Buenos Aires between 2005 and 2013, including participant observations and interviews. While the movement of the unemployed was quite diverse, focusing on these movements, representative of the autonomous stream of the overall movement, allows me to highlight the radical critique of work being made by this movement. Finally, I explore NUM, drawing both on participant observation, interviews with participants, and the organization's official texts and statements. In both cases, I draw heavily on the theoretical production of the movements themselves, considering this as an important element of their political work (see Colectivo Situaciones, 2007; Roggero, 2014). Through this exploration, I hope to show how both of these movements have challenged concepts of labor, leading to a broadened definition of what counts as work and who count as workers, by re-appropriating tactics from the labor movement and recomposing heterogeneous laboring forces.

Debating and defining work

These two movements point to the complexity of the composition of labor, arguing for an expanded definition of labor itself that takes this heterogeneity – in terms of the form, organization, and regulation of labor – into account and recognizes reproductive work and the work of social cooperation. Additionally, these movements point to the increasing informalization, precaritization, and feminization of labor. Here I will give a brief overview of the debates around these transformations in the world of work, particularly focusing on what is illuminated through taking up the perspective of the movements of the unemployed and the feminist movement. I begin with the question of unemployment to examine the role of unwaged labor in expanding a definition of labor, and then show how this perspective allows us to understand the informalization and precaritization of labor in a new light. Finally, I turn to the issue of reproductive labor to highlight its continued centrality to labor struggles.

The figure of *the unemployed* has traditionally been considered too reactionary or marginalized, or too heterogeneous and dispersed to be able to mount an effective opposition to capital (Mazzeo, 2006; Zibechi, 2003). Therefore, as unemployment increased in the country throughout the 1990s, Argentinean labor leaders and Leftist political parties often completely disregarded the struggles of the unemployed. Toty Flores, a leader of the MTD of La Matanza recounts, 'Leftist political parties, minus a few honorable exceptions, accused us of being "lumpens," and ordered us to go work in the factories. Of course, factories that no longer existed' (2005: 19). Recognizing that the permanent decline of Fordist employment and the Peronist welfare state, different sectors of the movement of the unemployed developed alternative understandings of the role of the unemployed in the conjuncture. One of the most suggestive analyses is that elaborated by autonomous sectors of the movements, which understood unemployment in terms of 'differential inclusion' or 'inclusion through exclusion.' Colectivo Situaciones and the MTD of Solano define exclusion as 'the *place* that our biopolitical societies produce to be able to include people, groups and social classes in a subordinated manner' (2002: 128), emphasizing that 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' go hand and hand. According to this analysis, the unemployed are not merely the outcasts or victims of capital, but also have a productive and creative role. By challenging the idea of this exclusion, Mazzeo (2006) argues that the piquetero movement made it impossible for structural unemployment to continue playing its role of social discipliner, its role of driving down wages and blocking the struggles of the employed.

Dinerstein takes this argument about the place of the unemployed further, challenging the conception of unemployment as lack or exclusion: 'More than a lack, unemployment is an intensified form of capitalist labor where the dematerialization of labor becomes apparent' (2009: 256). Thus, what unemployment makes visible, at least when the unemployed themselves make it visible, is precisely the transformations in labor, the immaterialization of work, due to the real subsumption of life under capital. Unemployment is not some nonplace outside of capital, but is fully subsumed into capitalist relations. Dinerstein argues for understanding unemployment itself as 'a *form* of work produced by the intensification and expansion of capitalist labor in its most abstract form: money (or abstract

labor in movement)' (*ibid.*: 245). Therefore, unemployment cannot be understood solely in terms of lack or exclusion, but must be seen as a specific, especially violent, form of exploitation and dispossession. It is the action of the roadblock, she argues, that makes this violence visible by demonstrating the materiality of unemployment.

Understanding unemployment as more than lack points us to the question of the material forms with which the unemployed manage to get by or sustain themselves. These heterogeneous forms are generally classified under the category of the 'informal sector,' which is usually defined negatively in relation to 'formal' employment, as work that is not regulated, not taxed, or without benefits. This position also continues to pose formal work as the norm, while informal work is seen as the aberration, hiding and devaluing the work of the unemployed. Against this position, Denning (2010) counters that it is wage-less life that precedes employment, thus forcing us to invert our perspective and start from questions of reproduction. In a similar vein, Gago (2017) posits the conception of 'baroque economies', characterized by a mixture of different forms of exploitation and dispossession, including some that are commonly considered 'pre-capitalist', 'communitarian', or 'indigenous'. In these baroque economies, various types of informal work and even forced labor, community labor, or family labor coexist both temporally and spatially with more formal work, making it impossible to speak of formal work as the norm. Additionally, these unwaged and 'informal' activities that continue to sustain the 'formal' economy and are also an important source of state revenue. Meanwhile, the legal 'flexibilization' of labor and the generalized precaritization of work blurs the line between informal and formal work, making clear distinctions between the two impossible.

This understanding of labor does not imply the necessity of a new vanguard figure, to take the place of the male factory worker, but rather the need to recognize the diversity of forms of labor. Toward this end, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) develop the concept of the 'multiplication of labor' to describe the intensification, diversification and heterogenization of labor under post-Fordist capitalism, very much apparent in the baroque economies described by Gago. This concept is useful for understanding the different ways through which the poor manage to get by and survive, which

characterize work and unemployment today. In other words, *precarious* work. While there is often to a confusion between the strategic and sociological use of the term (see Shukaitis, 2013), the social movement genealogy of precarity (Casas-Cortés, 2014) still points to the concept's radical potential. This is especially true when movements have expanded the concept of precarity beyond the workplace, as various social movements have done (see Frassanito Network, 2005; Precarias a la deriva, 2004). Colectivo Juguetes Perdidos (2014), working with youth in marginalized areas of Buenos Aires, describes this precarity in terms of terror, tying precarity not only to labor relations, but also to the instability of affective bonds, everyday life in the city, inadequate transportation, housing and health care, or the lack of effective ways to respond to the stress caused by this situation. This precarity can be linked to the extraction of value from more and more times and spaces of life, which puts social reproduction itself at risk (Federici, 2012; Hardt and Negri, 2009).

In Argentina, these expanded and heterogeneous forms of labor are increasingly being understood as a fundamental element of the neo-extractivist economy. Scholars and activists, drawing on the experiences of varied social struggles, have developed an expanded definition of the concept of 'extraction', beyond the extraction of natural resources, to include all forms of extraction of value from social cooperation in contemporary capitalism, regardless of whether or not a wage is present (Gago and Mezzadra, 2015). This definition of neo-extractivism allows us to include the myriad ways in which capital captures the value produced by social cooperation, extracting that wealth in a form very similar to the way in which it extracts natural resources from the earth. *Instituto de Investigación y Experimentación Política* (The Institute for Political Investigation and Experimentation) (2013) thus builds on this definition to link the violent dispossession of peasants from their land to forms of extraction through finance and real estate speculation in urban communities. These industries rely on the extraction of natural resources, as well as on the knowledges and capacities of the very people they subordinate in order to better use both urban and rural land and extract rent from it. This capture of knowledges and capacities adds yet another layer to the neo-

extractivist economy and highlights the importance of immaterial forms of labor along with the natural resource extraction.

Under this expanded notion of extractivism and the multiplication of labor, social reproduction becomes another site for value extraction and struggles around social reproduction acquire a fundamental importance. Referring to the labor necessary to reproduce labor power as commodity, as well as the social relation of capitalism itself, Marxist feminists have long pointed out how capitalist production depends on this, often unpaid and unrecognized, labor usually carried out by women, and struggled to redefine 'work' to include unpaid reproductive labor (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Federici, 2004, 2012). Gutiérrez Aguilar's definition of reproductive labor as 'the incessant efforts carried out primarily – although not only – by women to maintain and sustain life, to expand possibilities for pleasure and enjoyment, to materially and symbolically reproduce human and non-human life, day after day, year after year, and generation after generation' (2015: 171) also points to how it can function as a site of resistance, through creating possibilities for pleasure and enjoyment, and through that excess desire that always escapes. This idea of reproduction as also a point of resistance is one that has been picked up by both the piquetero movement, in their autonomous forms of social reproduction (see Mason-Deese, 2017) and the feminist movement through challenging gendered hierarchies in reproductive labor.

Today productive and reproductive work become increasingly integrated as what has traditionally been unpaid reproductive work enters into the market in the form of paid work, while the affective and communicative skills characteristic of reproductive work are becoming necessary for more and more forms of work outside of the clearly reproductive sphere, as part of what has been described as the *feminization of labor* (Morini and Fumagalli, 2010; Weeks, 2011). This overlap between 'reproduction' and 'production' is a key feature of the baroque economies described by Gago or the precarity described by Juguetes Perdidos, in which labor is as likely to be organized by obligations to family members, neighbors, or other informal groups as by formal labor contracts and often includes a component of maintaining affective ties or territorial knowledge.

Despite this general feminization of labor, most reproductive labor continues to be carried out by women. A 2014 report released by Argentina's INDEC shows that women on average dedicate 2.5 hours per day more than men to domestic work and carry out 76% of total domestic labor.¹ This work continues to be undervalued and often taken for granted. During the neoliberalism of the 1990s, women faced an increased burden as austerity measures attacked the social safety net leaving women to pick up the extra costs in order to protect their families. While many individual women referred to these issues when explaining their decision to join the organizations of the unemployed, it was not until NUM that they became explicit political points, for example in the movement's statement for the March 8 strike, claiming that unpaid domestic labor adds an extra three hours of day to women's work, and that women are the first to lose their jobs and feel the effects of neoliberal structural adjustment.

It is within this context that the expanded understanding of neo-extractivism becomes useful for understanding the exploitation of reproductive labor as well. As NUM writes in a statement condemning the government's decision to take out more foreign debt:

Finance, through debt, constitutes a form of direct exploitation of women's labor power, vital power, and capacity for organization in households, in neighborhoods, in territories. Sexist violence is made even stronger with the feminization of poverty and the lack of economic autonomy implied by debt.²

In other words, they are arguing that women's unpaid reproductive labor, in the household and the neighborhood or territory, is being exploited, that value is extracted from it, through mechanisms of debt and credit, as Federici argues, 'every articulation of the reproduction of labor power has been turned into an immediate point of accumulation' (2012: 102). They go on to argue that, as in the past, the new foreign debt with disproportionately affect women who will be forced to bare the brunt of the cuts to social

1 Full report available at:
http://www.indec.mecon.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/tnr_07_14.pdf.

2 The complete statement can be read on the group's Facebook page:
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=650738665117319&id=351635908360931.

services that will inevitably follow. Thus both the MTDs and the feminist movement, then, point to broad changes in forms of production and extraction of value, which is not limited to the formal workplace or instances of waged employment, but occurs throughout the spaces and moments of life, as life itself is put to work (Morini and Fumagalli, 2010). However, these movements also, as I will show in what follows, point to new forms of resistance to this capture and the re-composition of laboring forces.

The piquete

Organizations of the unemployed emerged in response to increasing unemployment and poverty in Argentina in the mid 1990s as the result of neoliberal policies and international financial crises. After the unemployed in towns that had been devastated following the privatization of the state-run oil company began carrying out large and combative roadblocks to demand jobs and unemployment benefits, the tactic was quickly taken up by the unemployed across the country. The piquetes, an appropriation of the traditional labor movement's tactic of blockading factory gates, thus became the emblematic tactic of the movement of the unemployed (Svampa and Pereyra, 2009). The piquetes also demonstrated the power of the unemployed by directly using their bodies to disrupt the circulation of capital and economic flows in the cities (Dinerstein, 2009; Mazzeo, 2006).

In urban areas, the MTDs often started as spontaneous protests or gatherings of neighbors, acting in response to the shock of recent job loss, cuts to social services, and rising inflation, which made the costs of reproduction unbearably high. This initial organizing around issues related to reproduction and everyday life (Mason-Deese, 2017) could be seen in their very form of organization, which corresponds to the multiplication of labor described above. Zibechi compares these movements to the traditional labor movement, which took the spaces and rhythms of the factory and the state as their models, while the new movements of the unemployed turned to 'non-Taylorist, unordered, and nonhierarchical forms of being together' (Hardt et al., 2012: 167). In other words, movements of the unemployed adopted forms of internal organization paralleling transformations in work itself. The protests and subsequent organizations would take on different

forms in different places, corresponding to the specific composition and experiences of the unemployed in those sites.

The unemployed who participated in the piquetes included people with experiences of different types of informal work or other types of precarious employment, part-time employment, or underemployment. Many older men had previously held formal waged work, while many of the women and younger members had never had formal, contracted, waged jobs. The piquetes thus had a heterogeneous composition in terms of gender, age, race and ethnicity, as well as political ideologies and organizing experiences. Mazzeo (2006) argues that it was both this former political experience of older workers with trade union backgrounds, and the new energy of young people who had never held formal, stable work that accounted for the movement's innovation and success. For example, members of the MTD of La Matanza included former metallurgic factory workers and schoolteachers, former domestic workers, many 'self-employed' who made a living by reselling goods from wholesale markets or selling food prepared in their homes, as well as younger people with even less work experience. One young man recounts that he had worked in a family member's kiosk, as a handyman, and in a series of other odd jobs. Another that he had worked for a hairdresser and as an electrician, at the time, he was studying computer repair (Interview conducted, Apr. 19, 2012). In the most successful cases, the MTDs were able to use this diversity to their advantage, bringing together diverse segments of the population and people with different skills in order to create new, innovative projects from schools to health clinics to cooperative enterprises, drawing on that wide range of knowledges.

The piquetes adopted the traditional tool of the labor movement and reshaped its spatiality. Rather than characterize the piquete as a less effective strike, we must recognize that the piqueteros took their protests not to the factory doors, but rather, to the streets of the city, understanding the city as the crucial site of capitalist production. Thus, it demonstrates an understanding of the importance of the urban space for contemporary capitalism production through the wealth produced through forms of urban social cooperation, becoming a sort of 'wildcat strike against the metropolis' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 259). Ferrara elaborates:

The roadblock attacks one of the central necessities of capital: its circulation. The blocked roads are both a strangulation of the mercantile process and a blow to the legal foundations of the system. If traffic is disrupted, freedom of trade is curtailed, conducting business is prevented, the economic flow is detained, capitalist legality is questioned, giving a dismal impression to investors around the world. Therefore, it is an important measure that hits the system in its vital centers. Capitalism cannot withstand roadblocks for very long. (2003: 38)

Dinerstein (2009), on the other hand, comments that the piquete is powerful because it allows for the materialization of the 'abstract' conditions of unemployment and makes visible the violence inherent in the economic system. Thus, for these commentators, the piquete is an entirely effective form of disruption and protest of contemporary capitalism.

The piquetes, as a way of interrupting capital, thus point to the productive capacity of the unemployed. For example, the *cumbia villera* and rock music and corresponding fashions that are produced and made famous in the poor neighborhoods of Buenos Aires become not only heavily commercialized, but are also then reproduced in the middle and high income neighborhoods of the city. Even more important are the territorial knowledges of local organizers and activists, women's work of cleaning and caring for households and public spaces, maintaining the affective ties that hold communities together, and the alternative and informal economic practices developed by the poor and unemployed to survive during the economic crisis (Gago et al., 2014). These activities all point to the importance of affective and knowledge labor, or 'biolabor' (Morini and Fumagalli, 2010). Yet, even while they are being exploited, these activities are often not recognized as work. Therefore, the MTD Solano emphasizes the importance of rethinking the concept of work itself:

The true obstacle seems to be the difficulty with breaking with the conception that labor is a capacity that is sold in the market, that is, something oriented toward producing profit. Thus, all of the productive activities not governed by this criteria are not considered work. Work tends to be thought of as the elaboration of products, which can later be justified to the government's administrative bureaucracies or sold on the market. (Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano, 2002: 114)

They argue that we need to broaden our understanding of what is considered work, beyond the generation of material objects, recognizing the diverse productive activities of the unemployed, as well as what other types of work are possible.

The piquetes then made this productive capacity of the unemployed visible and showed what happens when the unemployed withdraw their labor from the reproduction of the capitalist relation. But more than a form of protest, they functioned as a site for the construction of new social relations and communal values. They were encampments in the middle of the street, bringing together people who had been largely isolated from one another due to a lack of common spaces, they became spaces where people took care of each other, sharing food and other responsibilities (Dinerstein, 2009). Since piquetes would often last for days or week at a time, daily life had to be organized within them, including food and medical care, informal forms of self-education and knowledge-sharing, as well as singing and music-making to foster a sense of community. As Sitrin argues, a piquete not only shuts down a road, 'but also to open up a new space on the other side of the blockade' (2012: 175). Accounts of early piquetes compare them to a carnival, a space where power relations are turned upside down, and new social relations are formed based on solidarity and trust (Colectivo Situaciones and MTD de Solano, 2002).

The piquetes recognized and valued diverse forms of labor and it was there where people began experimenting with new ways of organizing social and productive relations. These experiments were taken back to the neighborhood as many unemployed workers' organizations started their own cooperatives or other productive enterprises as a way of creating 'work with dignity.' These cooperatives served both as a minimal source of income for the unemployed and the organizations, but also as a way to imagine and create other ways of working and producing. Different MTDs started cooperative bakeries, textile workshops, metal-working workshops, and other enterprises. Usually these cooperatives operate through mechanisms of internal direct democracy, making decisions through assemblies in which all workers can participate as equals. Many of these cooperatives also emphasize training and rotating tasks to break down internal divisions between intellectual and manual labor. These cooperatives, as a form of

autogestión or workers' self-management are important both as a form of survival during times of neoliberal crisis and because they prefigure other ways of living, transforming organizations, social relations, and subjectivities (Vieta, 2014). In this way, these cooperatives operate as a form of 'labour commons' in which the workplace functions as a sort of 'organizational commons' (de Peuter and Dyer-Witherford, 2010).

Along with these cooperatives that focus on more traditional forms of 'productive' labor, many of the MTDs have also created cooperative forms for addressing issues of social reproduction. For example, the School Yo Sí Puedo, which broke off from the MTD La Matanza in 2007, is a cooperative primary and secondary school. The school uses the unemployment benefits and other subsidies provided by the state in order to remunerate both the teaching labor involved in running the school but also other forms of social cooperation and affective labor involved in territorial organizing (Mason-Deese, 2017). The former MTD of Solano runs a cooperative health clinic, providing community health services to low income neighborhood residents, usually connected to issues of drug abuse and psychological problems. They also operate a housing cooperative, where a growing number of families live together, collectively producing food, caring for children and the elderly, and studying and learning. For this reason, the group changed their name, because, as Neka Jara explains, 'we no longer want to be defined by our relationship to paid employment,' (Interview, conducted February 18, 2013) in other words, recognizing that they are more than 'unemployed' even if not receiving a formal wage for their productive activities.

It was the political productivity of these movements that created the space for Néstor Kirchner, and later his wife Cristina Fernández to come to office and these administrations attempted to bring more and more elements of these activities under government control through complex and subtle forms of governance and capture (Colectivo Situaciones, 2014; Gago et al., 2014). However, the movements ultimately forced the government to acknowledge the multiplicity of labor, both in terms of focusing policy on these sectors and in terms of recognizing the political force of those subjects, which can be seen in the new generation of state benefits programs (Gago, 2017). While elements of the autonomous wing of the unemployed movement continued exercising autonomy in their practices, other unemployed workers'

organizations were directly incorporated into the government, often through administering different social programs. However, this incorporation had very ambiguous effects: on the one hand, it meant more resources were available for cooperatives and other social movement projects, on the other, it limited the oppositional aspect of movements, as well as their creativity and inventiveness as they were forced to deal more government bureaucracy and the temporal rhythms of state governance. Yet both Dinerstein (2010) and Colectivo Situaciones (2014) argue that understanding the complicated relationships between movements and governments in terms of binaries of autonomy or incorporation, or resistance or co-optation is not useful because it ignores the situated and complex nature of that relationship and the inevitable tension between the affirmation and recuperation of autonomy (Bohm et al., 2010). Regardless, and despite these contradictions, the movements of the unemployed were responsible for a lasting shift in understanding what counts as labor and who are considered laboring subjects and this legacy continues to be felt to this day.

The women's strike

Nearly two decades after the initiation of the piquetero movement, NUM formed in response to the increasing rate of feminicides in Argentina. Both an organizing collective comprised of journalists, writers, artists, and academics, and a larger movement made up of women from diverse class backgrounds, NUM has been responsible for organizing a number of large mobilizations, along with two women's strikes. The first national action in 2015 – in response to the brutal murder of Daiana García – included a public reading, including art, poetry, and other artistic interventions. The following year, NUM began organizing larger open assemblies, and then a large march on June 3 and a women's strike on October 19. This momentum carried into 2017, in the women's strike on March 8 and another large action on June 3. Yet the power of NUM is not only seen in these large public events, but also in how it has reframed the debate about gendered violence and women's work and contested gender relations at multiple scales and sites from the household to the university, from the street to electoral politics.

NUM builds on a long history of women's organizing in Argentina and a diverse genealogy of feminist struggles, especially the annual National Women's Meeting and the movement to legalize abortion. The National Women's Meeting, which has been held annually in different cities across the country since 1986, drew approximately 70,000 women to Rosario in October 2016. These meetings are self-organized, horizontal, open gatherings of women to discuss a variety of different issues affecting women, from reproductive health to domestic violence to discrimination in the workplace. There women come together from different political and ideological backgrounds, from different parts of the country, and importantly from different class and ethnic backgrounds. While women from various different political parties and some unions were already participating in the meetings, when women *piqueteras* began to attend in the early 2000s that the class character of these meetings shifted considerably. For example, debates about abortion from a human rights perspective were suddenly transformed when women living in slums began talking about friends who had died from unsafe, clandestine, abortions.

Drawing on these experiences, the contemporary feminist movement reflects a certain type of popular feminism, which has only recently taken hold in working class neighborhoods, often where the *piquetero* movement was strongest. Women's experience in the *piquetero* movement was contradictory and ambiguous: the movement featured high levels of women's participation and privileged feminine sites of the home and the neighborhood, while women rarely obtained leadership positions and were often confined to traditional gender roles associated with caring (Svampa and Pereyra, 2009; Dinerstein, 2010). However, women did not passively remain in those roles. In the MTD La Matanza, young women regularly challenged male members to have childcare work recognized as work equal to the work carried out in the cooperatives, or to be included in more of the leadership. Years later, these women, many of whom were only in their teens when they participated in their first *piquetes* are now leaders of the fight against gendered violence in their neighborhoods. For example, some of the young women formerly involved in the MTD La Matanza are now spearheading feminist mobilizations in that area, organizing contingents to attend the national marches, as well as workshops about gender violence

and comprehensive sexual education, self-defense classes for women, and feminist concerts and theater performances. This territorial work was essential in laying the groundwork for the women's strike.

In October 2017, in response to the brutal stabbing of Lucía Pérez by three men in Mar del Plata and violent repression against National Women's Meeting in Rosario, NUM called a women's strike. Organized in just over a week, the strike on October 19 was a huge success. Organizers called for women to leave their formal workplaces for an hour in the middle of the day, to participate in marches and other mobilizations in the evening, and to abstain from any type of reproductive labor for the entire day, including all types of domestic labor, caring labor, and the labor of reproducing the gendered relation itself. Participants emphasized the importance of telling their male partners and their male comrades within political organizations, 'we are not here for you today.' Indeed, they made it their mission to do only the work that was necessary to be together with each other, with *estamos para nosotras* as their slogan. The action thus made visible the myriad forms of labor that women carry out on a daily basis, often without recognition. And it served as a tool for bringing different women together, despite their differences, and to be able to recognize both the similarities and the differences in their everyday practices, their forms of labor, and their exposure to violence.

This effort to make women's labor visible and to link the devaluation of women's labor to violence against women is a key component of NUM's work. As the collective states in their statement calling for the March 8 International Women's Strike:

Using the tool of the strike allowed for highlighting the economic fabric of patriarchal violence. And it was also an enormous demonstration of power because we removed ourselves from the place of the victim to position ourselves as political subjects and producers of value. We complicated the category of women workers and made it clear that work is also domestic and informal work, and includes forms of self-managed association.³

3 The statement was translated and published in *Viewpoint Magazine*: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/02/16/how-was-the-march-8-international-womens-strike-woven-together/>.

Or as Verónica Gago says speaking of the October strike:

To strike is to challenge and block the forms of producing and reproducing life in homes, in neighborhoods, in workplaces. It is to connect violence against women with the specific political nature of the current forms of exploitation of the production and reproduction of life. The strike was the key that enabled us to unite those two things. This produced an impressive effect. First, because it broadened the idea of the strike. We started bringing together women from all different sectors, waged or not, young and old, employed or unemployed. This really caught on and activated people's imagination about how to multiply the effectiveness of the tool of the strike. What does it mean to strike in your position? If you are not unionized, but also if you are in an organization (in school or a community network, for example) and so on. (Fernández-Savater et al., *Viewpoint Magazine*, 21 March, 2017)

NUM directly links economic precarity to women's vulnerability to male violence and to ideas about women's inferiority and disposability at the root of the gendered violence. The women's strike thus was about work, about challenging its masculinist definition and centering women's labor, but it was also about the economic and political function of gendered violence. In the organizing assemblies leading up to the strike, women share stories of facing sexual harassment on the job, of being afraid to advocate for better working conditions because of fear of violence, of staying in abusive relationships because they lack the economic means to leave. Organizers draw connections between these experiences, referencing Rita Segato's work (2016) to demonstrate how violence against women's bodies has a 'pedagogical' or disciplining impact that is essential to maintaining colonial power relations.

Yet, similarly to the piquetero movement, despite NUM's emphasis on labor, they have had a conflicted relationship with the major trade unions. The fast pace of organizing for the October 19 strike, called with little over to spare, meant that unions had little time to officially respond, leaving women workers from various unions free to participate in the action. However, the March 8 International Women's Strike was a different story. Called in January of 2017, in collaboration with feminist organizers from Poland and other countries, there was ample time to build wider coalitions. Toward this end, women from various unions approached the leadership of the union federations asking them to endorse the strike. However, the union

leadership (all men, of course) responded by declaring that they were the only ones with the authority to call a strike. Natalia Fontana, Communications Secretary for the Airlines' Workers Union, discusses the conflict:

On the one hand, there are those who argue that the strike is a tool that belongs to the unions and only the union federations can call one. That is, they don't consider that it could be a tool that goes beyond the unions or that it goes beyond the idea of the unionized formal worker. [...] It is hard for them to give credit to a strike called by women, women who are organized and who are capable of transversely coming together with other women from other unions federations and political and social organizations. (Fernández-Savater et al., *Viewpoint Magazine*, 21 March, 2017)

The trade union federations thus refused to endorse the International Women's Strike and, as a countermeasure, organized their own march in Buenos Aires on March 7. There union leaders were driven off the stage by rank and file workers demanding that the unions call a general strike. The next day, in the women's strike, one of the chants was: 'the national strike was called by women'. Pushed by the demands of their rank and file members, and especially women organizing within unions, the union confederations were forced to call a general strike for April. This shows how women's organization and specifically their use of the strike tool, both threatened and pushed the labor unions, unions dominated by masculine leadership structures and ideas about what counts as work.

The union-like institution that was most supportive of both women's strikes was the Confederation of Popular Economy Workers (CTEP), an independent organization comprised of cartoneros, street vendors, market stallholders, micro-entrepreneurs, artisans, workers in cooperatives and recuperated factories, and other informal sector workers. It thus represents some of the most marginalized and precarious workers in Argentina: workers without formal contracts, stable or guaranteed employment. CTEP is also on the front lines of redefining work and labor organizing in Argentina: purposefully bringing together workers around the concept of the *popular economy*, rather than that of the informal economy, in order to recognize the productivity and creativity of that sector, which has been marginalized by formal labor union structures. Because of their precarious position, these

workers run unique risks in participating in a strike action for even one day. Yet, they were one of the first groups to endorse the strike. Here the links between the feminist and the piquetero movements become increasingly clear. Gago recounts an assembly of popular economy women planning for March 8:

We went with our friend Neka Jara and she was greeted by and reunited with many women from the *piquetero* movement. But the most interesting thing, as Neka was telling us, was that 20-year old-women would greet her, that is, women who were only five or six years old during the assemblies of the *piquetero* movement around 2001. Neka said: 'It's very exciting, they are the daughters of the *piqueteras*.' There is a very strong generational element that brings this intersection of the lineage of the movements of the unemployed and those of the popular economy to the street. Of course this lineage is not linear nor can it be unproblematized. Yet it is intolerable for the world of unionism: for all of that to appear under the status of work is intolerable. Because it problematizes the idea of work itself. (Fernández-Savater et al., *Viewpoint Magazine*, 21 March, 2017)

Thus, a clear parallel can be drawn between the piquetero movement and the contemporary feminist movement through their problematization of the concept of labor itself and the attempt to appropriate tools of the traditional labor movement to organize laboring forces in new ways.

Conclusions

The MTDs and NUM have much to teach us about the nature of class composition and labor organizing not only in Argentina but across Latin America as a whole. Defining labor only in terms of formal, waged employment ignores vast amounts of contemporary production and producers. Thus, the informalization, feminization, and precarization of labor point to general trends in which formal, waged labor is not the norm, and where affective qualities and social cooperation are increasingly put to work. These movements also show us that other strategies and tactics of organization and action are the most suited and have the potential to be most successful under these conditions. The piquete and the women's strike, as discussed above, are two examples of the re-appropriation of the traditional tactics of the labor movement, taken in new directions, but we could also look at the forms of internal organization and network-like

structure of these movements. Both the feminist movement and the MTDs are rooted in the spaces and practices of everyday life in parallel to the multiplication of labor across all times and spaces of lives. These forms of organization have also allowed the movements to be more heterogeneous and flexible, building on the diverse lived experiences of the unemployed, informal workers, and women workers.

These movements also show us that other ways of organizing socially necessary labor are possible, as are other social relations beyond work. In the piquetes, and to a greater extent in their cooperative enterprises, the unemployed realized that they do not need bosses, that they can collectively organize their own labor. Thus, the movements of the unemployed created hundreds of worker-managed cooperatives across the country, including everything from bakeries to textile workshops. Similarly, the women's movement challenges the gender division of labor toward creating new ways of sharing labor and responsibilities. The women's strike also served as a tool for bringing women together in a new way, in a sense demonstrating the same prefigurative aspect as the piquete. In the strike, women discover their collective power, not only mourning the deaths of the women murdered by male violence, but also celebrating a feminist desire. Participants take this experience back home and begin enacting new gender relations in all the spaces they inhabit.

The piquetero movement emerged as a challenge to the neoliberal order, the effects of structural adjustment and Argentina's growing international debt. They were able to show how the debt primarily affected low income populations, leading to higher levels of unemployment and the inability to meet basic needs. In a similar way, by making the connection between the devaluing of women's labor and gendered violence, the feminist movement has been able to make a profound critique of the violence on which the capitalist system is founded, as well as how this violence is necessary to maintain capitalist relations. They have also expanded their analysis to include a critique of the violence of financial capital, focusing on its gendered aspects, both in how women are disproportionately affected by the austerity measures accompanying the IMF loan, as well as how women are particularly affected by new forms of consumer credit for household items and basic expenses. In this, they were one of the first movements to bring

attention to and publicly protest the increase in external debt in the current moment under the government of Macri.

Looking at these movements, in these ways, opens up a new understanding of the current 'cycle of struggles' in Latin America. Going beyond the 'end of cycle' narrative that narrowly focuses on the governments in power, we can recognize the hidden undercurrents that tie together movements of the past with those of the present. Both the piquetero movement and NUM show that some of the fiercest opposition comes from these previously unacknowledged subjects and forms of labor. Yet, despite being unrecognized, this labor has long formed the backbone of capitalist production, and, as it takes place in a diversity of times and spaces, so do the forms of resistance to exploitation and extraction. Re-appropriating the tools and tactics from earlier generations of labor struggles, picketing the spaces of circulation and the urban production, striking from reproductive and affective labor, and creating new social relations in the process, these movements demonstrate the heterogeneity of labor and the diversity of points of extraction, as well as the complex forms that labor struggles take today.

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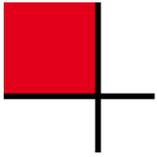
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Methodologies of resistance: Facilitating solidarity across difference in inter-movement encounters*

Johanna Leinius

abstract

This paper analyzes how Latin American social movements organize to build solidarity across difference. It asks what kind of organizational practices and discursive resources are mobilized in the meeting between heterogeneous social movements. By examining the meeting logics of two inter-movement meetings that took place in Peru, the meaning of methodology for facilitating communication across the political, cultural, but also epistemic and ontological differences between the meeting participants is examined. The analysis is based on activist research at two inter-movement meetings, the 13th Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (XIII EFLAC) and the 5th Dialogues between Knowledges and Movements (V Diálogos). I argue that the meeting logics of both encounters strove to bridge difference and create solidarity. By understanding difference differently, however, methodological decisions resulted in different outcomes concerning the possibilities of dialogue across difference, as I illustrate by examining the place and role of *mística*:

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By emphasizing the exchange of experience rooted in affect, the V Diálogos suspended rigorous borders of identity and allowed for practices of recognition that fostered solidarity across difference. The XIII EFLAC, in turn, celebrated co-presence as dialogue. Though it articulated a deliberative logic that foregrounded dispute, the performative celebration of solidarity overshadowed the challenge to solidarity voiced through the *mística*.

Organizational practices for ‘other’ possible worlds

In an interview with Michael Hardt and Alvaro Reyes, the Uruguayan social movement scholar Raúl Zibechi argues that in the organizing efforts of marginalized communities and social movements in Latin America, a society becomes tangible that ‘has different ways of organizing itself, including its own system of justice, forms of production, and organizational models for making decisions’ (Hardt and Reyes, 2012: 176). Contrary to the ‘official society’, which is ‘hegemonic, a colonial inheritance, with its institutions, ways of doing’, this ‘other’ society is ‘visible only when it moves’ (*ibid.*).

Critical Latin American research has argued that in the organizational practices of this ‘other’ society, different worlds are enacted that potentially offer more democratic modes of organizing and being (see Escobar, 2008; Dinerstein, 2015; Entrepueblos, 2016). According to Zibechi, one of the central characteristics of these ‘other’ modes of organization is the facilitation of horizontal communication between different groups that ‘until that point had never gotten together’ (Hardt and Reyes, 2012: 169). It is this *getting together across deep difference* that is increasingly seen as strength of contemporary social movement organizing in Latin America (see Santos, 2006; Conway and Singh, 2011).

In this paper, I trace how this ‘getting together’ was organized in two inter-movement meetings, both of which took place in Peru and explicitly aimed to foster solidarity across difference to build counter-hegemonic alternatives: the 13th Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (XIII EFLAC)¹ and

1 The XIII EFLAC was attended by about 1400 women from Latin America, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. It took place from 22-25 November 2014 in Lima, Peru.

the 5th Dialogues of Knowledges and Movements (V Diálogos de Saberes y Movimientos, V Diálogos).² While the first meeting was part of a long tradition of feminist organizing on the continent (see Alvarez et al., 2003; Restrepo and Bustamante, 2009), the second was embedded in the alternative political projects emerging in the region in the wake of the World Social Forum process (Daza et al., 2016).

My primary research question is what kind of organizational practices and discursive resources are mobilized in the encounter between heterogeneous social movements and what effects they have on the possibilities of fostering dialogue and solidarity across difference. I conceive of the two inter-movement meetings as characterized by meeting logics³ that foreground prefigurative emancipatory practice and the recognition of difference. I illustrate the effect of the distinct meeting logics by scrutinizing the role of *mística*⁴ at both meetings. I argue that deep difference can be bridged in meetings between heterogeneous social movements when rigorous borders of identity are suspended and opportunities for sharing collective experiences and affect are created. This, however, necessitates a radical transformation of organizational practices that goes beyond the mere addition of methodologies assumed to be rooted in ‘other’ worlds. The argument I make in this paper is based on activist research with the social movements in question.⁵

2 The V Diálogos took place from 21-23 September 2014 in Lima, Peru. The meeting was attended by 60 social movement leaders, scholar activists, and artists from Peru, other Latin American countries, Europe, and Africa.

3 To grasp the interplay between the discursive level of meaning-making, the organizational decisions taken, and the interactional level of doing, I put forward the concept of ‘meeting logics’. The concept is explained in more detail in the subsequent section of this paper.

4 The *mística* is a pedagogical and cultural practice that has been popularized in Latin American social movements by the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (see Máximo Prado and Júnior, 2003; Issa, 2007). While the *mística* can take many forms – from theatre performance to spiritual ritual, collective offering, or a merging of all of the above – the aim is generally to foster a ‘subjective experience in collectivity’ (Issa, 2007: 126) for those participating.

5 I have conducted 31 in-depth interviews, ethnographic research during four fieldwork stays – including activist research at both meetings – and analyzed a

In the following, I first give an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of my analysis and of the discursive and political context of the two inter-movement encounters. I continue by showing how the two meeting logics define difference differently, leading to distinct strategies of how difference is to be bridged and solidarity created during the meetings. To illustrate the effect of the two meeting logics, I discuss the role and effect of *mística* in both encounters. I end with an evaluation of what the two distinct experiences can offer concerning critical knowledge for fostering practices of liberation that take the recognition and respect for the different social worlds Latin American social movements are embedded in as starting point for counter-hegemonic struggles.

Meeting logics

I have chosen the two inter-movement meetings in question because in Peru, people as distinct as indigenous and peasant communities affected by mining projects in their territories, LGBTQ activists demanding an end to discrimination⁶, feminists fighting for an end to violence against women, and young people struggling for better working conditions have spearheaded large-scale mobilizations in recent years (see Arce, 2015; Hoetmer, 2012). Indigenous and peasant actors have sought to build alliances to urban social movements because the intelligibility and legitimacy of their demands is regularly denied by state authorities and in public debate (see Drinot, 2011; Silva Santisteban, 2016). There have been moments of cross-movement convergences in the context of state-sponsored committees (see Greene, 2010), the resistance to extractivist projects (see De Echave and Diez, 2013:

variety of documents, focusing in particular on the two reports on the meetings compiled by the organizers.

- 6 I use the abbreviation LGBTQ for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer' activism to identify the movements that struggle for the rights of those whose sexuality or gender is perceived as deviant and who therefore experience discrimination and violence. In Peru, the issue of intersex activism has not (yet) been articulated in social movement mobilization, which is why I do not use the abbreviation LGBTQI (for a similar reasoning, see van den Berge and Cornejo Salinas, 2012: 9).

98-99), and as part of transnationally connected organizing against neoliberal capitalism (see Flores Rojas, 2011a).

But due to the country's history of violence as well as social and political polarization, mistrust towards those unknown or seen as different is high and social and political mobilization difficult (see Theidon, 2004; Hoetmer, 2006). Therefore, Peruvian social movements on the Left have faced enormous challenges in cross-movement organizing (see Grompone and Tanaka, 2009; Hoetmer, 2012; Pajuelo Teves, 2004), which is why they have had to develop explicit organizational practices of bridging difference and building solidarity.

As the two societies Zibechi describes are not autonomous societies untouched by each other, but 'partially connected heterogeneous social worlds' (de Lima Costa, 2013: 84) embedded in coloniality, the encounter between them is, even in the supposedly open spaces of emancipatory organizing, inevitably characterized by dynamics of exclusion and marginalization. Marguerite Waller and Sylvia Marcos, examining encounters across difference in the transnational feminist movement, argue that often, it is not a lack of desire for engaging with the 'other' on horizontal terms that reproduces a colonizing stance, but the inability to destabilize one's certainties (Waller and Marcos 2005: xxv), which 'makes opacity feel like transparency and ignorance like knowledge' (*ibid.*).

Social movement scholars as well have increasingly argued that research should not assume that knowledge and recognition easily flow between heterogeneous social movements once they gather face-to-face. They propose to focus on the meeting between activists as focal point for forming and maintaining activism (see Polletta, 2002; Chabot, 2010; Haug, 2013), some taking their cues also from organization studies literature. But even though in organization studies, meetings have been a category of research since decades (see Schwartzman, 1989), they have generally been perceived as a failure of the organizational structure (Haug, 2013: 707). Social movement scholars, on the contrary, propose to pay attention to the interactive processes of meetings as an essential aspect of the (re-)production of social order and collective identity (*ibid.*: 709), including examining the role of power and conflict within the internal spaces of and between social movements. Empirical studies have,

consequently, examined the decision-making processes of social movements from a deliberative-democracy (see della Porta, 2005; Haug and Teune, 2008) or cultural perspective (see Flesher Fominaya, 2016; Baumgarten et al., 2014). These studies, however, by focusing on the interactive aspect of social movement meetings, pay less attention to how the interactions observed are connected to the discursive and social fields in which the meetings are embedded (Leinius et al., 2017: 11-14).

The concept of ‘meeting logics’⁷ I propose builds on the work of Christoph Haug (2013), who, in his research on social movement meetings, has identified the logics of organization, institution, and network, and Jeffrey Juris (2012), who has examined the spatially grounded logic of aggregation within movements like #Occupy. I add a poststructural focus on examining the discourse on the meeting, because the latter shapes the social reality that steers organizational decisions, the behavior of those organizing and facilitating the meeting, the norms guiding interaction, what is perceived as disturbance and how it is reacted to during the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the meeting.

A focus on meeting logics also opens the analytical gaze towards the various dimensions that shape the meeting and its dynamics, for example its explicit rules and program, the – often contradictory – expectations of what is supposed to happen at the meeting by the organizers and participants, the spatial organization as well as the intersubjective relations developed.

Because every ‘encounter is mediated; it presupposes other faces, other encounters of facing, other bodies, other spaces, and other times’ (Ahmed, 2000: 7), the interplay between the discursive, organizational, and interactional levels of the meeting – the meeting logics, in short – needs to be supplement with a careful analysis of the context in which the meeting develops.

7 I use a poststructural understanding of logics as ‘the type of relations between entities that makes possible the actual operation of that system of rule’ (Laclau, 2000: 283), aiming to identify the underlying ‘rules or grammar of the practice[s]’ (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 136) that co-constitute both the meetings and the subjects participating in them.

In the following, I therefore show how the meeting logics of the two meetings were shaped by the embeddedness of the meetings in very specific discursive fields and historical trajectories. I illustrate the interplay between the discursive, organizational, and interactive levels by analyzing the role of *mística*, discussing whether spaces for actual dialogue across difference were opened.

The meeting logics of the two inter-movement encounters

Recognizing the diversity of Latin American feminisms: The XIII EFLAC

The 13th Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter (XIII EFLAC) is part of a series of Latin American feminist meetings that have been organized in regular intervals since 1981 with the explicit intention to create an open space for feminists of the region to meet, share their experiences, and forge common struggles (Curiel and Espinosa Miñoza, 1998: 4). The deep rifts within the region's feminisms are regularly enacted at the EFLACs. Nevertheless, a concern for ensuring that the heterogeneity of the diverse feminisms existing in the region can be expressed has guaranteed the continued relevance of the EFLAC for Latin American feminist organizing (Abracinskas, 1998: 54; Curiel and Espinosa Miñoza, 1998: 8)⁸. As a consequence, the EFLAC has no overarching institutionalized organizational structure. Decisions are taken by the final plenary at the end of each encounter, and the topic and methodology of each encounter is left to the local organizing committee.

Methodological choices have always been one of the main points of contention (see Restrepo and Bustamante, 2009; Curiel and Espinosa Miñoza, 1998). This holds true for the organization of the XIII EFLAC as well, which was spearheaded by the three largest Peruvian feminist NGOs,⁹ which were striving to mitigate the simmering conflict between autonomous and

8 Unless indicated otherwise, I translated all quotes that follow from Spanish to English.

9 These were the Flora Tristán Center of the Peruvian Woman (Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán), the Movimiento Manuela Ramos (Manuela Ramos Movement), and the feminist human rights organization DEMUS.

‘institutionalized’¹⁰ feminists within Latin American feminisms through their organizational choices. This included the decision to focus on ‘Encounters in Diversity’ as overarching theme of the XIII EFLAC. The struggle over the meaning of ‘diversity’ propelled the Peruvian organizers to not only strive to integrate both autonomous and ‘institutionalized’ feminist positions¹¹ but also to try to bridge the divide to other women’s movements not necessarily identifying as feminist by emphasizing the value of heterogeneity for emancipatory struggle in the Political Manifesto published before the actual encounter.¹²

The discursive emphasis on the value of diversity was translated into the methodology of the meeting: The three thematic sections ‘critical interculturality’, ‘sustainability of life’, and ‘body and territory’ were set as

10 I use the translation ‘institutionalized’ feminists for ‘feministas institucionalizadas’. Other authors have either chosen to not translate the term at all or also have used ‘institutionalized’ feminism (see Alvarez, 2000; Alvarez et al., 2003; Vargas, 2016). The term denotes feminists working in large NGOs or in state institutions, who are generally characterized as being middle-class, urban, ‘white’ or mestiza, and university-educated. The term is often rejected by those identified as ‘institutionalized’ for evoking charges of depolitization and cooptation. During the VI EFLAC in 1993, the first critiques of Latin American feminisms losing their autonomy and becoming ‘institutionalized’ emerged. The dispute came to the fore in 1996 during the VII EFLAC in Cartagena, Chile (see Alvarez et al., 2003: 556). Due to the ‘trauma’ of Cartagena (ibid.: 560) the meeting logics of the EFLAC have, since then, been generally oriented towards facilitating an ‘open dialogue between all positions’ (Comisión Organizadora VIII EFLAC, 1999: 13).

11 While previously denoting mainly the relative distance or proximity to state institutions and NGOs, autonomous feminists have in recent years increasingly proclaimed that ‘institutionalized’ feminists are not only defined by their affiliations, but also by their ‘ideological, political, material dependency’ (Curiel 2009 in Espinosa Miñoso et al., 2014: 25) on colonial power relations and the subordination of those perceived as different, especially indigenous, Black, lesbian, or ‘popular’ women. Those identified as ‘institutionalized’ feminists have forcefully rejected this allegation.

12 Already during the preparatory phase, however, critique was voiced that the language of the Political Manifesto was too academic (13 EFLAC, 2014d: 29), while others complained that the traditional focus of the feminist movement on subjectivity and rights was watered down because of the emphasis on interculturality and intersectionality (ibid.).

transversal themes, providing the structuring axes of the first three days of the four-day meeting: They served as the topics of the morning plenaries and of the self-organized workshop taking place during the afternoons of the three days. Prior to the XIII EFLAC, three regional feminist meetings were organized to counteract the tendency of the Peruvian feminist movement to focus on the capital Lima, to visibilize the existence of feminists in the regions, and to invite women activists from indigenous and rural movements to participate in the encounter (13 EFLAC, 2014d: 32).

The decision to showcase the diversity within Latin American feminisms was moreover expressed in the choice of the panelists for the morning plenaries: They were chosen ‘taking into account the diversity of perspectives, identities, and Latin America political proposals’ (*ibid.*: 43). After the panels, the audience was to be divided into sub-plenaries, in which the topics of the plenary were to be discussed (*ibid.*). The addition of the sub-plenaries was argued for by those in the organizing committee who believed that for actual dialogue across difference to happen, spaces enabling the exchange of experiences beyond the assembly-style format of the morning panels were needed.

Engaging with the interdependency of all emancipatory struggles: The V Diálogos

The 5th Diálogos de Saberes y Movimientos (Dialogues of Knowledges and Movements, V Diálogos) were organized by the Lima-centered Programa Democracia y Transformación Global (Program Democracy and Global Transformation, PDTG).¹³ The PDTG is, according to its self-description:

an environmental, feminist organization of the Left, with a well-developed, clear methodological proposal, which aims to (...) link the biggest number of experiences to construct a proposal of generating ties of articulation. (interview, 05/11/2014)

13 The PDTG, a center for popular education and militant research founded in 2002, identifies as part of the World Social Forum process. Starting as a post-graduate program within the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, one of Peru’s largest public universities, it moved out of the university in 2007, institutionalizing itself as an NGO to accompany social movements and connect their struggles.

The Diálogos are a format for inter-movement meetings the PDTG initiated in 2010 to develop pedagogical and organizational modes of ‘encountering each other, entering into dialogue, and connecting social movements’ (Daza et al., 2016: 75). The difficulties of constructing alliances across Peruvian social movement struggles led to the Diálogos explicitly experimenting with ‘methodology that goes further than programmatic discussions, the negotiation of agreements’ (interview, 17/02/2013).¹⁴

Drawing on the methodology of the Popular University of Social Movements (cf. UPMS, 2016), Reflect-Acción¹⁵ as well as feminist pedagogical approaches, the Diálogos strive to circumvent the written word by using oral or visual methods to generate knowledge collectively (interview, 19/11/2014). Since 2010, six Diálogos have been organized. The number and background of participants varied, but usually, artists, activist scholars, and activists from Peru and abroad attended, who were part of feminist, women’s, and LGBTQ movements, student, afro-descendant, indigenous, peasant, and shantytown organizations, trade unions as well as political parties and collectives (see Daza et al., 2016: 71-72).

14 In 2003, several organizations of the Peruvian Left, among them the PDTG, strove to organize a Social Forum in Peru. While the project eventually failed, a variety of social movement encounters built on the ties developed during the process were organized, among them the Encuentro Grande in Tambogrande (Great Encounter in Tambogrande) organized in 2004, the Cumbre de los Pueblos - Enlazando Alternativas 3 (People’s Summit - Linking Alternatives 3) of 2008, the Popular University of Social Movements of 2006, and the Diálogos Inter-Movimientos de Mujeres (Women’s Inter-Movement Dialogues) in 2009-2010. The latter two were organized by the PDTG, which also participated in the first two (for more information, see Flores Rojas, 2011b; Bebbington et al., 2008; Daza et al., 2016).

15 Reflect-Acción is a methodology for fostering emancipatory social change developed in the 1990s in Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Uganda and then disseminated transnationally through capacity-building workshops (Archer and Newman, 2003: 5). It is practiced by a transnational network of practitioners of popular education that draws on the methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Paulo Freire’s approach to collective learning, and feminist pedagogy to construct an ‘on-going democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant to them’ (Reflect-Action, 2009).

The methodology of the V Diálogos aimed to challenge the dominant ‘system of capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal domination’ (PDTG, 2014a), which is seen as inhibiting alliance-building between social movements, because it foregrounds logocentrism, or the belief in an overarching order of meaning based on hierarchized binary oppositions, thus perpetuating the hierarchization of difference. Logocentrism is believed to be challenged by engaging with each other bypassing the word as well as fixed identity categories, for example through ‘dance, music, corporeal expressions, the místicas, the exercises’ (PDTG, 2014b: 145). The methodology of the Diálogos, consequently, strove to

recover the important histories, moments, or situations lived, find paths that allow to express them in their complexity and richness, problematize them and create spaces of dialogue for the more plural inter-learning between the subjects. (Daza et al., 2016: 93)

By sharing personal experiences, recognizing the interweaving of individual and collective histories, and learning how they have been shaped by oppressive relations of power, the hierarchization between groups that, according to the PDTG, contributes to fragmentation and polarization is to be overcome.

Seeing difference differently

Both the V Diálogos and on the XIII EFLAC put forward the notion of a civilizational crisis which allows for alternatives to the current system to be articulated.¹⁶ But the system that is in crisis is characterized differently in the two encounters, which shaped the conditions under which difference could be articulated: In the discourse on the XIII EFLAC, the system in crisis is defined as constituted by multiple, but separate dimensions of domination:

16 The notion of a ‘civilizational crisis’ points to the multidimensionality of the overlapping crises of which the global financial crisis that began roughly a decade ago is seen as only one aspect of (Gills, 2010; Veltmeyer, 2010). In Latin American activism and critical academia, in particular, the term is used to underline that the climate, water, food, financial, and other crises can be traced back to the underlying crisis of the Western civilizational model (Escobar, 2015: 455; see also Daza et al., 2012).

So, in capitalist-neoliberal, colonial, patriarchal, heteronormative, and racist societies, where relations of domination and oppression rule, our bodies are affected by these relations that leave the imprints of exploitation, subordination, repression, racism, and discrimination. (13 EFLAC, 2014c: 1)

Because these oppressions inscribe themselves differently onto women's bodies, women have different experiences that result in different identities and outlooks. Because difference can be traced back to the distinct dimensions of oppression, difference is, on the one hand, inevitably tied to inequality. On the other hand, it can serve as the entry point for understanding how the different dimensions of oppression work, as a first step to challenging them:

(...) the diversities that characterize our societies are dyed with inequality and violence, and reflect severe imbalances of power, which has consequences for our movements. Evidently, diversity has neither been valued nor understood as a concrete possibility for challenging discrimination in all its forms. (13 EFLAC, 2014c: 2)

An already existing commonality between women is therefore posited, which enables solidarity across difference as soon as women recognize that though their experiences of oppression might be different, they share the 'common difference' of having been subject to violence and oppression.

According to the meeting logics of the XIII EFLAC, this recognition can be fostered by women talking about their experiences of oppression. But because difference is interwoven with inequality and the dimensions of oppression are distinct, the exchange of experiences will inevitably result in conflicts. Learning to manage conflict is therefore a necessary ability for being able to recognize the common ground of women's oppression. This discursive logics can be depicted in the Final Declaration of the XIII EFLAC:

we have listened to each other, we have learned, we have disputed views, positionings, and interpretations. Today in Lima-Peru, we re-encounter each other and we continue deepening our debates and constructing our collective knowledges. (...) we are progressing and this is the richness of our feminisms (...). (13 EFLAC, 2014b)

Listening and learning is as indispensable to building solidarity across difference as is disputing 'views, positionings, and interpretations'. This

echoes a deliberative ethos, which posits debate and dispute as central mode of strengthening the Latin American feminist movements.

What can also be depicted is a notion of teleological progression: The encounter is positioned as ‘re-encounter’, as part of a larger process fueled by dispute. The organizational logics of the XIII EFLAC, centered on the morning plenaries in which the panelists were chosen as representatives of specific differences and expected to represent and articulate the most diverse points of view possible, mirrored this discursive logics of fostering dispute as a means to confront inequalities and be able to recognize women’s ‘common differences’.

The discourse on the Diálogos, in turn, assumes the existence of a system of domination anchored in modernity, which is characterized by one overarching fragmenting logics:

With the Diálogos we understand that this system of domination, strongly articulated and strengthened through modernity, fragments us. It breaks bonds, it isolates and reifies us in order to commodify everything. It creates borders of identity and dichotomous positions in order to exercise more control over people’s life. It hierarchizes us. (Daza et al., 2016: 88)

Positing fragmentation, polarization, and hierarchization as the roots of oppression means that ‘the power to build bonds and commonalities is highly revolutionary’ (Daza et al., 2016: 88).

Difference is not a violent side-effect of oppression and domination, as in the discourse on the XIII EFLAC: People are different because they are embedded in different environments and webs of social relations, and as ‘it is the relations that constitute us’ (PDTG, 2014b: 67), difference is an inherent feature of life. What needs to be challenged is not difference as such, but the ordering of difference in hierarchies of power and knowledge as well as the inequalities that are legitimized by negating and obscuring the relationality of all beings. By fixing difference in homogenizing and dichotomous categories, the multiple and fluid affiliations of all beings are denied.

The discursive logics of the V Diálogos, consequently, are based on positing difference as the outcome of the inherent relationality of human existence. Methodologically, this translates into mapping difference tied to socio-spatial

environments ('territories' in the discursive vocabulary of the V Diálogos) to identify points of possible convergence that do neither negate nor strive to overcome difference. The organizers of the V Diálogos concordantly write in the thank-you letter to the participants of the V Diálogos:

[The V Diálogos] was a space to exchange knowledges, affects, and smiles, enriching through intercultural construction our methodological practices, listening and contributing from the intersectionality of struggles, understanding all struggles as necessary and just and asking ourselves in various moments how to build more bridges between movements, our political practices, and methodological reflections.

Because all struggles are 'necessary and just', the building of bridges between struggles is set at the central goal of the encounter. The 'revolutionary power to build bonds' is translated into a methodology that foregrounds listening and affect: 'knowledge, affects, and smiles' were exchanged and 'intercultural construction' enriched 'our methodological practices'.

Apart from emphasizing affect, difference is historicized by working together to reveal how difference has been fixed as inequality, constructing an 'ecology of struggles and knowledges' (Daza et al., 2016: 122). By circumventing the identification of categories of difference a priori, the recognition of difference is suspended and set as the horizon of collective learning: Instead of presuming to know who encounters each other and under which conditions, difference emerges as interrelated and as anchored in the actual personal and collective histories and experiences of those gathered at the encounter.

In the following, I illustrate the effect of the meeting logics by analyzing the role of *mística*. *Mística* has become a central characteristic of Latin American social movement practices aimed at transcending heterogeneity by creating affective and embodied practices that generate an emotional experience of the collective (see Issa, 2007; Dinerstein, 2015: 186). I show that instead of a universally applicable method of resistance, the function of *mística* within the meeting logics has to be taken into account when evaluating its effectiveness as emancipatory practice for building solidarity across difference.

Mística as mode of (mis-)translating between different worlds

Anchored in the political pedagogy of liberation theology, *mística* describes a ‘political performance’ (Flynn, 2016: 65) comprised of ‘short instances of theatre performance laden with the ritualistic use of symbols’ (Flynn, 2013: 172; see Gouge, 2016). According to Joysinett Moraes da Silva and Rafael Vecchio, the *mística* in the Brazilian Landless Worker’s Movement (MST) is usually centered on performing the life and history of its activists to raise consciousness (Moraes da Silva and Vecchio, 2006: 376). The practice of performing *mística* during social movement gatherings has, however, travelled from the MST to other Latin American social movements, and, in the course of these travels, has been adapted to the needs of the activists enacting it. The term ‘*mística*’ can therefore refer to a variation of political and pedagogical practices, from short political theater performed during a meeting of activists, to the joint singing of a song during such a gathering, as well as to the tangible result of these practices, often in the form of an ‘*ofrenda*’ (‘offering’) displaying the symbols used during the performance. The common denominator of the varied practices called *mística* is the aim to foster a ‘subjective experience in collectivity’ (Issa, 2007: 126), binding the participants together across their differences.

In the meeting logics of the V Diálogos, *mística* functioned as ‘a shared creation of collective recognition, where song and the various spiritualities present invited us to see the importance of these aspects in the struggles of resistance’ (PDTG, 2014b: 4).

The V Diálogos began with a *mística*, set right after all participants had convened: After a member of the Peruvian indigenous-rural women’s organization Femucarinap¹⁷ explained how they used *mística* within their movement, every participant was asked to showcase a symbol that, for them, embodied their struggle (a flag, a patch, some brought seeds, other drew symbols on a paper) and to walk around, finding people whose symbols seemed similar to one’s own. The groups that were formed were then asked to converse about the origin and the meaning of their symbols, finding a

17 The National Federation of Peasant, Artisan, Indigenous, Native and Salaried Women of Peru (Femucarinap) was created in 2008 by peasant and indigenous women previously organized in the peasant federation CCP (Olea Mauleón et al., 2012: 71-74).

common symbol that could represent the group as a whole. This group symbol was then presented and arranged on a woven fabric adorned with Andean seeds displayed in clay pots, flowers, instruments, and spiritual tokens. The groups also shared a wish for the V Diálogos and burned coca leaves together (see figure 1). The *mística* concluded with a song proposed by an afro-Colombian activist and the meeting continued with the organizers presenting the schedule and the main goals of the encounter.



Figure 1: Enacting the *mística* at the V Diálogos (picture: PDTG)

The tangible result of the *mística* was transferred to the main meeting room and set in the center of the circle of chairs that served as space for the plenary sessions (see figure 2). It remained there until the end of the V Diálogos, becoming part of several other practices at various points during the encounter, with people adding symbols or notes. It also served as the focal point of the circle of chairs used for all plenary discussions.



Figure 2: The *mística* at the V Diálogos (picture: PDTG)

The subsequent *místicas* – there was one *mística* every morning – were organized by a commission created on the first day of the V Diálogos.¹⁸ Within this commission, composed mainly of indigenous and rural women, tensions arose, because some of the women in the commission felt marginalized by the afro-Colombian activist who proposed the song at the inaugural *mística*. When they voiced their concerns to the organizers, they did not intervene, justifying their decision by pointing to the marginalized position of afro-Latin rituals in emancipatory activism in Latin America.

At the XIII FLAC, the Femucarinap organized and performed a *mística* – announced as ‘Ofrenda a la Pachamama’ (‘Offering to the Pachamama’) in the program but presented as *mística* during the encounter – as well. The *mística* took place during the inauguration ceremony and served as transition between the welcoming speeches, given by a representative of the organizing committee of the XIII EFLAC and the mayor of Lima, and the cultural program.¹⁹

The *mística* at the XIII EFLAC was political theater aimed at translating indigenous and rural women’s experiences to the assumed social world of the audience, perceived as predominantly feminist, middle-class, and urban. It articulated the need to build solidarity across difference to end women’s oppression, but also formulated a challenge to those embedded in ‘official’ society: Accompanied by Andean music, Lourdes Huanca, the leader of Femucarinap, narrated the hardships in the life of indigenous and rural women, their struggles and histories, their spirit of resistance and their ties to territory. While she talked, members of the Femucarinap filed in from outside of the tent in which the 1400 participants of the encounter were convened, carrying enormous ‘rocks’ made of paper and painted with words like ‘machismo’, ‘patriarchism’, ‘envy’, and ‘individualism’ on their backs, their hands bound by chains made of paper. These burdens chaining not only indigenous and rural, but all women and inhibiting solidarity could only be

18 Most of the subsequent *místicas* were comprised of singing, dancing, and poetry readings. They also included methods that encouraged the participants to touch each other and share experiences.

19 The cultural program consisted of Peruvian dances and music as well as a feminist Batucada, or percussion group.

broken, so Huanca, if urban women would learn to unlearn and be willing to build ties based on mutual respect and recognition. She urged the women gathered, stating that

[y]ou must learn to understand that the peasant woman just as the woman from the city is wise. We have a powerful soul. Of being able to plant proposals and solutions. This is why we are here, compañeras. (13 EFLAC, 2014a: 00:21:35-00:21:48)

According to the narrative, indigenous and rural women attended the XIII EFLAC to build solidarity between rural and urban women. Translating this call to the performance of the *mística*, Huanca called for the audience to break the chains and destroy the rocks by singling out feminist activists by name and asking them to bring soil, seeds, and water to the enchained and burdened women. Once they received these offerings, the enchained women broke the chains and unburdened themselves from the rocks, symbolically freeing themselves from oppression. The *mística* ended by Huanca changing the words of a popular traditional song, urging all women from ‘coast, highlands, and rainforest’ to join the struggle.

The *mística* invigorated the audience, which cheered and clapped exuberantly. The dramatic performance of the *mística*, culminating in the breaking of chains, seemed to confirm the existence of a common struggle and of solidarity. The challenge in the words of Huanca, who called urban feminists out for having to unlearn their privileges by listening and learning from rural women and recognizing their differences as source of strength first, in order to then build solidarity, remained largely unheard. Those that recognized the political challenge articulated in the *mística* saw it as inappropriately placed and as disturbing the celebratory character of the inauguration ceremony, as was stated during a collective evaluation I attended several days later.

In the course of the XIII EFLAC, the active participation of indigenous women dwindled, as other conflicts, especially concerning the recognition of sex workers as well the struggle for dominance between ‘institutionalized’ and

autonomous feminists, took precedence.²⁰ While efforts were made to make the attendance of indigenous women possible during the preparatory process, their presence at the meeting did not seem to ensure their active participation in the proceedings, especially when the debate settled on topics they did not feel interpellated by, articulated in a mode that fostered antagonistic debate and ossified the rigorous and polarized boundaries between the political identities of ‘institutionalized’ and autonomous feminists.

The tangible product of the *mística*, consisting of an arrangement made of flowers, soil, seeds, and figurines rendering the outlines of the continent of Latin America, the feminist symbol, and a vulva, which was located right in front of the podium on which the morning panels took place, remained present throughout the encounter (see figure 3). It seemed to enlarge the space between those speaking on the podium and those listening from the audience, however, rather than connecting those present.



20 During the first two days, indigenous and rural women’s voices dominated the audience slots after the panels and indigenous and rural women were present on the morning panels. They were not represented on the panel of the third day. The solution of the organizers, who noticed the lack of an indigenous or rural woman on this panel, had been to ask an indigenous feminist to moderate the panel. While an indigenous body was on stage and thus, ‘diversity’ was ensured, she seemed not to contribute to opening a discursive space for indigenous women, as only one rural woman contributed in the audience slot. On the fourth day, indigenous and rural women were present, but did not intervene during the final plenary at all.

Figure 3: The *mística* at the XIII EFLAC (picture: F. Ekerlund)

Methodologies for translating between different worlds

The different role of *mística* in the two encounters illustrates well the challenge of translating between different worlds and languages to build solidarity. It also shows that hegemonic logics based on logocentrism are not overcome simply by adding methodologies of resistance believed to be anchored in ‘other’ worlds if the meeting logics as a whole are not transformed towards taking seriously the multiple ways of how certain ways of perceiving the world and interacting across difference continue to be privileged in social movement meetings.

In the *mística* of the XIII EFLAC, while on the level of speech, the continued separation of countryside and city and the need to learn to recognize the equality of struggles was underlined, it was the performative aspect, culminating in the breaking of chains, that captured the imagination of the audience. The context of the *mística* in the inauguration ceremony might have contributed to its cultural rather than political understanding. Another factor contributing to the audience not hearing the critique might have been the discomfort that acknowledging the challenge that was voiced might have resulted in. Those in the dominant position had the option to not make the effort of translating, especially when it would mean questioning their own normalized practices and asking how these perpetuate and legitimize marginalization and oppression.

Additionally, as the meeting logics of the XIII EFLAC posited the visible presence of diverse women as proof of success, measured in dispute, the decreasing participation of indigenous and rural women during the encounter was not perceived:

The indigenous women present in the EFLAC proposed to open a debate about the realities and demands from different visions and cosmovisions: it is necessary to decolonize feminism, propose new forms of relating ourselves, recognizing the contributions of both movements and establishing common points of action: the struggle against all forms of violence, discrimination and racism, the impunity, the violation of human rights. (13 EFLAC, 2014d: 74)

Even though there was no final declaration of indigenous and rural women and the contributions of the indigenous panelists and audience members were rather heterogeneous throughout the meeting, indigenous women are represented in the final report as ‘having proposed to open a debate’. The meeting logics of the XIII EFLAC, centered on deliberation between clearly recognizable groups defined by their identities, presumed homogeneity and anticipated dispute, overshadowing the interactions observable at the meeting.

In the V Diálogos, in turn, *mística* was integrated as pedagogical practice that tasked all participants to actively participate and invest their emotions and experiences in the construction of a collective. The deviation from what was perceived as usual form of communication during social movement encounters in Peru led to feelings of discomfort: One of the academic activists commented that for her, the *místicas* were very uncomfortable, as she was not used to spiritual practice as a way to link struggles. In the collective evaluation of the V Diálogos within the PDTG, this discomfort was deemed productive, as it decentered modern logics.

The organizational decision to establish a commission responsible for developing and facilitating the subsequent *místicas* of the encounter also allowed for the protagonism of indigenous and rural women, who otherwise rarely take on leading roles in inter-movement encounters. It also provoked conflict between afro-Latin and indigenous spiritual practices, showcasing – but not solving – their plurality as well as the continued hierarchization of difference also within and between those part of Zibechi’s ‘other’ society.

The *místicas* alone, however, did not counterbalance the V Diálogos’ emphasis on producing results and the dominance of academic activists in inter-movement interactions: Group work, which was seen as primary space for the exchange of experiences, the creation of affect, and of learning, was conditioned on the need to produce results to be presented in the plenaries. While it opened possibilities for dialogue, it also privileged those familiar with abstraction and systematization, fluent in Spanish and familiar with speaking

in front of large audiences.²¹ The emphasis on affect and positive emotions also made it difficult to voice experiences of discrimination or marginalization, or even disagree publicly with others.

Methodologies of resistance for emancipation from below

In this paper, I have put forward the concept of ‘meeting logics’ as a way to analyze the interplay between the discursive, organizational, and interactional levels of social movement meetings. My analysis of the role and effect of the *mística* in two inter-movement meetings that explicitly strove to build solidarity across difference provides some insights into how methodologies of resistance can be fostered in contexts characterized by coloniality. It also opens new avenues for research that link social movement, postcolonial, and organization studies by focusing on the meeting between heterogeneous actors as embodied encounters, analyzing the continuing relevance of hegemonic logics in shaping meetings, and offering analytical tools for approaching the silences, marginalizations, and exclusions that these logics reproduce.

My analysis has shown that challenging the hegemony of logocentrism through other modes of creating community, like *mística*, is a first step but should not be seen as unproblematically counter-hegemonic in all contexts and situations: By presuming fixed categories of difference that can be represented by social movement actors, as the meeting logics of the XIII EFLAC did, logocentrism is perpetuated and the complexity, multiplicity, and interdependency of identity formation denied. But *mística* can be a tool for fostering encounters across difference. By emphasizing the exchange of experience rooted in affect, the meeting logics of the V Diálogos suspended rigorous borders of identity and allowed for practices of recognition that fostered solidarity across difference. Centering positive emotions and affect, however, limited the possibilities for conflict to be articulated, which might impact negatively on the sustainability of the ties of solidarity created in the long run.

21 This was recognized as a continuing challenge by the organizers in the reflection on the V Diálogos.

Methodologies of resistance that strive to include other ways of being in the world need to pay attention to mistranslations and disturbances, because the latter can serve as an entry point to critically reflecting on the continued hierarchization of difference even in emancipatory spaces. Allowing for disturbances to routine interactions and hegemonic norms to become starting points for collective critical reflection and transformation means ‘slowing down reasoning’ (Stengers, 2011: 139, original quote in English) to allow for that what is going on to unsettle that what we believe is happening. For organizers and facilitators, this means ‘staying with the trouble’, as Donna Haraway has called this stance of ‘learning to be truly present’ (Haraway, 2016: 1, original quote in English). By continuously reflecting on how the meeting logics shape the spaces and the interactions taking place within them and being conscious of disturbances and silences as opportunities for learning and not as obstacles to be overcome to reach the assumed goal of the meeting, methodologies of resistance can unfold their radical potential for other possible worlds.

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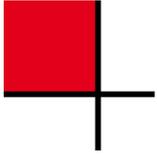
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Grassroots media activism and the counter-hegemonic narrative of politics*

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abstract

This paper examines the narrative dispute about the June Days. By way of a hermeneutic framing analysis of the corporate media, we argue that Brazilian newspapers managed to put violence at the core of the protests through a double movement that included the naming of a subject-of-violence (the rioter) and the normalization of the state of exception dedicated to halt their existence. We also analyze Ninja Media's broadcasting of protests through Twitcam, arguing that, more than just correcting corporate media's factual mistakes, the polyphonic framing of the protests presented by 'ninja' activists publicly debunked the founding myth of journalism, broadened the scope of voices in the public sphere and helped to foster a political subject in the process of representing it.

resumo

O presente trabalho examina a disputa narrativa em torno das Jornadas de Junho. Na primeira seção, a análise de *framing* da mídia corporativa revela sua contribuição decisiva no sentido de elevar a violência ao centro dos protestos, através de um duplo movimento que incluiu a nomeação do sujeito-vândalo e a normalização do arbítrio policial no intuito de asfixiá-lo. A segunda seção examina a narrativa da Mídia Ninja, argumentado que, mais do que constranger a mídia corporativa, corrigindo-a factualmente, o enquadramento polifônico operado por midiativistas

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‘ninjas’ desconsagrou publicamente o mito fundador do jornalismo; ampliou o escopo das vozes na esfera pública, redefinindo as condições do diálogo; e contribuiu para construir o sujeito-político-manifestante durante o processo de representá-lo.

Introduction

The literature on contentious social movements recommends starting the study of popular revolts outbursts by observing their structural conditioning factors, such as the ‘political opportunities and constraints’ operating in a given context and the ‘repertoire of collective actions’ available to the agents (Tilly, 2004; Tarrow, 2009). From this perspective, collective political confrontation initiatives are influenced less by social and economic factors experienced by individuals or groups, than by existing opportunities for challenging agents to make their claims. Opportunities include the opening up of institutional access, conjuncture splits among the elites, and the decline of repressive capacity of the state (Tarrow, 2009: 99).

None of these opportunities preceded the 2013 June Days (Jornadas de Junho), the largest political demonstrations in Brazil since the redemocratization: no institutional access had been allowed, the political and economic elites kept advancing their agendas, the state kept the capacity of its repressive apparatus intact. There was, however, a concrete dissatisfaction with the situation of cities, embodied in the issue of urban mobility, and a more diffuse dissatisfaction with what has been perceived as the failure of the representative system. The spark that triggered the wave of protests, initially called by the Free Fare Movement (Movimento Passe Livre), was the increase in bus fare decreed during the school term. The revolt would spread as a consequence of the circulation of images of police repression in São Paulo, widely disseminated in social networks. What began, in the first week of June, as a protest against the R\$0.20 increase, soon turned into a demand for the very right to protest. Millions of people took to the streets in practically all Brazilian capitals, and the demands of their agenda diversified as the scale of the protests increased. From early July onwards, the demonstrations lost momentum, except in Rio de Janeiro,

and fragmented into partial mobilizations with specific objectives (Singer, 2013: 24-26).

The bursting of the demonstrations caused astonishment, as expected, but the signs of its fermentation were already given, though it was only possible for the observer to clearly discern them in retrospect (Nunes, 2013b). The protests against the construction of the Belo Monte plant (Ultimosegundo@ig, 2011); the popular resistance in Rio de Janeiro to the removal of dwellings due to sporting events that the city would host (Caffé and Rodrigues, 2013); the attacks on the World Cup mascot in the city of Porto Alegre (Moraes, 2013); the struggle for the permanence of the Maracanã Village (Aldeia Maracanã) in its original place, or of the Friedenreich municipal school, both in direct resistance to the dictates of Rio's public power – all these issues, which overlapped part of the agenda that would appear on the placards and the demands voiced by the crowd as of June, had been echoing in the public sphere for some time. Considering more specifically the issue of public transport, which triggered the protests, something similar occurred. On July 22, 2001, an editorial by the Folha São Paulo newspaper entitled 'Primitive Rebellion' ('Rebeldia primitiva') reported that bus depredations in the city of São Paulo in 2000 alone totaled 636, almost two vehicles a day (Cardoso, 2013). In 2003, the 'Bus Revolt' ('Revolta do Buzu'), in Salvador, paralyzed the capital of Bahia. In 2004, it was Santa Catarina's turn to stop due to the 'Turnstile Revolt' ('Revolta da Catraca'), the initial point of articulation of the Free Fare Movement (MPL), whose founding plenary would be held in the following year, during the World Social Forum. In 2008, a major demonstration against increases in transportation fare in Brasilia led to the approval of the fare-free transportation for students in the Federal District. In 2010 and 2011, the MPL organized protests against the cost of transportation in several Brazilian capitals. In early 2013, demonstrations in the metropolitan region of São Paulo brought down the increase in the municipality of Taboão da Serra, a victory also obtained in Porto Alegre through popular mobilization (Movimento Passe Livre, 2013: 18). And while it is true that the working class, the popular movements and the rural workers did not lead the June demonstrations, it is equally necessary to acknowledge that they were not inert at all times, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of

strikes in 2012 (Secco, 2013). In short, much can be said about the June Days, except that they were a sort of political mobilization big bang in the Brazilian society.

Protest actions, whether spontaneous or led by structured social movements, sooner or later fade, until they cease altogether. The challenge is examining whether its gradual curb occurs for endogenous reasons, or if it was stimulated by external factors (Olivers and Myers, 2003). In the case of the June Days, three hypotheses could be put forward to explain such restraint: 1) having been unable to present their demands within a positive framework, the protesters failed to gain significant support from public opinion; 2) the spontaneity of the protests, expressed in the rejection of clearly delineated leaderships (traditional social movements, unions, parties, etc.), would have led to a clutter that, over time, had taken its toll; or 3) the alignment of the repressive apparatus of state and the corporate media in respect of repression. Since the two first hypotheses do not seem exactly convincing – either because the protests soon escalated beyond the MPL's initial circle, giving rise to diverse demands, or because the protesters did have a form of organization, although different from the one traditionally seen in movements (Nunes, 2013a), it is worth examining the third.

The task I propose in this article is precisely to examine how the June Days were discursively constructed by both the corporate media and the Ninja Media (Mídia Ninja), and to observe the political effects of these constructions. The June Days offered a unique opportunity to observe the dispute over the attribution of meaning of a political event, as for the first time in Brazil popular manifestations took place in a context in which corporate media no longer had discursive monopoly on public events. The popularization of the internet, coupled with the use of smartphones and social networks, allowed the appropriation of these tools to build journalistic narratives, something that was until then a privilege of large media conglomerates. In the streets and social networks, a myriad of agents – Ninja Media, Mariachi Collective, A Nova Democracia Newspaper, Projetação Collective, Vinhetando Collective, among other groups, as well as countless individuals – offered, in real time, a narrative different from that printed on newspapers' covers, thus inaugurating a new way of doing politics.

It is worth mentioning that this text does not intend to offer a neutral or unbiased account of the June events. I had an active role in this war of narratives. During the demonstrations, I was part of a collective that projected political messages on the facades of buildings. I speak, therefore, from a place ideologically committed to the counter-hegemonic longings that gained expression during the protests. But acknowledging personal involvement with a perspective – having experienced some of the events examined in this paper, *in loco* – does not mean claiming some kind of authority over the report, which would simply be fallacious. On the contrary, I hope that the arguments put forward here are able to stand on their own. I hope they are assessed taking into account their internal coherence and their relevance for raising questions about the reality they address.

If events do not ‘speak’ for themselves, but rather ‘are spoken’ about, then the challenge lies in observing the real effects that the framing mobilized in their representation were capable of generating, the purposes they serve, and what they might reveal about those who formulated it. For this reason, this paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will make explicit the negative nature of the representation of the protests as reported by newspapers, arguing that the main factor for closing and suppressing the contestation energy unleashed by the June Days was the alignment between government and corporate media in respect of the police repression. The role played by corporate media was especially important for two reasons. First, by framing the narrative of events from the outset in the realm of violence, not politics, it helped to build popular consent to the use of force in the repressive apparatus, which then appears as necessary and justified. And, second, by sanctioning police violence, it exponentially raised the costs of participating in the protests, as only the most risk-prone protesters, inclined toward violent confrontation, would remain on the streets. Therefore, it’s about understanding the contribution of the journalistic narrative to placing the dynamics of violence at the center of the protests, through a double movement that included the naming of the vandal-subject and the legitimation of police action in order to stifle them. The second part examines the narrative of the Ninja Media collective, arguing that it not only embarrassed corporate media by factually correcting it, but also, through its polyphonic framing, publicly deconsecrated the founding myth of

journalism, rooted in objectivity. Moreover, it expanded the scope of voices in the public sphere, redefining the conditions of dialogue and expanding the space of memory production, and contributed to constructing the political subject of the protestor during the process of representing them.

The media framing and the construction of the vandal subject

As noted, the June Days had three different stages: the initial marches called by the MPL in Sao Paulo, the explosion of protests in Brazil and, finally, the gradual restraint and fragmentation of partial mobilizations with specific objectives. The performance of the newspapers (O Globo, Folha de São Paulo and O Estado de São Paulo) varied according to these stages. From the outset, the delegitimization of the Free Fare (Tarifa Zero), the oversimplification of manifestations as acts of violence, the emphasis on the hindering of public mobility due to the blockade of streets and avenues. In a second moment, realizing the imminence of the massive explosion of protests, the attempt to set their agenda: the insistence on issues beyond the original repertoire of demands, such as the approval of stricter anti-corruption laws. Finally, the effort was to criminalize the protesters who remained on the streets, especially in Rio de Janeiro, where public marches were frequent until October. To observe it, let us analyze its discourse, comparing between the headlines of printed newspapers, which presents themselves as objective, and the editorials, in which their ideological stances are self-consciously enunciated. Some points are especially relevant: the closure of the understanding of the Free Fare claim, the construction of the vandal's identity, the metaphor of war as the rhetorical operator of the narrative framing of violence, and the demophobic fantasy that underlies all these procedures.

In the issue of June 8, 2013, the headline of O Estado de São Paulo (Estadão) reported, with the sobriety of those who present the numerical accuracy of a fact, the effect of the first march called by the MPL: 'Protest closes Marginal Avenue and slowness reaches 226km'. The inspiration behind the making of the headlines can also be found in the editorial of that same edition:

The protest against the increase in bus, subway and train fares, which on Thursday paralyzed important roads in the capital of São Paulo, between 6pm

and 9pm, was nothing more than a festival of vandalism. ... To try to understand this protest, one must take into account the many things that are behind it. One is the fact that the Free Fare Movement is simply against any fare or, if you prefer, in favor of a zero fare. It is not opposed to raising the fare from R\$3 to R\$3.20, but to the fare itself. Therefore, there is no possible agreement and, as their militants are radical, any demonstration they promote can only end in violence. Public safety officials, knowing this, should have ordered the police to act more rigorously from the beginning of the protest. ... In order not to look bad to the so-called social movements, for political reasons, the authorities have tolerated their misdeeds. Right now, Mayor Fernando Haddad, instead of condemning the vandalism promoted by the Free Fare Movement, hastened to inform that he is open to dialogue. Are you going to discuss the free fare with this bunch of vandals? (O Estado de São Paulo, editorial of June 8th, 2013.)

Here we find the main arguments that would then be endlessly repeated – the damage to urban mobility, the emphasis on vandalism and the call for stricter repression by the government, the implausible and radical character of the free fare claim. In addition to the stereotyping maneuver expressed in the adjectives attributed to those protesting (and at the time the *Black Blocs* hadn't even been named public enemies yet), it is worth noting that the very demand for the abolition of the public transport fare is presented as a *denial* to the possibility of a dialogue. If there is no 'possible agreement' with the protesters, the result can only be violence. The ideological gesture is to label such a demand as unthinkable, as if the debate necessarily had to start from the assumption that public transport can only be paid for, as if the system of concessions for exploitation by private companies were its natural starting point, despite reports of successful experiences of free public transport in at least 18 countries (Peschanski, 2013:60). Proclaiming the impossibility of an agreement is denying the issue of public transport any chance of being regarded in terms other than market ones, denying intelligibility to the socialist vocabulary implicit to the aspiration for the free fare. The question that ends the editorial, in a provocative tone, may then convey a statement: that protesters and MPL members should not even be considered as interlocutors. The provocation aims to embarrass São Paulo's mayor, Fernando Haddad; but it is the sense of this embarrassment, the exhortation for Haddad to refuse dialogue, which should be emphasized. It gives a glimpse of what is really at stake: not vandalism, broken bus stops and the shattered glass panes of banks, but the worldview that underlies the desire

for free public transport. In other words, if there was no possible dialogue, as the *Estadão's* editorial suggests, it is not because the protesters were impervious to rational or reasonable criminals, but quite the contrary, because they were articulate enough to question some of the assumptions that regulate the right to the city, which the Establishment would like to keep out of discussion in the public sphere.

On June 13, the headline of *Folha de São Paulo* read: 'SP government says it will be tougher against vandalism'. Below, a photo that caught the moment when a military policeman, blood running down his forehead, immobilizes a protester on the ground, while pointing his gun at protesters to prevent possible lynching. The editorial of that edition of *Folha* reads as follows:

Eight military police officers and an unknown number of injured protesters, 87 damaged buses, R\$100,000 in damages to subway stations and millions stuck in a standstill in São Paulo. This is the balance of the third protest of the Free Fare Movement (MPL), which boasts about stopping São Paulo – and comes too close to getting it. Its claim to reverse the increase in bus and subway fare from R\$3 to R\$3.20 – below inflation, it is worth mentioning – is just a pretext, of the vilest kind. They are young people predisposed to violence due to a pseudo-revolutionary ideology that seeks to take advantage of an understandable general irritation at the price paid to travel on overcrowded buses and trains. Worse than that, only the trifling group's declared central objective: free transport fare. The claim's unrealism already betrays the hidden intention of vandalizing public facilities and what is assumed to be symbols of capitalist power. ... The right to manifest is sacred, but it is not above the freedom of movement – least of all when the first is claimed by a few thousand protesters and the second is denied to millions. ... It's time to put an end to it. The City Hall and the Military Police must enforce the existing restrictions for protests on Paulista Avenue, in the vicinity of which there are seven large hospitals. (*Folha de São Paulo*, editorial from June 13, 2013.)

The title of this editorial, 'Retake Paulista Av.', suggests that the government had lost control of the streets, an argument that would later be repeated in Rio de Janeiro, as we shall see. The need to overstate the violence supposedly intrinsic to the protesters' 'pseudo-revolutionary ideology' goes hand in hand with the concern of isolating them socially – hence 'trifling group'. A double move, which the selective presentation of statistics will complete: there are numbers for everything (property damages, damaged buses, injured police officers), except for injured

protesters. The numerical question reappears at the end of the text as a mainstay to demand from public authorities the prevalence of the right to come and go, denied to millions, over the right to protest, claimed by a few thousand. Alongside the appeal to the public authorities for a repression that would *put an end* to the protests, there is once again the delegitimization of a demand that starts from a principle other than that of private exploitation of public transport. We see similar artifices in the editorial of the Estado de São Paulo, published on that same day:

On the third day of protest against the increase in public transport fare, the troublemakers who promote it exceeded all limits yesterday and, from now on, either the authorities demand for the police to act more rigorously than they have been acting or the capital of São Paulo will be abandoned to disturbance, which is unacceptable. ... Attacked with sticks and stones whenever they tried to contain the riot of the troublemakers, the Military Police reacted with tear gas and rubber bullets. ... The MP acted with fairness, contrary to what the protesters said, who accused it of truculence to justify their acts of vandalism. ... The reaction of Governor Geraldo Alckmin and Mayor Fernando Haddad – despite some reticence of the latter – to the protesters' fury and irresponsible behavior indicates they are finally ready to harden the game. The overly moderate attitude of the governor was already tiring the population. It didn't matter if he was convinced that being moderate was the most appropriate approach, or if, by political calculation, he avoided looking truculent. The fact is that the population wants to end the turmoil – and that depends on the strictness of the authorities. (O Estado de São Paulo, editorial of June 13th, 2013.)

Estadão's questioning, with its blackmail rhetoric, is in line with the final gesture of the text, that of pretending to speak for the 'population'. However, the day after this editorial, a Datafolha survey attested to the approval of the protests by the majority of the people of São Paulo¹. Sadly, the strictness to stifle the demonstrations, demanded by the newspapers, would eventually turn against the employees in charge of covering them.²

¹ The search can be found at the following address
[<http://noticias.terra.com.br/brasil/cidades/datafolha-maioria-dos-paulistanos-defende-protestos-contrareajuste,c107429bb514f310VgnVCM4000009bcceb0aRCRD.html>].

² The balance of police violence against journalists during the June 13 protest: a Carta Capital reporter arrested for carrying vinegar; seven Folha de São Paulo journalists injured – reporter Giuliana Vallone was hit by a rubber bullet in the eye and nearly lost her sight; a FuturaPress photographer was hit in the right eye

There is, then, an inflection, characterized not only by the press's emphasis on police excesses³, but also by a general change in the tone of coverage. Realizing the imminence of the outburst of protests, the newspapers partially abandon virulent rhetoric and the demand for repression to embrace, albeit with reservations, what would then be presented as the awakening of Brazilian civil society. The cover of O Globo newspaper of June 18, 2013 is emblematic in this sense: the title 'A country that moves. Brazil on the Streets' comes along with the (now famous) photo of the Rio Branco Avenue taken by the crowd, which seems to double in size given the reflection in the windowpanes of the buildings. Next to the main photo, which occupies much of the vertical length of the newspaper's cover, there is a box that reads 'The Battle of Alerj' (Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro), and another photo in which we see masked people around a huge bonfire in the street. The metonymic operation thus acquires a new meaning. Since the street movement reached massive proportion, preventing the reduction of the protester to the vandal, the narrative gesture was then reversed – and then suddenly it was not the middle-class segments of large urban centers who were protesting, but 'Brazil'.⁴ 'What began with vehement

by a rubber bullet and hospitalized (would eventually become blind); a O Estado de São Paulo photographer was hit by a police car. There began the repercussion of the police violence on the Internet, with a flood of videos on YouTube and reports on Facebook. To gather these complaints, the website <http://oquenaosainatv.tumblr.com/> was created. The next day, the São Paulo Public Prosecutor's Office called a meeting to discuss the excesses of repression.

³ Folha de São Paulo's cover on June 14 is emblematic in this regard: under the headline that read 'Police react violently to protest and SP lives chaotic night', there was the picture of a policeman assaulting people in a bar. The following day (June 15), Folha's editorial noted the following: 'The State of São Paulo's Military Police played a spectacle of unpreparedness, truculence and lack of control even more critical than the vandalism and violence of the protesters they were supposed curb. It is up to the MP to impose order, not to contribute to the disorder'.

⁴ The most notorious example of this change in the editorial line was the interventions of the columnist Arnaldo Jabor in the 'Jornal Nacional'. On June 12, Jabor claimed that 'the population had only seen such hatred for the city only when the criminal organization burned dozens of buses', and that 'the middle-class rioters' who do not know why they are on the streets protesting, 'aren't even worth 20 cents'. [<http://globo.com/rede-globo/jornal-da-globo/v/arnaldo-jabor-fala-sobre-onda-de-protestos-contr-aumento-nas->

condemnation’, writes Venício de Lima, ‘turned overnight not only into an attempt to co-opt but also to instigate and define the agenda of the demonstrations, introducing claims seemingly unrelated to the protesters’ original motivation’ (Lima, 2013: 92).

Although counterbalanced by the narrative of the ‘giant who had finally awakened’, violence would still be the thread of the media representation of the June Days, especially in Rio de Janeiro, where protests were strong until at least October. In Rio, the articulation between media and police repression had a very peculiar dynamic. On some occasion, undercover police began the scuffle during protests⁵; in others, the government has chosen to delay police intervention so as to let violent protesters act unchecked. The day after the protest in which many broke into the municipal assembly building, while also beating and injuring police officers, former BOPE⁶ commander and current public security consultant Rodrigo Pimentel stated, in an interview on the TV show *Bom dia Rio*, that the officers trapped were from the 5th police department, that is, not prepared for that kind of situation, and that the ‘riot police was at the barracks’. In the evening of July 17, police watched for about two hours, without intervening, the destruction of shops and shop windows in the city’s upscale neighborhood of Leblon.

All this suggests that the state government of Rio de Janeiro deliberately let certain episodes of vandalism run wild during the demonstrations. It is not

tarifas-de-onibus/2631566/]. On the 17, Jabor retracted: “The young people awoke because no one can stand to see the Republic paralyzed by partisan and private interests.” Warning against the danger of violence and abstract claims, the columnist calls for “a new politics, reinventing itself, but with concrete objectives, such as fighting the constitutional amendment bill 37, or PEC-37” [<http://globo.com/rede-globo/jornal-da-globo/v/arnaldo-jabor-fala-sobre-novos-protestos-e-ressalta-forca-da-juventude/2640269/>].

⁵ There were so many complaints and videos showing the action of ‘P2’ (infiltrated police) inciting vandalism that Sergio Cabral (Rio de Janeiro governor at the time) himself publicly acknowledged the fact, although saying he hadn’t been aware of it. [See, for example: <http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2013/07/cabral-diz-que-nao-sabia-de-policiais-infiltrados-em-manifestacoes-no-rio.html>].

⁶ BOPE is the elite squad of Rio de Janeiro’s police.

surprising, therefore, that the day after the biggest political demonstration in Brazil in decades, the cover of O Globo newspaper read in bold letters: 'OUT OF CONTROL'. The headline, however, reveals more than the surface of the words indicate. The hidden subject of the headline is the state, which, surprised by the force of the protests, would have lost its grip on the city. The illocutionary purpose of the headline is not only *assertive* – that is, it is not just meant to represent a supposedly given state of affairs – but above all *directive*. O Globo newspaper challenged the state, denouncing its weakness, accusing the state failure in fulfilling its elementary role of securing public order. In other words, O Globo was demanding an even tougher response the next time the people took to the streets in protest. But there is also a side effect of this kind of narrative to the other intended interlocutor. If the identity of individuals and groups is socially constructed through a dialectical process in which recognition is a fundamental condition for the constitution of subjects, then making broken windowpanes and burnt buses the centerpiece of a moment of political relevance meant giving the vandals a certificate of grandeur. As such, it served to assure them they were in fact a force to be reckoned with.

It was not long before the success of this framing strategy was so evident from the point of view of the state, that the very need to mask its exceptional character began to seem like an unnecessary concern. On July 18, during an emergency meeting at Guanabara Palace to address the vandalism practiced the night before, the Military Police Commander Erir Ribeiro stated that the pact between the police, human rights entities and the Brazilian Bar Association had failed. The press conference is broadcasted live by Globonews, which at one point divides the screen into two halves: on one side, Colonel Erir Ribeiro announcing the hardening of police actions thereafter; on the other, the *ad nauseam* repetition of images of banks and stores being broken in Leblon. Days later, on July 22, the Official Gazette reported that the State Government had created, through decree 44,302/13, the Special Commission for the Investigation of Acts of Vandalism in Public Demonstrations (or CEIV, in the acronym in Portuguese for Comissão Especial de Investigação de Atos de Vandalismo em Manifestações

Públicas).⁷ On the same day, Bernardo Santoro, director of the Liberal Institute (Instituto Liberal), published an article on the institution's website pointing out the many unconstitutional points of the decree, describing it as a 'DOI-Codi in a full-blown democracy'. On July 24, a small O Globo editorial entitled 'Agility' praised CEIV: 'With the establishment of the special commission made up of representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office and the police, the complaints to the courts against vandals are expected to be examined faster'. In short, the state government intended to regulate the exception that was already informally in force on the streets, to the applause of the only widely circulated newspaper in Rio de Janeiro. Even those unfamiliar with Agamben could criticize the maneuver; being an attentive liberal was enough.

In order to fulfill the function of structuring the perception of the June Days in the framing of violence, corporate media discourse made the metaphor of war the main rhetorical operator of its narrative. Metaphors are particularly effective as tools of persuasion because their essence is that of 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 5). These are not just ornamental aspects of language designed to create poetic effects (Gibbs Jr, 2008:3); 'it is a mistake, then, to think of linguistic usage as literalistic in its main body and metaphorical in its trimming. Metaphor, or something like it, governs both the growth of language and our acquisition of it' (Quine, 1992:162). If metaphors inform our perception of the world, then they also contribute to conditioning our actions in the world. They do it quite subtly. The metaphor we use to refer to a particular aspect of reality engenders a set of correlated dispositions or attitudes because it sheds light on certain aspects of experience while concealing others. In metaphors, 'symbols do additional work' (Goodman, 1992: 181), which may be either the construction of an unprecedented bridge of meaning or an invitation to establish a complicity between the sender and the receiver of the message (Cohen, 1992).

Metaphors used in the representation of political processes are never neutral, innocent, since they 'lay out the concrete meaning of politics'

⁷ The text of the decree creating the CEIV can be found at the following address: <http://www.legisweb.com.br/legislacao/?id=256720>.

(Zizek, 2006: 38). Hayden White points out that a narrative can be judged solely on the richness of the metaphors governing its sequence of articulation. Understood as such, the metaphor governing a historical account could be treated as a heuristic norm that self-consciously eliminates certain kinds of data taken for evidence (White 2001: 59). In a more general sense, the metaphor governing a given narrative of events creates the conditions for an assertion about such events to be seen as true or false because it will be evaluated within the metaphorical conceptual system that made it possible in the first place. But there is also the negative, closing effect of the metaphor; in this sense, the main aspect that the war metaphor tried to eliminate in the perception of the June Days was, of course, its political character. The peculiarity of the war metaphor is that it teaches us to *think by exclusion* (Henringer, 2013), establishing a Schmittian cognitive dynamic – you are either a friend or an enemy, there's no middle ground possible. Once incorporated into common sense, the metaphor of war sediments a terrain conducive to making certain inferences: it departs from the larger premise that (a) 'there is an enemy'; which gives rise to a minor premise (b) 'this enemy must be fought and defeated'; which, in turn, underlies the conclusion (c) 'since our safety depends on this victory, any combat action we take is justified'. The strength of a metaphor is directly proportional to the number of allusions it can muster in a nutshell (Swanson, 1992). If the June 17 protest in Rio de Janeiro was a 'battle' (of Alerj), it is because it is part of a wider 'war', and if we are at war, then the adoption of a vocabulary that includes notions like 'enemy' and 'army' is more than justified. Representing the June Days in terms of the war metaphor contributed not only to shaping a public agenda centered on the demand for repression but also to legitimizing it. Since war is, by definition, the void of law, the way for the police forces to enforce repression at their own discretion was then paved.

Let us briefly recap what has been said so far. Discrediting the idea of free public transport, which was the origin of the first manifestations, went hand in hand with the stigmatization of the subject who claimed it. The political character of the protests was emptied as newspapers highlighted occasional episodes of violence, overvaluing the images of conflict and repeating them *ad nauseam*, as if they were the very essence of the demonstrations'

inspiration – until the metonymic operation was completed. The *Black Bloc* then appears as an obvious candidate to stereotype: having no identifiable face in its uniqueness, it perfectly fits the role of becoming the abstract place of an ‘illicit surplus of meaning’, says Jameson (as cited in Filho, 2004: 32) whose function will be to demarcate the symbolic boundaries between politics and violence. It is evident that the use of the term ‘vandalism’ fits the description of a depredated bus stop; it is equally obvious that part of the protesters who took to the streets from June onwards can fairly be described in this way. But it is not a question of the appropriateness of using a word, but of framing the entire June Day narrative in the framing of vandalism. Newspapers can always claim that they were just chronicling the events unfolding on the streets – but isn’t it curious that they did it in the exact same way, or in the same terms, as the government would have done? If the government could offer a narrative of the June events, it would have used the same narrative framework as the corporate media, showing us how ‘impartial’ it is.

The whole point is understanding what the corporate media were actually doing while talking about the protests (Austin, 1990). In this sense, the *modus operandi* described here, which combined the naming of a subject-vandal and the adoption of a repressive strategy that had to exaggerate such subject to then appear as the necessary response to the threat they posed, resulted in a huge increase in the threshold for participating in demonstrations. Thus, taking to the streets in protest from mid-June meant risking arbitrary detention. Therefore, it would only be natural that those who remained in the streets were solely the individuals the most prone to confrontation. Facing a police force with *carte blanche* to brutalize and a media coverage that built the consensus necessary for its acceptance, the ordinary protester had no alternative but to withdraw. The story goes full circle, and newspapers may accuse the reality they helped to create – ‘See, only vandals remained on the streets, the true democratic and politicized protesters were expelled...’.

Lacan once remarked that the immense jealousy that the husband feels of his wife will continue to be pathological even if the betrayal is later confirmed (Zizek, 2010). Taking the reasoning to our discussion, it would be suitable to argue that, even though all vandalism took place exactly as

severely as the press described, this still does not nullify the fact that their representation, the way they were framed within a narrative, obeyed a principle that does not concern the vandal themselves, but rather the need to exaggerate their threatening villainous condition. From this perspective, what matters is the media's investment in the symbolic figure of the vandal, not the concrete materialization of young people who cover their faces and throw rocks at the police. Such an investment is a symptom, a manifestation of the demophobic fantasy that brings into being and at the same time supports the need for the investment itself. The true object of moral panic has never been the flesh-and-blood vandal, but what they represent – the affirmation of the fissure opened by the truly political act, that is, the claim of the part by the no part, which sets in motion the dispute that must reorder the counting of the whole (Rancière, 1996).

Media activism and the construction of the political subject of the demonstrator

Media activism is not exactly new. Indymedia, the pioneer, made its debut during protests against the World Trade Organization meeting in 1999; in Brazil, the first movement in this area came from the Independent Media Center (Centro de Mídia Independente).⁸ However, media activism gained new momentum with the action of the Ninja Media⁹ (acronym in Portuguese

⁸ Media activism emerged in the late 1990s, early 2000s, during anti-globalization protests. The Indymedia Network and the Independent Media Center (CMI) managed to hog the limelight, soon becoming a reference for the construction of media by users and protesters themselves, who could thus begin to narrate their own struggles on the Internet. The CMIs played a key role in appropriating the (then) new digital technologies for the struggle of anti-capitalist collectives and social movements, setting the stage for the most recent experiences to develop. I thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.

⁹ Ninja Media was created in 2011 with the Pós-TV (Post-TV), the digital media branch of Fora do Eixo collective. Created amid the Pontos de Cultura (Culture Points) program of the Department of Culture, Fora do Eixo (“Out of the axis”) has established itself as a network for cultural production and the development of communication technologies. Gradually, it also began to act as a kind of social movement, collaborating with various groups and collectives in many states. But, after June 2013, the collective became well known, mainly due to the Ninja Media.

for ‘Independent Narratives, Journalism and Action’) during the June demonstrations, although it was not the only initiative of the kind to cover them. The action of the ‘ninjas’ basically consisted of transmitting live images of the protests, using a cellphone (via Twitcam). The audience could not only follow, on Facebook, what occurred on the streets during demonstration evenings, but also interact with ‘reporters’ by sending questions or making suggestions, which they eventually answered, always live.

In formal terms, we can characterize Ninja Media discourse as a narrative that intends to intervene in reality rather than to represent it; a narrative whose source of legitimacy rested on the fact that it was a live and uncut first-person broadcast, which suggests an ethics of proximity. Contrary to the supposedly descriptive activity of traditional journalism, based on the ethics of impartiality, and therefore of distancing, the work of the ‘ninjas’ invites the engagement of the public to which it addresses. The following table summarizes the difference between these two types of journalism:

	Corporate Media	Ninja Media
Speech Type	Representation (Descriptive)	Intervention (Narrative)
Source of Legitimacy	Supposed Neutrality (Ethics of objectivity)	Openly Partial (Ethics of proximity)
Engagement with the Audience	Low (Little Openness and Responsiveness)	High (Co-presence and co-authorship)

Table 1: Comparison of corporate media and Ninja media (source: author)

The discourse of the ‘ninjas’ was the target of various criticisms and objections, which was only natural. Roughly, the arguments accuse the precariousness of the visual language used in the broadcasts, the lack of reporters’ professional practice, the partiality that would undermine the

ethical principle of seeking to capture the facts in their plurality of meanings, and the absence of an editing that could make sense of the long and unbroken streams of images. Many people even contended that their work could not even be considered journalistic: they were passionate agents who directly intervened in reality, not distant observers striving to describe it, therefore, they would automatically become characters of the stories to which they belonged, not chroniclers of the facts taking place before their eyes. From this perspective, it would not be possible to occupy the positions of observer and participant at the same time, nor to extract any broader meaning from the uncut exhausting transmissions of the protests in real time. Finally, there would be no real understanding at the end of a 'ninja' narrative, only spasms of political activism previously committed to a particular ideology (Moretzsohn, 2013; Gabeira, 2013; Escorel, 2013).

Such criticisms say more about the subjects who state them than about the object with which they deal. Let us first look at the objection concerning the alleged lack of editing, and thus, the sense-making of the broadcast of the protests via Twitcam by the Ninja Media. The misconception here is to understand 'editing' as synonymous with 'the absence of cuts'. But the lack of cuts or interruptions in transmissions does not imply narratives totally devoid of editing work, in the sense of consciously assembling an intelligible sequence of events. What position does the camera reporter take among the crowd of protesters? What subjects and actions do they preferably record? What angles do they choose? What people do they interview? And how do they conduct these interviews? All these choices are already an operation of selection, that is, they make up a clipping of information in order to offer a very particular perspective on reality.

Moreover, the coverage of manifestations by 'ninjas' is a dialogical process in which the narrative is being constructed throughout the event also due to interactions with the audience, which, connected to social networks, receives information in real time and shares it, issuing police repression alerts at a particular location, making requests for information checks, etc. Recording and editing blend together in a spontaneous and uncoordinated work of interaction.

Despite this collective edition, the meaning-making problem would still remain, since the uninterrupted visual record, regardless of whichever characteristics it might have, would not be sufficient by itself to facilitate an adequate understanding of the events portrayed. The meaning, which critics insist on saying is not there, is constantly being constructed in the discourse of the 'ninjas', a discourse that reflects a markedly counter-hegemonic stance on the world. If all that 'ninjas' offered was just a chaotic jumble of images that failed to establish an understandable picture of reality, how could it have *resonated* with the protesters who remained on the streets after June? And isn't it interesting that this criticism is the exact reverse of that traditionally attributed to the traditional press, about how the habit of tearing pieces of facts would hinder their understanding within a broader order of events, making it impossible to understand their meaning (Bourdieu, 1997; Chau, 2006)? There seems to be no middle ground: corporate media shreds reality too much, Ninja Media refuses to edit it. What both critics fail to understand is the narrative structure that underlies the operation of reporting the facts, whether on the pages of daily newspapers or on the broadcast of protests over the Internet. It may not be very perceivable, but there is always a story being told.

Stories are created from the account of the 'facts', which supposes a plot weaving operation, in which 'events are converted into a story by the suppression or subordination of some of them and the highlighting of others by characterization, repetition of motive, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies and so on' (White, 2001: 100). Inserting the 'facts' into a plot is attributing a meaning to them. This construction operates both at the substantive level, the meaning added to a specific event, and at the formal level, the patterned repetition of models within which stories can be understood, giving rise to socially shared cognitive conventions. News stories not only inform what happens in the world, but also provide models of apprehension of facts that, once made conventional, are 'no longer a subject for discussion but a premise of any conversation at all' (Schudson, 1999: 279). In other words, journalistic discourse sets a frame of reference within which the stories presented may gain particular, narratively constructed meanings. Thus, journalistic narratives become ways

of world making (Goodman, 1995), that is, they are able to construct realities during the process of representing them.

This goes for both traditional journalism and media activism. But reducing the weight of the criterion of correspondence with reality does not mean discarding it entirely, which would lead to the elimination of the boundaries that distinguish journalism from fictional discourse. Rather, it means prioritizing the project of anchoring the validity of journalistic discourse on other grounds.¹⁰ There is a difference between saying ‘facticity matters’ and ‘facticity is all that matters’, and that difference becomes more evident if we pay attention to the uses of words rather than to their meanings. Therefore, one should start from the recognition of the multiple illocutionary purposes proper to journalistic discourse, and the perlocutionary acts they help to place in the world, and then search for a criterion of validity in the critical imagination of the worlds that this discourse helps to build.

This is where the Ninja Media discourse reveals the fruitfulness of the perspective it introduces: it frees journalism from its primary fidelity to correspondence with reality without, however, falling into sterile relativism. It is not a question of rejecting the truth as a regulatory ideal, but of broadening the normative horizon of all description activity to encompass other ethical and political concerns, some of which stem from the very commitment to seek the truth. Thus, the criterion for deciding on the quality of journalistic discourse should not refer solely to the degree of objectivity of its reports, but rather to the purposes which those reports serve, the horizons they unfold, the possibilities of which they allow a glimpse. Rather, it is a matter of questioning the validity of the journalistic discourse in a way

¹⁰ Obviously, the guiding principles of journalistic work include the transparency of sources and the fairness requirement to ‘listen to both sides’. But none of this solves the problem we are raising. Sources contrary to one another may be mistaken, or even lying (Seidenglanz and Sponholz, 2008: 43); they can even be strategically employed as a false or cynical counterpoint within a narrative the newspaper is constructing. The main thing is always in the context: the judgment about the correctness of a journalistic action can only be formulated if its effects on the conjuncture in which it operates are examined.

that makes us reflect on how instructive the story is, how much it would allow us to understand about ourselves, and if it could open a fertile perspective on the events it describes.

It was precisely because it gave meaning to the events it dealt with, mediating the understanding of the June Days in a framing different from the one offered by the press, that the 'ninja' speech could engage the June protesters. The problem is not the difficulty of reconciling the positions of observer and participant; rather, the possibility of such a junction only seems problematic because of the old positivist fable that separated them in the first place. When we abandon the belief that such a separation is possible, when we are led to recognize, with Heisenberg, that all observation is to some extent participation, the problem is not even posed. One can always debate how much participation and observation there is in a given account, but it is a question of degree, not an ontological impasse. The boundaries between 'ninja' and protesters are more porous, or less defined, but they still exist: they open a space for polyphonic enunciation, without however diluting this multiplicity of voices into a homogeneous whole.

The demarcation of these borders is not trivial at all. Since the characters of journalistic narratives also become their coauthors, new questions arise about the relationship, which is above all a power relationship, between the subject and the object of the representation. In this sense, the nuisance introduced by the narrative of 'ninjas' is analogous to the impact of the ethnographic problematization, installed after the publication of *Writing Culture* (1986). The essays collected in *Writing Culture* displace the assumption of anthropological neutrality, as they buttress the perception that ethnographic account is always writing, and objectivity is textually constructed (Clifford 1986: 14-26). It was not without reason, therefore, that most ethnographers of the post-Geertz generation found in Bakhtin's work, in the notions of polyphony and heteroglossia, the inspiration for new modes of ethnographic authority rather than interpretive one (Clifford, 2002). When one assumes polyphony as a mode of textual production, the author / authorship / authority triad is undermined. Is this not precisely the effect generated by the 'ninja' narratives of the journalistic activity – which in fact explains why the first reaction of the field itself was to label these broadcasts as mere ideological work outside journalism's record?

Keeping the due proportions, we could say that 'ninja' media activism does for journalism something similar to what Writing Culture did for ethnography: the introduction of a new procedure for an old work, which questions the assumptions of representation from a perspective that, by contrast, reveals the ideological substrate of the practice it has come to displace. To paraphrase James Clifford, it would be the case that the 'ninja' discourse evidences the fact that journalistic work, although not fictional, is always a representation, a narrative account of a subjectively perceived story. Language matters: the detached attitude, which is based on the pretense to objectivity or neutrality, cannot endure there where language exhibits peculiar color and flavor. The 'ninja' narrative drifts apart from the analytical, rational and (potentially) dogmatic indirect discourse to the extent that it has a specific coloration, a characteristic tone that uniquely distinguishes it. The contrast is evident. The newscast sets a distance from viewers, seeking to reassure the audience (or frighten them); protected by the studio, the presenter speaks at a regular, homogeneous pace in the third person, while the interviewees have their speech cut off, edited (Stam, 1993: 160). The 'ninja' narrative, on the contrary, establishes a relationship of intimacy, relies on the sympathy of its audience, even because it depends to some extent on this interaction to continue doing its work. By explicitly assuming a color that uniquely distinguishes it, the 'ninja' discourse stands beside, not above, its objects, the protesters. This allows them to appear as what they really are – heterogeneous subjects, not an amorphous mass on which demophobic fantasies of corporate elites are projected. Not surprisingly, the most assiduous June Day protesters recognized themselves on online broadcasts, not newspaper covers.

This, however, poses a new challenge: if, on the one hand, the use of distancing, which would create the necessary conditions for the making of an objective account, is in fact an ideologically motivated fiction, on the other hand, proximity imposes the problem of excessive identification with the Other, to the point of jeopardizing the ability to capture them in their uniqueness (Caiafa: 2007: 150-151). It is not uncommon for such an identification to result in a perspective incapable of constructing any critical traction in relation to the identified group, thus obscuring the examination of its contradictions and impasses. Every narrative is constructed on the

basis of one-off exclusions, elements that could have been embraced but were left aside. Twitcam's broadcast of protests would be no exception to the rule. Since a close examination of this question would escape the scope of this paper, it will suffice to suggest that in the case of the June Days the 'ninja' narrative may have shown a certain tendency to absolutize its position, despite the manifest support for the multiplicity of perspectives (for example, the casualness with which the violence of protesters against traditional journalists was treated is concerning). Romanticizing 'ninja' discourse as intrinsically virtuous, just because it was born spontaneously from a counter-hegemonic position, can be morally comforting to those who adhere to progressive ideas, but is analytically counterproductive. Despite playing with the spectacularization of violence, many media activists and sympathizers have claimed a kind of moral high ground for themselves, which is not exactly beneficial, even if we admit the hostile context, the persecution by the government, and the criminalization imposed by traditional media outlets. Moreover, polyphony also hides its pitfalls, since the virtuosity of the assembly of voices may well only serve to confirm its manipulation by a single author (Rabinow, 2012: 86).

All of this suggests that the relevance of the 'ninja' broadcasts of the June 2013 demonstrations was not in the factual corrections imposed on corporate media reporting, but in helping to build a protesting political subject during the process of representing them. This is especially relevant if we keep in mind how fragile the ties of identification with a political event can be to those who may take part in its early stages. 'The fact that the event is undecidable,' writes Badiou, 'imposes the constraint that the *subject* of the event must appear. Such a subject is constituted by a sentence in the form of a wager: this sentence is as follows. This has taken place, which I can neither calculate nor demonstrate, but to which I shall be faithful.' (Badiou, 2002: 45; italics of the author). A wager, then: is it not precisely this availability, this openness to the possibilities that an event gives rise to, a necessary condition for the task of thinking about the June Days? From the point of view of the established power, what has always been at stake since the first manifestation of the MPL in São Paulo was the need to halt them, through the repressive brutality of the state, the appearance of a political subject who sought to remove the problem of public transportation from its

marketing framework to think of it as a matter of right to the city. By presenting a story different from that of the corporate media, 'ninja' broadcasts not only made evident, by contrast, all that such a story had to exclude in order to tell a lie by only telling truths, but also helped to create a sense of belonging to a 'we' whose truth was still open, being built during the manifestations themselves.

In spite of its shortcomings and limitations, the June Day 'ninja' narrative at least had the merit of placing in the world a novelty that sought to untie the knot of political immobility, claiming more participation and right to the city. It denaturalized corporate media discourse, revealing by contrast its ideologically motivated fictional character. It has undermined its monopoly of Truth production. It did this not from a centralized place of speech, but from a myriad of collective and individual perspectives, forming a polyphony whose authority cannot be fully claimed by any specific agent. 'Polyphony', asserts Robert Stam, 'does not consist in the mere appearance of a representative of a given group but rather in the fostering of a textual setting where that group's voice can be heard with its full force and resonance' which implies in the objective change of the position of the interlocutors, not in a mere addition to an arrangement given beforehand (Stam, 1993: 167). More than broadening and diversifying the voices in the public sphere, media activism began to redefine the conditions of dialogue – which is itself a political act.

Concluding remarks

The contrast between the representation of June events offered by the corporate media and the Ninja Media could not be more evident. The challenge, then, was to examine the assumptions and effects of this contrast, and it was precisely this trajectory that the arguments presented here sought to follow. In this sense, the critique of such representations provided us with a good illustration of the Gramscian discussion on hegemony. Gramsci, of course, was aware of the fact that, from the standpoint of power, coercion is not enough; the state, or the elites who run it, depend as much on coercive force as on the discursive construction of consent to maintain the foundations of its domination. June 2013 exposed this relationship in a

crystal clear way: corporate media, the cultural hegemonic operator that has always had the prerogative of establishing ‘truths’ not only about the facts, but also about the correct way of perceiving them, has employed its full rhetorical arsenal to frame the demonstrations in exactly the same way that the state would, if it had the opportunity to do so (which indeed defies the Manichean interpretations of Brazilian political life, given that in 2013 the country was chaired by Dilma Rousseff, of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, that is, the Workers Party). In contrast, a myriad of individual and collective media agents presented a diverse narrative framework, paving the way for the construction of an alternative identity for protesters, thus contributing to the ‘resource mobilization’ process described in the social movement literature (McCarthy and Zald, 2003).¹¹

The lessons to be learned from the June events are not at all clear, perhaps because the very temporality that underlies the spirit of the claims prevents it – after all, its goal was to change the very order of the political game, not just the position of one or two pieces on the board (Nunes, 2013b). However, it is certain that media activism in general, and Ninja Media in particular, did not perish along with the emptying of protests in 2013. Quite to the contrary, we have since witnessed a gradual increase in the number and relevance of such initiatives. Consider, for example, the platform launched by Ninja Media in 2014, focused on collaborative content production; among the various media activism initiatives coming from the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, I have in mind especially the collectives *Papo Reto* (‘Straight Talk’) and *OcupaAlemão* (‘Occupy Alemão’), but there are many others; protests against hosting the soccer World Cup (2014), which once again raised the issue of the democratic access to cities; in the demonstration of the strength of the stoppage of high school students in São Paulo (2015/2016). Voices and protests gained scale and visibility because, among other reasons, they had the opportunity to represent themselves in the public sphere, rather than being unilaterally represented by the prevailing corporate power.

Of course, counter-hegemonic perspectives have failed to gain all discursive authority over themselves, and continue to be described in often negative, stereotyped ways. There is still the question, which remains open, whether

¹¹ I thank the anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

the media production of the common folk will have enough strength and scope to rival the hegemony of capital, or whether it will be domesticated and absorbed by it. While, on the one hand, it is certain that the crack in the traditional political representation wall is open, on the other hand, it is necessary to recognize the magnitude of the challenges ahead. Twitcam broadcasts work at extraordinary events that escape routine normality – but isn't the hegemony of corporate media constructed and reaffirmed in the daily presentation of 'reality', be it in the *fait divers* (Bourdieu, 1997) or institutional politics itself? Can the spreading of *fake news* have the side effect of a revival of the credibility of traditional journalism outlets, in contrast to what is increasingly perceived as the toxic environment of social networks? And what guarantees us that the exponential growth of media activism initiatives is able to overcome the impasses that arise with the bureaucratization necessary to gain scale, which usually leads to the gradual removal of the group's original interests, as foreseen by the Robert Michels' Iron Law (2001)? There are many questions and unanswered queries, which of course is expected. But at least the progressive field has significantly broadened its repertoire of collective actions and representations.

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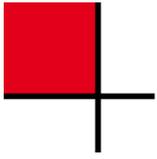
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América Latina siglo XXI: Golpes, derechos y cientificidio

Nuria Giniger and Rocco Carbone

abstract

In this article we ask ourselves what happened in the science and technology sector under the aegis of the Alianza Cambiemos (Alliance of Change) government. To fully understand this conflict, we reconstruct the major declines of a Latin American historical-political process, which, from our point of view, started in 1994 or 1998. But first we will walk through, although briefly, the neoliberal years, those of the transition to democracy after the Latin American dictatorships, which in all our countries meant the same thing: the crisis on the possibility of socialism. Situated in the present time, we will give an account of the expressions acquired by the Right of our continent during their recovery of the political initiative. We propose that from 2009, with the coup in Honduras, imperialism and the Latin American Right began to redefine its strategy to regain control over their 'backyard'.

This conservative restoration strategy is framed in three directions. On the one hand, the systematic suppression of the conquered rights; on the other hand, a new agreements with the International Monetary Fund put the country in a state of external submission, with loss of effective sovereignty; finally, the project of buying military armaments as if the country was facing eminent conflicts and needed them to coercively sustain the fierce adjustment plan that was being carried out.

In this article, we then contextualize a characterization of the State and the medium-term hegemonic configuration of Macrism (reference to Macri, Argentinian President from 2015 to 2019) and the Latin American Right. Macrism is subordinated to the plans of a capitalism in crisis that obviously cannot elaborate a response to the collective demands for the future of the great majority, neither by imitating

international capitalism, much less by its own creation, since the only ‘creativity’ shown is the brutal adjustment over all strata of the working sectors and the repressive practices known and exercised by the State since its creation. It knows how to exercise its prey and virulence over the people, it knows how to use the concentrated means of communication and social networks, but it fails to establish an ideological-cultural bridge that proposes a promising future for the great majority. In fact, most of the times the initiatives it deploys are aimed at strengthening the moral link with its own social class sector, which has been the only one favored by its policies, and which is extremely concentrated and restricted in numerical terms.

To this we must add another consideration: this State could not fully subordinate society to establish its hegemony, because it collided with the organized people struggling against adjustments and its perverse impacts on their daily lives, while trying to build political alternatives to displace Macrism. That is, in this article we propose an analysis of Macrism, while we deploy some markers that enable popular resistance. In Argentina, specifically, during all these years, millions of workers mobilized against the adjustment program, organizing around wage increases, against repression and dismissals, and other central demands such as ‘Not one less’ or legal, safe and free abortion. However, the national government did not change the direction of its economic policy, which indicated the difficulties of concentrating popular efforts only in the streets. The configuration, then, of a broad electoral front that can defeat Macrism is an expression of the political articulation derived from these years of struggle and confrontation.

Finally, we put forward a characterization of the Macri government and its monologues with the science and technology sector. This points to the central discussion of this article, which revolves around questions related to scientific research. When Macri was campaigning, he insisted that not only would he give continuity to science and technology policies, but that he would increase the budget for the sector. Quite the opposite, we find that not only the campaign promises were widely breached. As a synthesis, we punctuate the following measures taken in pursuit of scientificide (a neologism used to refer to the murder of science):

- The downgrade of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation (MinCyT) to a Secretariat, which does not only have economic but especially symbolic implications.
- The budget cuts of the Scientific-Technological Centers through (they were granted only 40 percent of what was demanded), the inflationary increase and the devaluation of money.
- The lack of budgets for scientific meetings implies that the workers of the CyT system are not be able to organize congresses, conferences or seminars financed by CONICET. This decision implies that we are not able to plan an

essential part of our work, and that we are isolated from the scientific debates that are articulated both in the region and the world.

- Cutting of subsidies to research projects: this implies, in fact, nullifying the general possibility of continuing to produce knowledge, with exceptions. These political decisions generate inequality, deepen meritocracy and elitism between the teams that obtain external financing (from foreign agencies or central countries) and those that do not. The teams that do not get international financing research problems related to education, health, housing, productive and technological development, labor and so on. These are problems of our region and our people, which are not of interest to international agencies. The Argentine State finances the training of doctors and scientists so that they go to work abroad, because they get paid better, because the working conditions are better, because the agenda 'themes' are developed with greater technology and skills abroad (mainly Europe and the US). This limits local scientific production.

In the last section, as a provisional conclusion, we record a kind of (proto) science and technology agenda for the 21st century that we believe is part of a larger and collective debate to be framed within the power disputes and an anti-imperialist country model, where it is significant to ask what scientific sovereignty is. For us, what is at stake is the ability to independently resolve the welfare challenges of the majority of the population. Yet, this is impossible if sovereign guidelines for our homeland are not thought of.

resumen

En este artículo nos preguntamos qué aconteció en el sector de ciencia y tecnología bajo la égida del gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos. Para entender cabalmente este conflicto, reconstruimos las declinaciones mayores de un proceso histórico-político latinoamericano, que desde nuestro punto de vista arranca en 1994 o en 1998. Pero antes haremos pie, si bien someramente, en los años neoliberales, en los de la transición a la democracia, luego de las dictaduras latinoamericanas, que en todos nuestros países significaron lo mismo: la puesta en crisis de la posibilidad del socialismo. Situados en la actualidad, nos proponemos dar cuenta de las expresiones que adquiere la recuperación de la iniciativa política, por parte de las derechas de nuestro continente. Así planteamos que a partir de 2009, con el golpe en Honduras, el imperialismo y la derecha latinoamericana comienzan a redefinir una estrategia para recuperar el control del 'patio trasero'.

Esta estrategia de restauración conservadora se entrama en tres direcciones. Por un lado, negar sistemáticamente los derechos conquistados, pretendiendo reactualizar el clásico de Gilberto Freyre: la vuelta de los dueños de la Casa Grande, que al retornar

pretenden expulsar al pueblo y arrinconarlo de nuevo en la Senzala. Con el contrafrente de que ya no supone ninguna ‘sacarocracia’, sino la reducción de nuestros países al tamaño del mercado. Por otro lado, los nuevos acuerdos con el Fondo Monetario Internacional ponen a la región en un estado de sometimiento externo, con pérdida de soberanía efectiva. Por último, el proyecto de comprar armamento militar como hipótesis de conflicto frente a la necesidad del poder de sostener coercitivamente el feroz plan de ajuste que está llevando adelante.

En este artículo, luego entramos una caracterización del Estado y de las expectativas de configuración de hegemonía a mediano alcance por parte del macrismo y las derechas latinoamericanas. El macrismo se subordina a los planes de un capitalismo en crisis que evidentemente no puede elaborar una respuesta a la demanda colectiva de futuro para las grandes mayorías, ni por imitación del capitalismo internacional ni mucho menos por creación propia, ya que la única ‘creatividad’ que ha mostrado tener es el ajuste brutal sobre todos los estratos de los sectores trabajadores y las prácticas represivas conocidas y ejercitadas por el Estado desde su creación. Sabe ejercer su rapiña y virulencia sobre el pueblo, sabe usar los medios concentrados de comunicación y las redes sociales, pero no lo logra establecer un puente ideológico-cultural que le proponga a las grandes mayorías un futuro promisorio. De hecho, la mayor parte del tiempo y de las iniciativas que despliega están orientadas a fortalecer el vínculo moral con su propio sector social de clase, que ha sido el único favorecido por sus políticas, extremadamente concentrado y restringido en términos numéricos. A esto hay que agregarle otra consideración: que este Estado no puede aún prefigurar ni configurar el sujeto social subalterno que requiere porque se encontró (se chocó literalmente) con un pueblo que se organiza y que le busca la vuelta a la resistencia contra el ajuste, intentando construir una alternativa política que desplace al macrismo. Es decir, en este artículo proponemos un análisis de la etapa actual, al tiempo que desplegamos algunos mojonos de resistencia que habilitan salidas populares. En Argentina, concretamente, durante todos estos años millones de trabajadores nos movilizamos contra el ajuste, alrededor de aumentos salariales, contra la represión y los despidos, y otras reivindicaciones centrales como el ‘Ni una menos’ o el aborto legal, seguro y gratuito. Sin embargo, el gobierno nacional no modificó un ápice el rumbo de su política económica, lo cual indicó las dificultades de concentrar los esfuerzos populares sólo en las calles. La configuración, entonces, de un frente electoral amplio que pueda derrotar al macrismo es expresión de la articulación política derivada de estos años de lucha y confrontación.

Finalmente, avanzamos en la caracterización del gobierno Macri y sus monólogos con el sector de ciencia y tecnología. Esta articulación apunta a la discusión central de este trabajo, que gira alrededor de cuestiones relativas al *cientificidio*. El actual presidente cuando estaba en campaña insistió en que no solo iba a darle continuidad a las políticas de ciencia y tecnología, sino que iba a aumentar el presupuesto destinado al sector. Muy por el contrario, nos encontramos con que no sólo las

promesas de campaña fueron ampliamente incumplidas. A manera de síntesis, punteamos las siguientes medidas tomadas en pos del cientificidio:

- La degradación del Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Productiva (MinCyT) a Secretaría. Esta desjerarquización no implica solo un problema económico sino especialmente simbólico.
- El desfinanciamiento de los Centros Científico-Tecnológicos (CCT) a través de la subejecución presupuestaria (se les otorgó solo el 40 por ciento de lo estipulado), el aumento inflacionario, particularmente de las tarifas, y la devaluación.
- La falta de disponibilidad presupuestaria para reuniones científicas anunciada pasado implica que las y los trabajadores del sistema de CyT no podremos organizar congresos, jornadas, seminarios, conferencias financiados por CONICET. Esta decisión implica que no podremos planificar una parte esencial de nuestro trabajo y que estaremos aislados de los debates científicos que se articulan tanto en la región como en el mundo.
- El desfinanciamiento de subsidios a los proyectos de investigación: esto implica anular de hecho la posibilidad general de seguir produciendo conocimiento, con excepciones. Estas decisiones políticas generan desigualdad, profundizan la meritocracia y el elitismo entre los equipos que consiguen financiamiento externo (de agencias extranjeras o países centrales) y los que no los consiguen. Los equipos que no consiguen financiamientos internacionales trabajan problemas ligados a temas de educación, salud, vivienda, desarrollo productivo y tecnológico, laboral y un largo etcétera. Problemas propios de nuestra región y nuestros pueblos, que no son de interés para las agencias internacionales. El Estado argentino financia la formación de doctores, de científicos y científicas para que se vayan a trabajar al exterior, porque les pagan mejor, porque las condiciones de trabajo son mejores, porque los 'temas' de agenda se desarrollan con mayor tecnología y capacidades en el exterior (Europa y EE.UU, básicamente). Y esto se articula con los límites concretos a la producción científica local.

En el último apartado, a manera de conclusión provisoria, registra una suerte de (proto) agenda de ciencia y tecnología para el siglo XXI que creemos es parte de un debate mayor y colectivo a encuadrarse dentro de las disputas de poder y a un modelo de país antiimperialista, en dónde es significativo preguntarse qué es la soberanía científica. Para nosotros, la capacidad de resolver de forma independiente los desafíos

de bienestar de las grandes mayorías. Pero esto es imposible si no se trazan lineamientos soberanos para nuestra Patria Grande.

Introducción

En la Argentina, desde el 10 de diciembre 2015, asumió el gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos encabezado por Mauricio Macri y a partir de ese momento arrancó un conflicto que, entre otras cosas, se expresó a través de un ajuste brutal en el sistema de Ciencia, Técnica y Universidad. Asimismo, se crearon varios colectivos militantes de Ciencia y Técnica. La experiencia de este colectivo prueba que la militancia puede poner en tensión la práctica de especialista y acercarla a una interrogación más de corte intelectual sobre el sistema de la ciencia y su relación con las políticas públicas en general.¹

1 Al respecto dos anotaciones. La primera concierne a la naturaleza de este texto. Se trata de un trabajo de corte militante, escrito de ese punto de reflexión y acción sobre la realidad, pero que apela a los mejores instrumentos de la academia para entender y explicar algunas declinaciones de la situación política argentina y latinoamericana del siglo XXI. El texto, estrictamente, no sigue la lógica formal de un artículo científico y sin embargo emplea ese género discursivo como forma de la trasmisión de sus hipótesis y discusiones.

La segunda anotación concierne a la militancia en ciencia y tecnología y la emergencia de espacios militantes nacidos a fines de 2015 con motivo del balotaje entre Mauricio Macri (Alianza Cambiemos) y Daniel Scioli (Frente para la Victoria) para expresar, sustancialmente, la negativa de una parte conspicua de la comunidad científica y universitaria a la postulación de Macri a la presidencia. Nos convocamos apelando a una necesidad vinculada a la coyuntura del balotaje, ya que las organizaciones políticas populares –en su mayoría– no tuvieron la capacidad de convocar o congregar los distintos sujetos sociales para expresar un repudio unánime y decir No a Macri. En los momentos aciagos pre balotaje, sí vimos a multitudes de ciudadanos en las plazas y en distintos lugares públicos diciendo de diferentes formas que no queríamos que Macri fuera nuestro presidente, pero más allá de esa negación no vimos actuar a las fuerzas políticas para tratar de encauzar esas formas de indignación múltiple, para que la negación tuviera su correlato político. La militancia científica cifra tal vez la novedad histórica y nuclear de los espacios. Palabra entroncada con las condiciones objetivas de un sistema científico público jerarquizado, ampliado y extendido nacionalmente en los últimos 12 años, que hoy cuenta con 25 mil trabajadores en CONICET. Que se transforman en 70 mil si consideramos el amplio espectro de las y los investigadores de las universidades nacionales.

En este contexto, nos queremos preguntar qué acontece en el sector de ciencia y tecnología bajo la égida del gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos. Para entender cabalmente este conflicto, nos parece, hay que reconstruir las declinaciones mayores de un proceso histórico-político latinoamericano que desde nuestro punto de vista arranca en 1994 o en 1998. Pero antes haremos pie, si bien someramente, en los años neoliberales, en los de la transición a la democracia y en los momentos últimos de las dictaduras latinoamericanas antes de sus quiebres, que en todos nuestros países significaron lo mismo: la puesta en crisis de una posibilidad: el socialismo. Esas etapas son necesarias para debatir acerca de dos categorías: *democracia* y *democratización*. A continuación entramaremos una caracterización del gobierno Macri y de sus monólogos con el sector de ciencia y tecnología, y una perspectiva regional para las agendas de la izquierda latinoamericana. Esta articulación apunta a la discusión central de este trabajo, que gira alrededor de cuestiones relativas al *cientificidio*, la soberanía y la lucha de clases. El último apartado, a manera de conclusión provisoria, registra una suerte de (proto)agenda de ciencia y tecnología para el siglo XXI que creemos es parte de un debate mayor y colectivo a encuadrarse dentro de las disputas de poder y a un modelo de país antiimperialista.

Dictadura, declinación del socialismo, democracia y democratización

El siglo XXI tiene apenas dos décadas. Años cargados de múltiples 'borrascas de la historia' del siglo XX. En ese arco de tiempo nuestra región atravesó un proceso en el cual los largos años de lucha contra el neoliberalismo de fin de siglo XX se sintetizaron en experiencias populares y/o estatales de variada profundidad, según el balance y el equilibrio entre participación popular y estatalidad. En estos años, con la reconfiguración del marco político-cultural de Nuestra América, también se pusieron en tensión algunas ideas y conceptos. Una de ellas, la idea de *democratización* es consecuencia de los procesos democráticos que en nuestros países se inauguraron luego de experiencias del Terrorismo de Estado. El caso de Argentina es emblemático en ese sentido: hacia 1983, se configuró un sentido vinculado a la antinomia dictadura-democracia, una democracia que desde la perspectiva final de los órdenes genocida-autoritarios latinoamericanos era soñada con esperanza.

Desde ese punto de mira, la democracia se prefiguraba como el nombre de un futuro que debía ser conquistado. Así como en la España franquista, con la restauración constitucional y el voto popular, se solía hablar de ‘transición’. O sea, de un camino que iba a conducir a las sociedades de cada país de una historia de intolerancia, autoritarismo, ‘oscurantismo’, a un futuro de pluralismo, libertad, integración y convivencia bajo patrones por cierto más deseables que el patrón autoritario, dictatorial y asesino-desaparecedor anterior. La democracia aparecía de manera proyectiva, entendida menos como proyecto/realización que como programa a realizar. Entonces, la utopía democrática era utopía de la plena realización de todas esas libertades arrebatadas y negadas por las dictaduras, que en el caso argentino fueron sintetizadas por el presidente Alfonsín con la frase ‘con la democracia se come, se cura, se educa’. Es decir, la democracia como programa vino a reemplazar al socialismo como proyecto en disputa en el período de ascenso popular entre 1959 y 1973/75², y la frontera de lo posible se circunscribió a los límites del capitalismo, que como tuvo a bien decir en alguna ocasión Ernesto Guevara: ‘es el genocida más respetado del mundo’.

Con los regímenes dictatoriales se inaugura un proceso por el cual se cambia el patrón de acumulación y se repone un modelo de reprimarización de la economía de los países. Sin embargo, el neoliberalismo como modelo político-económico-cultural se termina de realizar recién en la década de 1990, luego de la caída del bloque socialista. Allí se convierte en hegemónica la idea de democracia representativa y liberal con una ‘clase política’ separada de las y los ciudadanas/os y esquizofrénica respecto de su suerte, con una ciudadanía y un pueblo cada vez más desencantados de la política. En ese lapso prolongado, la idea de democracia como utopía declinó del todo. Y se adelgazó también la participación política que, como correlato tenía una creciente explotación instrumentada desde el Estado. Paralelamente, se dio un proceso de concentración de la riqueza y aumento de la explotación de las y los trabajadores a través de la desocupación como factor disciplinador. Factor regulador a la baja de los salarios que tenía como complemento un proceso

2 El golpe de Estado al gobierno de Allende en Chile fue el 11 de septiembre de 1973. Esa emergencia, en el Cono Sur, inauguró un proceso de contrarrevolución preventiva (Anderson, 1987) y funcionó como ejemplo disciplinador para el resto de América y el mundo.

creciente de flexibilización laboral y tercerizaciones. Obviamente, estas políticas impactaron malamente en la fragmentación de la clase trabajadora.

Este paradigma – que se sintetizó con la idea de ‘el fin de la historia’ (Fukuyama, 1992) –, entró en crisis en 1994, cuando surgió el Movimiento Zapatista en Chiapas, o en 1998 con la emergencia de Chávez en Venezuela. Sea como fuere, 1994 ó 1998, a partir de esos puntos de inflexión se abre un ciclo de impugnación al orden neoliberal como paradigma dominante de acumulación y dominación que sobre su cierre redundó en varias ‘crisis presidenciales’. Este orden social, ya en profunda desintegración y con altos niveles de corrupción política, terminó de desplomarse a fuerza de movilizaciones populares, militancia y lógicas de insurrección callejera que produjeron la caída de gobiernos neoliberales. En Argentina eso se verificó los días 19 y 20 de diciembre de 2001. Momento político que había sido ‘anunciado’ en 1998 por la banda de rock, Bersuit Vergarabat en ‘Se viene’. Ahí en el estribillo se dice: ‘Se viene el estallido, / se viene el estallido, / de mi guitarra, /de tu gobierno, también’. En esos días aciagos, la consigna derivada del descrédito hacia la política era: ‘Qué se vayan todos’. Por otra parte, también se ejercieron procesos de protagonismo popular y de articulación entre distintos sectores afectados por las políticas neoliberales, condensados en otra consigna propia de ese momento político: ‘piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola’. Estos elementos, y otros tantos³, luego fueron recuperados por los gobiernos progresistas para configurar su legitimidad posterior.

Los años posneoliberales transitaron por experiencias políticas progresistas/reformistas e incluso revolucionarias (Venezuela y Bolivia concretamente, acompañando a Cuba que se sostiene socialista). Y aquí aparece una nueva idea, que tiene que ver menos con la categoría de democracia que con la de ‘democratización’ (Rinesi, 2013). *Democratización* que ya no designa un Estado, sino un proceso, a un movimiento, de

3 Cuando la represión policial asesinó a Maximiliano Kosteki y Darío Santillán en el Puente Pueyrredón, el 26 de junio de 2002, el diario Clarín tituló su tapa de forma elocuente: ‘La crisis causó dos nuevas muertes’. El rechazo y repudio a ese titular significó un catalizador de la comprensión popular acerca de que la prensa tiene intereses y ‘miente’. Ésta, luego, sería una de las discusiones principales de los gobiernos progresistas y revolucionarios de la región con el poder concentrado de las corporaciones mediáticas.

crecimiento, de progreso y de ampliación de derechos (*conquistados* a través de las luchas populares). La cuestión de los derechos fue central en aquellos gobiernos que de un modo u otro encarnaron modelos sociales y políticos menos desiguales y que sustentaron su legitimidad a partir del reconocimiento, legalización y – a veces – efectivización de las demandas populares en tanto derechos conquistados.

La etapa posneoliberal empezó a entrar en crisis con el golpe de Estado en Honduras en 2009, seguido por el golpe de Estado en Paraguay en 2012, profundizada con el triunfo de Mauricio Macri en la Argentina, a fines de 2015, y terminó de agudizarse con el golpe de Estado de Brasil de 2016; que por cierto Macri fue a legitimar a Temer en uno de los primeros viajes que realizó como presidente. De esto descende que en la América Latina del XXI si es cierto que podemos encontrar dimensiones que se cruzan –democratización, centralidad del Estado y gobiernos progresistas/reformistas/revolucionarios–, también hay que agregar otra variable menos promisorio: la puesta en crisis de esas dimensiones por la derecha. Cuando en 2005 los gobiernos y los pueblos de la región proclamaran en Mar del Plata el entierro de lo que era la herramienta más consolidada del imperialismo –el ALCA–, la derecha por un tiempo se quedó sin iniciativa continental. Esto se debe muchos factores pero resaltaremos dos: en primer lugar, la mayor parte de los gobiernos progresistas no pusieron en jaque los negocios más elocuentes ni en serio riesgo el proceso de internacionalización y concentración del capital (aún cuando el valor de la fuerza de trabajo regional aumentó considerablemente respecto de la década de 1990). En segundo lugar, después de la caída de las Torres Gemelas (2001), la política exterior estadounidense tuvo su foco puesto especialmente en Medio Oriente con el objetivo de recuperar mercados no asegurados. Esa movida de geopolítica internacional le sumó a los gobiernos latinoamericanos cierta maniobrabilidad para implementar sus políticas democratizadoras. Pues bien, a partir de 2009, con el golpe en Honduras, el imperialismo y la derecha latinoamericana comienzan a redefinir una estrategia para recuperar el control del ‘patio trasero’.

Urnas, golpes e imperialismo

Ahora bien, un país como Paraguay, que parece ser más parecido al desierto de las teorías, paradójicamente ha colaborado a acuñar una nueva categoría política e intelectual, paradójicamente gracias a la derecha. Esa categoría es: ‘golpe a la paraguaya’. Es decir, Paraguay se convirtió en modelo para los golpes institucionales de la derecha, por lo menos en el Cono Sur. De hecho, el golpe que aún está en proceso en Brasil despertó las heridas que en 2012 marcaron y dividieron a Paraguay. El golpe paraguayo fue señalado como el modelo seguido por esos sectores de derecha neoliberal corrupta brasileña, empecinada en bajar del poder a un gobierno democráticamente electo. ¿Cómo? Por la vía de ese mecanismo constitucional que llamamos ‘juicio político’. El llamado ‘golpe a la paraguaya’, tal como lo nombró la misma presidenta del Brasil, Dilma Rousseff, es parte de una familia de operaciones políticas. El de Paraguay fue el segundo de los llamados ‘golpes blandos’ y que tuvo éxito desde el inicio de este siglo. Honduras, Paraguay y Brasil fueron los primeros golpes exitosos, porque antes ya había habido otros no-exitosos: Venezuela en 2002, Bolivia en 2008, Ecuador en 2010. En cambio, en la Argentina el caso Nisman, y antes las disputas por la renta sojera con motivo del Proyecto de Ley de Retenciones y Creación del Fondo de Redistribución Social, dieron lugar a amenazas que no llegaron a concretarse; hasta que en 2015 se produjo el ‘cambio’ de gobierno en dirección de derecha por vía electoral. La Alianza Cambiemos asumió con un *furcio*, el de Vidal, que en medio de los festejos de la primera vuelta dijo ‘hoy cambiamos futuro por pasado’. Ahora sabemos que ése fue menos un *furcio* que todo un programa político.

¿Qué hay detrás de todo este entramado? Una derecha en movimiento en un contexto en el que la crisis del capitalismo mundial se profundiza y las posibilidades de apertura de nuevos mercados y de aún mayor concentración de capital ponen en riesgo (incluso) la supervivencia de completas regiones biodiversas. La variable de ajuste es el aumento de la explotación, tanto en la disminución del precio de los salarios, la reducción del salario indirecto (en todas sus formas: educación, salud, vivienda públicas, etc.), como con el aumento de los ritmos de producción; articulación esta que produce además una masa sobrante de seres humanos y la destrucción de la naturaleza. Asimismo, las derechas tienen una ‘internacional’, por más paradójico que

parezca. Así como con el Plan Cóndor las derechas continentales se subordinaban de forma coordinada a los planes del imperialismo norteamericano, en el contexto actual de crisis capitalista, éstas muestran nuevamente una clara subordinación y coordinación que impacta sobre las condiciones materiales de existencia de las grandes mayorías latinoamericanas. La prueba se manifiesta en la coordinación de acciones desestabilizadoras tendientes a reorganizar la hegemonía. Lo estamos viendo en Venezuela con los planes para dar por tierra el proceso revolucionario y democratizante de los últimos 19 años. En América latina, la derecha se posiciona en contra de su pérdida de privilegios políticos y sociales⁴, ve como amenaza la más mínima redistribución de la riqueza y desea plena liberalidad para hacer sus negocios sin las irritaciones que conlleva el aumento de derechos para las grandes mayorías latinoamericanas. Los discursos y las políticas que implementan esas derechas latinoamericanas, pese a los contextos nacionales distintos, son asombrosamente similares: embates en contra de la educación pública en todos sus niveles, en contra de los sistemas científico-tecnológicos públicos, en contra de la salud pública, etc. Valga un ejemplo más. En Paraguay, del golpe al gobierno Lugo y de los despojos de la democracia, surgió el gobierno ilegítimo de Federico Franco, que dio paso al gobierno de Horacio Cartes. Éste nació de la legitimidad de las urnas, un dispositivo democrático por cierto, pero que no ofrece garantía alguna sobre el ejercicio de esa racionalidad política que decimos democracia. Pues bien, en octubre de 2013, Cartes propuso a Alfredo ‘Goli’ Stroessner –nieto del dictador Stroessner– como embajador ante las Naciones Unidas, el organismo de mayor relevancia mundial, nacido supuestamente para superar los horrores de humanidad. Stroessner nieto es defensor de una memoria paraguaya aderezada, en la que los horrores del régimen stronista no aparecen o, cuando aparecen, son justificados, banalizados. Ahí el ‘Nuevo rumbo’ cartista explicitó su direccionalidad: el rumbo del retorno, del Partido Colorado al poder, de un modelo de poder basado en la concentración incontrolada de potestades en el Poder Ejecutivo y de grandes negocios estatales o privados que derivan en extremo enriquecimiento de pequeñas porciones

4 Algunos derechos conquistados de los últimos años en la región afectan directamente la ‘ética’ de las derechas tradicionales, tales como el matrimonio igualitario, el derecho a la identidad de género, la petición por el aborto legal, seguro y gratuito, el libre consumo de marihuana, etc.

poblacionales, entre otros leves detalles. En la Argentina, el ‘Cambio’ también opera en el sentido del ‘futuro por pasado’. De hecho, el gobierno Macri acaba de designar a José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz (hijo) –cuyo padre fue ministro de Economía de la última dictadura cívico–militar–clerical – como vicepresidente del Instituto Nacional de la Propiedad Industrial (INPI). Como Stroessner nieto, también Martínez de Hoz hijo reivindicó la memoria paterna por medio de una solicitada cuyo título recitaba ‘Martínez de Hoz trofeo para el Bicentenario’ (2010), en la que se declaraba la inocencia de su padre. Con esta decisión del gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos verificamos que se pretende restaurar un modelo económico, político y cultural de características CEOLiberales como prolongación de ése que instalaron los cuadros civiles, empresarios y militares del Terrorismo de Estado. Un elemento más que prolonga la aberración de la 2x1, como veremos más adelante.

Estos movimientos paralelos que vemos en acto en la región nos demuestran que las resoluciones de las derechas latinoamericanas son similares y que a menudo apuntan al reformateo de la memoria y a la elaboración de un discurso y a la instalación de referentes apropiados para que el Nuevo rumbo en Paraguay o el Cambio en la Argentina se deslicen a través de cauces adecuados de consenso social.

Estos procesos de restauración conservadora, negadores seriales de derechos, implican también y quizás sobre todo, una vuelta hacia atrás en términos históricos. Hacia una etapa mucho más remota quizás que los años neoliberales. De hecho, todos los ademanes de las derechas latinoamericanas reactualizan la vuelta de los dueños de la Casa Grande, que al retornar pretenden expulsar al pueblo y arrinconarlo de nuevo en la Senzala. Con un matiz: el contrafrente ya no supone ninguna ‘sacarocracia’, sino la reducción de nuestros países al tamaño del mercado.⁵

Otro elemento que nos demuestra que esa derecha latinoamericana está en movimiento y estado de articulación nos lo corroboran por ejemplo las

5 Casa Grande e Senzala es un clásico de Gilberto Freyre que discute la formación de la sociedad brasileña. La Casa grande se refiere a los molinos de azúcar, y alrededor de esos molinos se construían ciudades enteras poseídas y dirigidas por un solo hombre: el señor esclavista. Senzala hace referencia a la clase trabajadora negra, antes esclava y luego sierva de los blancos.

relaciones bilaterales Argentina-Estados Unidos. Parece que el gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos tiene el proyecto de comprar armamento militar por más de 2000 millones de dólares a los Estados Unidos con el objetivo de ‘combatir el terrorismo’. Hasta 2019 quieren comprar aviones de caza, tanques de guerra, misiles de mediano y largo alcance, helicópteros. La hipótesis de conflicto frente a semejante rearmamento se sostiene bajo la necesidad del poder de sostener coercitivamente el feroz plan de ajuste que está llevando adelante. Este sector concentrado, hoy en los gobiernos, tiene la pretensión de realizar sus programas socio-económicos con la utopía de una sociedad sin conflicto. Y si eso es la paz de los cementerios, no sería la primera vez que la derecha lo intenta.

¿Todo está perdido? Presente y pasado

Con el triunfo de Trump en Estados Unidos, los golpes institucionales regionales y el ascenso del CEOliberalismo que hace punta en la Argentina, parecería que tal como plantea Álvaro García Linera, las derechas han recuperado la iniciativa. Eso es relativamente cierto. Entonces, ¿está todo perdido? Podemos y queremos decir que no. Desde una mirada argentina parecería vigente que la derecha es capaz de ganar elecciones en las urnas. Sin embargo, los datos muestran que de las 25 elecciones presidenciales de los últimos 15 años en los países con gobiernos progresistas y revolucionarios de América latina, sólo una vez el CEOliberalismo logró imponerse: Macri. En Ecuador, Lenin Moreno ganó las elecciones postulándose como el continuador de las políticas de gobierno de Rafael Correa, engañando al conjunto del pueblo latinoamericano.

Entonces, nos tenemos que preguntar qué sentido tiene la idea del ‘fin de ciclo de los progresismos’. Por un lado, la derecha, sobre todo por medio de sus construcciones mediáticas monopólicas, pretende decretar ‘el fin’ del ciclo relativo a la ampliación de derechos económicos, sociales, culturales, civiles y políticos. Por otro lado, vale decir que los procesos gobernados por el progresismo en el Cono Sur tuvieron límites profundos que García Linera (2016) sintetizó en cinco puntos y que permiten comprender este momento aciago: 1) no se satisficieron las necesidades económicas mínimas de las mayorías o se favorecieron económicamente sectores del poder concentrado;

2) se combinó una relativa redistribución de la riqueza sin politización social; 3) se expresaron debilidades morales en los gobiernos progresistas y revolucionarios; 4) se presentaron serias dificultades en la continuidad de los liderazgos (sobre todo ante la muerte de los dirigentes); 5) se presentaron serias debilidades en la integración económica regional⁶.

¿Qué implica recuperar la iniciativa para nuestros pueblos? En Argentina, concretamente, durante todos estos años millones de trabajadores nos movilizamos contra el ajuste, alrededor de aumentos salariales, contra la represión y los despidos, y otras reivindicaciones centrales como el 'Ni una menos' o el aborto legal, seguro y gratuito. Sin embargo, el gobierno nacional no modificó un ápice el rumbo de su política, lo cual indicó las dificultades de concentrar los esfuerzos populares sólo en las calles.

De todas formas, la situación de Venezuela, la enorme resistencia con que el pueblo y el gobierno bolivariano sostienen su autodeterminación, pone en tensión y realimenta la expectativa transformadora de nuestros pueblos y la certeza de que el ciclo no está aún obturado. De hecho, los pueblos latinoamericanos hoy no parten de la derrota para resistir ni reorganizarse. Hay nuevas generaciones que se sumaron a las luchas políticas sin haber sufrido en carne propia el Terrorismo de Estado y que vienen con la experiencia de haberse organizado alrededor de políticas públicas implementadas por los gobiernos progresistas. En este sentido, el saldo de los años progresistas sin duda es el incremento de la organización política popular.

En este sentido, creemos necesario reconstruir algunas declinaciones propias de la Argentina. Nuestro país es un ejemplo interesante de cómo se dan estos procesos por el lugar preponderante que tiene la lucha contra la impunidad del genocidio. Al salir de la dictadura, durante el gobierno de Alfonsín (1983-1989) bajo el reclamo popular de 'Aparición con Vida' y 'Juicio y castigo a los culpables', se conformó una Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP), cuya resultante fue materia clave para la realización

6 Conferencia 'Restauración conservadora y nuevas resistencias en Latinoamérica', dictada el 27 de mayo de 2016, en la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la UBA.

del denominado ‘Juicio a las Juntas’.⁷ Durante cinco años, los integrantes de las Juntas Dictatoriales estuvieron presos. Sin embargo, el intento de avanzar en juicios sobre el conjunto de los perpetradores del genocidio se vio cercenado por la sanción de dos leyes (‘Punto final’, en 1986 y ‘Obediencia debida’, en 1987), que en la Argentina significaron el comienzo de largos años de impunidad. Esos años se profundizaron con los indultos impulsados por el presidente Menem (1989-1999), los primeros dos años de su mandato. Paralelamente, la consigna ‘Ni olvido, ni perdón’ articuló la demanda por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia, que se configuró en un símbolo aglutinador del conjunto de las luchas populares. El 8 de septiembre de 1989, hubo una enorme movilización contra los indultos a los genocidas. En aquel momento se movilizaron más de doscientas mil personas en todo el país: el 0,75% de la población total de la Argentina. De todos modos, la impunidad avanzó y se articuló con un sentido de desprecio hacia ‘la política’, que atravesó toda la *segunda década infame*, mientras la lucha por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia quedaba como una suerte de faro impoluto. Esos sentidos, entonces, se arraigaron y se imbricaron con otras demandas populares y cuando aconteció la crisis de 2001, entraron a formar parte de los elementos constitutivos de un ‘programa’ popular que se estaba gestando en la calle. Asimismo, en ese año se declaran inconstitucionales las leyes de impunidad y comienza a plasmarse el clamor popular por vía político-judicial. En 2005, se reabrió la posibilidad de juzgar a los genocidas en el país y se constituyeron procesos judiciales inéditos, en los cuales el sistema judicial tuvo que aceptar condiciones novedosas tanto respecto a las querellas como a las víctimas y el peso probatorio inédito de sus testimonios. En esos procesos comenzó a suturarse la impunidad como marco cultural en el cual el pueblo argentino y las organizaciones populares realizaban su acción social y política. Y en algún sentido, el desprecio por la política también comenzó a desgranarse.

¿Por qué creemos necesario reconstruir estas declinaciones? Porque el gobierno Macri asumió lanzando distintas provocaciones respecto de la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia y se mostró pronto a disputar el sentido de

7 En 1985, a través del juicio, fueron declarados culpables los generales Jorge Rafael Videla y Roberto Eduardo Viola; los almirantes Emilio Eduardo Massera y Armando Lambruschini; y el brigadier Orlando Ramón Agosti. Los primeros tres integraron la primera de las juntas y los dos restantes, la segunda de las juntas.

esos términos una vez más. De hecho, poco antes de la elecciones, en un lugar emblemático por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia –la Mansión Seré, partido de Morón–, apareció un graffiti de color rojo que hacía referencia a que pronto en la Argentina se terminaría el ‘curro de los Derechos Humanos’. Ya gobierno, la Alianza Cambiemos se encargó antes de negar el número de desaparecidos, tildando de corruptos a los organismos de Derechos Humanos, intentando desprestigiar la fecha conmemorativa del golpe de Estado (24 de marzo), proponiendo ‘reconciliación’ (usando exactamente el mismo argumento que en 1989). Por otra parte, la Corte Suprema de (in)Justicia recurrió a una ley ya caduca –que se llama vulgarmente ‘2x1’ y que implica que cada día de prisión sin sentencia firme computa como dos– para liberar a los represores. Es decir, un virtual indulto, propio de estos tiempos, llevado adelante por el poder judicial (y bajo la venia del poder mediático). Pues bien, con este emergente el macrismo quebró todo pacto del vivir en común, al negar las luchas históricas del pueblo argentino en materia de Memoria, Verdad y Justicia. Y pasó un límite ético imposible de suturar. De hecho, el mismo día en que fue votada la ley por la Corte Suprema, en el segundo cordón del conurbano bonaerense, y en una de sus Universidades Nacionales, la de General Sarmiento, cuatro integrantes de la Escuela de Suboficiales de Campo de Mayo, que aparentemente habían salido a festejar (vale la pena preguntarse, ¿qué cosa?), atacaron sexualmente a una estudiante; ataque que en la Comisaría N° 2 de Malvinas Argentinas rotularon como ‘agresión sexual leve’. Ahora bien, ¿ese acto disciplinador en contra de una mujer (una vez más) el día de la sentencia hay que leerlo de manera separada de la ignominia jurídica de la Corte? Hay que decir que enfáticamente: no. Mal por partida doble. El indulto derivado de este fallo desprestigiable nos retrotrae a los años de la impunidad, cuando no sólo los genocidas contaban con el beneplácito de un Estado democrático incapaz de superar al Estado terrorista en materia de justicia, sino que el conjunto de la sociedad posgenocida sufría las consecuencias de sostener una moral incapaz de creer que un mundo más justo era (y es) posible.

Frente a esta vergüenza y desprecio por el pueblo argentino, un millón y medio de personas nos movilizamos en todo el país para dar marcha atrás con la medida. Tan impactante fue el No que hasta algunos dirigentes del partido de gobierno debieron sumarse al repudio. En esta movilización del 10 de mayo

de 2017, casi el 3% de la población de nuestro país marchó contra el indulto judicial. Y efectivamente, las decisiones judiciales y extra judiciales vinculadas a la potencial libertad de los represores o el fin de los juicios de lesa humanidad quedaron, por ahora, en el freezer del gobierno.

Entre fantasmas y genocidas

Evidentemente estamos frente a una situación compleja y no simple explicar. Desde 2016, en la Argentina la Alianza Cambiemos demuestra que encarna un gobierno CEOLiberal–neoliberal con una cuota gerencial propia del ámbito privado– y ‘fantasma’, en su doble acepción aterrizante de presente y ausente. El Estado siempre fortalece y debilita determinados aspectos de su estructura institucional, presupuestaria y política en pos de la dirección que el sector dirigente del bloque de poder pretende orientar los procesos de acumulación y dominación en una etapa específica. En este sentido, el Estado se fagocita así mismo para crecer, se engrandece atacándose, o sea achica excluyendo.

¿El macrismo representa un Estado específico? Al respecto, hay interpretaciones que asumen que el proyecto del macrismo no tiene particularidades diferentes a otros momentos históricos en los que la crudeza del bloque de poder se expresó dirigiendo el Estado. Esto le cabría, por ejemplo, al proyecto burgués-oligarquico cuya máxima expresión fueron las presidencias de Julio Argentino Roca (1880-1886 y 1898-1904) y al neoliberalismo inaugurado con la última Dictadura Cívico-Militar. El gobierno del Estado que Roca y su generación configuraron, con clara subordinación al Imperio Británico, como parte de la expresión nacional-estatal de la división internacional del trabajo, tuvo como sujeto protagónico a una burguesía nativa con proyecto propio, que entre sus aspiraciones/necesidades prioritarias se encontraba la de disciplinar y edificar sobre la masa popular heterogénea, una clase trabajadora acorde a los intereses del sector dominante. Asimismo, este proyecto –genocidio mediante, conocido como Campaña del Desierto– pretendía poner a la Argentina a jugar un rol de ‘granero del mundo’ y transformar el país en un ejemplo disciplinador de una América del Sur mestizada, con la construcción de un ser nacional europeizado.

La otra experiencia, la de la última Dictadura Cívico-Militar (y su prolongación, con distintos impactos, en el Alfonsinismo y el Menemato) también tuvo una burguesía nativa con proyecto específico para nuestro país. En el contexto de caída del Muro de Berlín y el fin del mundo bipolar, este proyecto se engrandeció, enfrentándose a los límites evidentes de las propuestas colectivas emancipatorias – destruidas como utopía social y deseo colectivo –, y de esta manera el grupo dominante argentino desplegó la extranjerización de economía, la subordinación política y la homogenización cultural. Por otra parte, el Estado neoliberal tenía como horizonte construir un sujeto social propio, en este caso sobre una clase trabajadora combativa, organizada y que pretendía conformar su propio proyecto. De esta manera se propuso desestructurar a ese sujeto a través de un nuevo genocidio, con el objetivo de construir un sujeto individualista, organizado por la doctrina del ‘sálvese quién pueda’, amante del dólar y de Miami como representante máximo del consumo. Hoy ese sujeto en la Argentina no ha podido ser suplantado por otro. O, para ser optimistas, ha sido suplantado por otro, pero sólo parcialmente.

¿Qué es el Estado CEOcrático? ¿Un Estado-Gato? Éste combina el anhelo extranjerizante de la burguesía roquista y dictatorial-menemista. Se subordina políticamente al imperialismo norteamericano, pero no encuentra qué sujeto social quiere y necesita construir. Se subordina económicamente a través de la deuda externa (una de las primeras medidas del gobierno, con genuflexión del Senado, fue la liberación de las trabas para negociar con los llamados ‘Fondos Buitre’, o mejor dicho para relanzar el ciclo de endeudamiento externo). De la misma manera que el roquismo, quiere ser el ejemplo disciplinador de/para Latinoamérica y en esa dirección destruir todos los atisbos de integración política regional. Es por eso que creemos que al propio Macri le interesa tanto la periferia jujeña en tanto laboratorio provincial con el estado policial moraliano y con Milagro Sala presa, porque ésta representa de algún modo un vínculo de integración latinoamericana con la emergencia revolucionaria andina de Evo Morales y Álvaro García Linera.

Pero además, el macrismo se subordina a los planes de un capitalismo en crisis que evidentemente no puede elaborar una respuesta a la demanda colectiva de futuro para las grandes mayorías, ni por imitación del capitalismo

internacional ni mucho menos por creación propia, ya que la única ‘creatividad’ que ha mostrado tener es el ajuste brutal sobre todos los estratos de los sectores trabajadores y las prácticas represivas conocidas y ejercitadas por el Estado desde su creación⁸. Sabe ejercer su rapiña y virulencia sobre el pueblo, sabe usar los medios concentrados de comunicación y las redes sociales, pero no lo logra establecer un puente ideológico-cultural que le proponga a las grandes mayorías un futuro promisorio. De hecho, la mayor parte del tiempo y de las iniciativas que despliega están orientadas a fortalecer el vínculo moral con su propio sector social de clase, que ha sido el único favorecido por sus políticas públicas, extremadamente concentrado y restringido en términos numéricos. A esto hay que agregarle otra consideración: que el Estado Gato no puede aún prefigurar ni configurar el sujeto social subalterno que requiere porque se encontró (se chocó literalmente) con un pueblo que se organiza y que le busca la vuelta a la resistencia contra el ajuste, aunque no pueda configurar aún una alternativa política que desplace al macrismo.

¿Decir ‘Estado Gato’ es acaso un insulto? En la jerga del lunfardo, de raigambre popular, y especialmente carcelaria, el ‘gato’ es un subordinado, alguien situado en el lugar de la servidumbre, y al mismo tiempo, un ‘soplón’ (alguien que delata), un pusilánime⁹. Esta acepción del término derivó actualmente en un mero agravio que vehiculiza un desprecio popular y que se

8 El 1 de agosto de 2017, en una represión a organizaciones del Pueblo Mapuche que reclamaban territorios, la gendarmería nacional desapareció a Santiago Maldonado, cuyo cuerpo apareció sin vida tres meses después en el lugar de la represión. Este episodio – sin lugar a dudas – combina las prácticas represivas genocidas, el desprecio y odio a los pueblos originarios y al pueblo en general, y la voluntad de sostener un lugar nacional para la burguesía trasnacional, derivada de la renta diferencial de la tierra, bajo la apropiación de los territorios. Aquellas extensiones de tierra que fueron conquistadas bajo genocidio por los apellidos que hoy gobiernan Argentina, hace 150 años, hoy vuelven a ratificar su dominio con la fuerza del Estado, para garantizar los negocios transnacionales. La represión estatal macrista sobre el Pueblo Mapuche se reitera y la prefectura naval argentina asesinó en el último mes a otro militante – Rafael Nahuel- quien fue muerto de un tiro por la espalda.

9 En lunfardo (el argot porteño) mismo tiene otra acepción vinculada, en la década del 20-30, a los consumidores de prostitución (proveniente de ‘gatillar’ = pagar) y luego se transfirió a las prostitutas y vedettes.

utiliza habitualmente para insultar al presidente Macri. En este marco de debilidad en la producción de sentidos consensuados, la interpelación material y evocativa de la represión es moneda corriente en el Estado Gato. Una vez más hay que pensar en la figura de Milagro Sala, detenida arbitrariamente desde enero de 2016 por liderar una protesta en contra del gobernador de Jujuy, Gerardo Morales. Esa detención arbitraria que sufre la dirigente de la Organización Tupac Amaru y su condición de presa política, mujer e indígena es la expresión cabal de una vulneración de derechos humanos a la que son sometidas grandes mayorías desde el inicio del gobierno de Cambiemos. ¿Y en el contrafrente qué es lo que nos ofrece el macrismo? Ajuste, tarifazos, negaciones de paritarias nacionales y otras jocosidades. Como si esa frontera no fuera ya de por sí una especie de expansión hacia una nueva campaña del desierto, sobrevolaron aviones de guerra sobre la Ciudad de Buenos Aires para conmemorar un nuevo aniversario de la Revolución de Mayo (2017). Por otra parte, esa frontera represiva afectó también a las universidades públicas: el ciclo arrancó en Jujuy donde se violó la autonomía universitaria y se torturaron estudiantes en la Universidad Nacional de esa provincia. Y no se trató de un evento aislado, pues una semana después la policía detuvo sin motivos aparentes a once estudiantes en la Universidad Nacional de Salta, luego entró a la Universidad Nacional de San Juan y finalmente en la Universidad Nacional Arturo Jaureche, situada en el Conurbano sur, en Florencio Varela.

‘No hemos nacido para servidumbres voluntarias’¹⁰

Frente a un gobierno que – a noventa y nueve años de la Reforma Universitaria, aquel hilo democratizante que recorrió Nuestra América en 1918 – no le importa la autonomía universitaria y no tiene ningún reparo en violarla, se le enfrenta un colectivo de trabajadoras y trabajadores de la educación, de todos los niveles (inicial, primaria, secundaria, terciaria y universitaria). Sin ir más lejos, el 22 de marzo de 2017, vimos una Plaza de Mayo desbordada por los gremios docentes de toda la Argentina. El objeto

10 Frase que pronunció Dora Barrancos cuando arrancó la columna de Ciencia desde el viejo CONICET de la calle Rivadavia al 1917 en ocasión de la manifestación del 22 de marzo que comentamos en este apartado.

inmediato de esa manifestación histórica, y que en un futuro cercano recordaremos como memorable, fue reclamarle a un gobierno ‘fantasma’ (aterrador, ausente y presente) que convoque a la paritaria nacional para discutir un aumento salarial adecuado y mejores condiciones de trabajo. Desde el sistema científico y tecnológico público nacional acompañamos esa gran manifestación con una columna que llevaba la consigna ‘Defendamos la Ciencia Argentina’. Estuvimos, entendiendo que el gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos quiere derrotar la lucha docente para que sea un caso testigo del resto de las discusiones paritarias y se impusiera un techo salarial. Pero además porque una parte sustantiva de la comunidad científico-tecnológica comprende que no hay ciencia soberana sin educación pública de calidad. Fuimos a defender, entonces, la Educación pública de una serie imperdonable de humillaciones, resumibles en dos ‘postales’. La primera: a mediados del año 2016, el exministro de Educación Bullrich, con motivo de la inauguración del Hospital-Escuela de Veterinaria de la Universidad Nacional de Río Negro, habló de la ‘nueva campaña del desierto, pero sin espadas, con educación’. Con esa referencia el ministro legitimó el genocidio de los pueblos indígenas. Esa campaña, que fue una ‘política cultural’ implementada vía el ejército argentino, pretende ser reeditada como ‘política educativa’. Segunda postal: esa primera humillación encontró una extensión en un ademán que formuló el mismo presidente Macri en el programa de televisión conducido por una antigua conductora televisiva reaccionaria y conservadora. En ese contexto, mostró una foto de un maestro impartiendo clases en una Hiroshima arrasada, destruida, borrada del mapa por la bomba atómica que el presidente Truman ordenó tirar sobre el Imperio de Japón en agosto de 1945. Ya Horacio González (2017) señaló que esa foto tenía un sentido muy distinto respecto del que quería subrayar el presidente y dijo que ‘muestra un tenso espíritu reconstructivo universal’ (González, 2017). Pues bien, también por eso estuvimos en la Plaza de Mayo: para recordarle a Macri que si cree que la educación pública está destruida se equivoca y para decirle que si estamos como en Hiroshima es porque su gobierno encarna la bomba atómica en la Argentina del siglo XXI. ¿Cómo? Dos ejemplos apenas: con las arremetidas en contra de la Educación Pública y en contra de la Ciencia y la Tecnología. Dos ademanes que expresan un mismo sentido: el ataque al pesamiento crítico en todos sus niveles de creatividad; aquél que la comunidad educativa fomenta todos los días en las aulas de nuestras instituciones educativas, en los

laboratorios o con las investigaciones en ciencias humanas y sociales. La respuesta coincidente del gobierno a través de sus ministros es golpear a nuestra comunidad vaciando el financiamiento público democrático.

Cientificidio, soberanía y lucha de clase

En los últimos años, el sistema científico y tecnológico público se extendió de manera considerable. Tomar el Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) como parámetro es siempre un indicador adecuado de la situación sectorial, por ser el organismo cuya única función es el desarrollo de ciencia y tecnología. El CONICET creció exponencialmente, no solo en cantidad de investigadores de las tres carreras (Carrera de Investigador Científico/CIC, Carrera del Personal de Apoyo/CPA y Becarios) sino en infraestructura y en Centros Científicos Tecnológicos situados en distintas latitudes del país con el objetivo de descentralizar y federalizar las políticas de ciencia y tecnología. Este crecimiento, cuya curva significativa despegó entre el 2005 y 2015, es una demostración de que hubo en nuestro país, durante esos años, una política de Estado que se propuso revertir años de desfinanciamiento, de fuga de cerebros, de formación de científicas y científicos de excelencia en las Universidades Públicas, que luego debían o irse al exterior o trabajar en otros empleos no necesariamente vinculados con su formación. Esta política implicó fundamentalmente tres elementos: el aumento sustantivo del presupuesto de ciencia y técnica, la creación del Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Productiva y la configuración de un sentido común que le (re)otorgó legitimidad y prestigio social a las y los científicos.

Frente a estos condicionantes, el actual presidente cuando estaba en campaña insistió en que no solo iba a darle continuidad a las políticas de ciencia y tecnología (dejar al mismo ministro estuvo en línea con esa gestualidad) sino que iba a aumentar el presupuesto destinado al sector. Muy por el contrario, nos encontramos con que no sólo las promesas de campaña fueron ampliamente incumplidas. De hecho, el presupuesto votado en 2016 implicó una reducción de 190 millones de pesos para el Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Productiva y esto impactó inmediatamente en la exclusión de 498 investigadores jóvenes de la planta permanente de

CONICET, pese a que habían sido recomendados por todas las instancias de evaluación del organismo. Por otra parte, el gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos se está encargado de implementar un proceso de destrucción de todo lo que se había construido hasta 2015: las líneas de producción científica-tecnológica que habían comenzado a fortalecerse ahora quedan truncas por falta de subsidios serios y por la imposibilidad de que aquellos investigadores que se están formando en esas líneas se incorporen de forma estable al trabajo científico. Todo esto se debe al cierre (progresivo) de la carrera del investigador científico. Esto atenta directamente contra la construcción de una agenda científica propia de nuestro país y nuestra región, en línea con el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, indisociable de la CyT. Frente a este panorama desolador es altamente probable que las y los científicos/as, en breve, tengan que irse a trabajar a países centrales (que también están experimentando las consecuencias de la crisis mundial) cuyas agendas científico-tecnológicas no tienen que ver –en general– con las necesidades de desarrollo de los pueblos de la periferia.

El Estado argentino financia la formación de excelencia para que los científicos se vayan a trabajar al exterior, porque les pagan mejor, porque las condiciones de trabajo son mejores, porque los ‘temas’ de agenda se desarrollan con mayor tecnología y capacidades en el exterior (Europa y EE.UU, básicamente). Y esto se articula con los límites concretos a la producción científica local: no hay subsidios o son ínfimos, no hay formación continua de nuevos colegas (queda trunca cada cierto periodo), se limita la cantidad de personal en cada proyecto de investigación por falta de ingresos, se desfinancia la infraestructura, etc., se profundizan los estándares de medición internacional (de publicaciones y de aquello que forma parte de ‘lo socialmente necesario’). De esto descende que en la Argentina de 2017 el gobierno de la Alianza Cambiemos está implementando un *cientificidio*: de nuestros científicos, de nuestras capacidades de desarrollo y de nuestro futuro en ciencia y tecnología. Uno.

Y dos. El *cientificidio* que estamos padeciendo en la Argentina tiene que ver con otra cuestión, mayor, que es la cuestión soberana.

Soberanía: ¿de qué se trata?¹¹ Del derecho de los Estados para organizarse y regirse con independencia de toda intromisión política externa. En este sentido, es contigua con otra categoría, que es la de la ‘autodeterminación’. Ésta refiere a la posibilidad de un pueblo de decidir libremente sobre las cuestiones fundamentales que hacen a un país: estatuto político, relaciones internacionales, sistema económico, sistema científico, sistema educativo, etc; sin que sobre esas cuestiones tenga injerencia algún poder externo. En las monarquías, la soberanía emanaba de la divinidad, en cambio, en los órdenes democráticos reside y emana del pueblo. Y de esta misma subjetividad emanan todos los poderes, por más que luego sean ejercidos por sus representantes. En términos políticos-jurídicos (modernos) remite al poder de mando. El término soberanía está anexado de manera estrecha con otro término: el poder político. ¿Pero cuál es la diferencia entre poder y soberanía? La soberanía puede ser pensada como una racionalización (jurídica) del poder, para que el poder de hecho (la fuerza si se quiere) se convierta en poder de derecho. En este sentido, la soberanía es el poder de mando de una sociedad política. En términos muy generales, cuando hablamos de soberanía nos

11 El término aparece hacia fines de 1500 – si bien el concepto existía tanto en la antigüedad como en la Edad Media bajo la figura de *summopotestas*, entre otras expresiones – junto con el concepto de Estado (moderno) e indica el poder estatal, exclusivo sujeto de la política. Implica una emancipación del estado moderno respecto del estado medieval y de alguna manera sintetiza la conciliación entre el poder supremo de hecho con el poder supremo de derecho. En efecto, el Estado moderno, entendido como ordenamiento jurídico, se caracteriza por una definición del poder en términos impersonales y abstractos. De esto descende que el Estado, en tanto que persona política pública por excelencia, detenta la soberanía. Los primeros teóricos de la soberanía – Hobbes, por ejemplo – cuando hablaban de poder soberano se referían a un poder monárquico, del rey, pero no excluían, teóricamente, otras formas de gobierno: aristocrático o democrático. En estos casos, el poder soberano se pensaba atado a una subjetividad colectiva: una Asamblea, por ejemplo; esto es, el lugar institucional en el cual legítimamente se manifiesta el poder. Rousseau, por otra parte, identifica la soberanía con el poder legislativo porque ve en las leyes la expresión de la voluntad general. En este sentido, el legislativo es el poder supremo de la soberanía. Pero en la categoría entran también otras atribuciones: como el hecho de decidir acerca de la guerra y la paz, nombrar oficiales, magistrados, ministros, imponer una moneda y en última instancia, juzgar.

referimos a la independencia política del Estado en su actividad interior y su política exterior.

¿Quién detenta el poder soberano? ¿El pueblo o sus representantes? ¿Y si hay desacuerdo entre el pueblo y sus representantes dónde queda sintetizada la soberanía? ¿En manos de quién, de qué subjetividad reside la soberanía cuando la política tensa lo que puede tensar? Justo en ese momento la soberanía aparece con toda su fuerza. En el momento en que hay una disputa por el sentido último de la política. Por eso, desde hace un año y medio, una parte conspicua de la comunidad científica y académica argentina plantea el problema de la soberanía científica y de la soberanía educativa. Podemos decir que la soberanía se manifiesta cuando se rompe la unidad y la cohesión social, cuando se manifiestan concepciones alternativas sobre tal o cual orden.

Otro elemento interesante es que la soberanía ‘sectorial’ entra en un espacio de disputa cuando se verifica, nada menos, la lucha de clase. Ahí la soberanía puede ser pensada como el poder de auto-decisión de un sector del pueblo acerca de la orientación que quiere darle a su sector –a su saber-hacer– y que puede entrar en conflicto con la orientación de otra clase. Lenin decía: ‘La teoría marxista exige de un modo absoluto que, para analizar cualquier problema social, se le encuadre en un marco histórico determinado’ (1914: apartado 2). En este orden hay que situar las disputas por la soberanía científica y por la soberanía educativas en la Argentina del s. XXI en el contexto de las políticas de ajustes macristas. La disputa puede inclinarse hacia un proyecto de ciencia al servicio del pueblo o puede hacerlo hacia un proyecto de ciencia al servicio de las minorías, de las corporaciones, de élites transnacionalizadas. Esa definición encontrará una conclusión en el campo de las luchas políticas de este tiempo.

Una (proto)agenda para el siglo XXI

Dentro del marco de la ‘soberanía sectorial’ cabe preguntarse: ¿cómo se define la soberanía científico-tecnológica? E inscripta en esta primera pregunta está una segunda: ¿ciencia y tecnología para qué? Una respuesta de principio es: para el desarrollo de la cultura y del conocimiento universal y en la sincronía, para una producción crítica que dé respuesta científica a problemas

específicos del país y la región. De América Latina, concretamente, y de los llamados países del Tercer Mundo. En este sentido, hay una serie de interrogantes cuya formulación nos permite reflexionar acerca de qué se juega y de qué hablamos cuando discutimos de *soberanía científica*. Valga apenas cuatro dimensiones que merecen ser consideradas, debatidas y respondidas colectivamente a manera de una agenda científica incipiente:

1) ¿Quién define cuáles son los problemas propios que constituyen la soberanía científica? La producción de ciencia y tecnología es un problema de poder. En este sentido, la definición está amarrada al gobierno del Estado con lo que esto implica: presupuesto, enfoques de producción generales (condiciones de trabajo científicos), las corporaciones científicas internacionales, las grandes empresas y su vinculación con la ciencia y tecnología. Estas cuestiones están nexadas con los estándares 'internacionales' de producción (definidos en y por los países centrales). Estos estándares se expresan en las condiciones de producción y circulación de la producción científica y en el desarrollo de tecnología. Son estándares que fijan no sólo las agendas de producción (temas y problemas de investigación, asociados a la inversión dirigida que realizan las agencias de financiamiento científico estadounidenses y europeas) sino también el propio proceso de trabajo científico.

Por esto mismo decimos que la producción de ciencia y tecnología es un problema de poder, o sea, un problema político. Quién ejerce el poder (los países centrales y las agencias/corporaciones científicas –grandes universidades y centros de investigación–, asociados a grandes empresas multinacionales) define quién, cómo, cuándo, dónde, qué, cuánto. Y también define el por qué. De esta forma, cuándo se disputa la producción de ciencia y tecnología se está disputando qué se produce, cómo, quiénes producimos, cuánto debemos producir, financiados por quién y por qué. En definitiva, se disputa el sentido general de la ciencia y de la tecnología, y el sentido específico (para qué y sobre todo, *para quién*).

2) ¿Quién realiza el desarrollo tecnológico? En general, en los países periféricos–y la experiencia argentina es una evidencia notable al respecto–

las grandes empresas no realizan desarrollos tecnológicos propios¹², ni absorben conocimiento científico producido en el país. Los paquetes tecnológicos llegan en una suerte de sobre cerrado. Al respecto, baste pensar en la soja *round up ready* que llega con el uso exterminador del glifosato. La expectativa de que un sector de la burguesía va a cumplir ese rol es falsa: la burguesía nativa es especuladora y cortoplacista. No invierte en desarrollo tecnológico sino que aprovecha al máximo la explotación de los trabajadores con la aceleración de los ritmos de producción y el achicamiento de las plantas de trabajadores.

En países emergentes como la Argentina la inversión en ciencia y tecnología la hace – y es deseable que la haga – el Estado, e incluso que el intento de articulación con un sector del empresariado, también esté en manos del Estado y su función reguladora. De hecho, los períodos históricos que tuvieron mayor desarrollo en ciencia y tecnología fueron aquellos asociados a una inversión mayor de presupuesto estatal en la universidad pública y en el sector. Que la inversión corra por cuenta del Estado implica también discutir cómo, cuánto, cuándo, dónde, qué, quién y por qué. En los últimos meses, las declaraciones del ministro Barañao acerca de la intención de fortalecer el desarrollo de ciencia y tecnología en grandes empresas (con exención impositiva mediante) orienta la discusión hacia una versión remozada de la teoría del derrame propia de los años neoliberales.

3) ¿Cuánta ciencia y tecnología es esperable, preciso producir? En el mundo capitalista, es consabido, lo que importa es ‘la medida’ o la cantidad. Éste es el nudo central alrededor del cual creemos que gira la cuestión: cuántos científicos hacen falta, cuánto dinero, cuántos institutos, cuánta producción. Cada uno de estos puntos define la vinculación de las políticas de Estado con

12 Desde la Dictadura hasta nuestros días, la incorporación de tecnología ‘dura’ y ‘blanda’ en las grandes empresas no fue desarrollada en ellas, ni siquiera en agencias estatales de ciencia y técnica, sino que fueron adquiridas a bajo patentes extranjeras. Por ejemplo, las innovaciones en la industria siderúrgica incorporadas a fines de los 70 en nuestro país (MCC) y luego en los 90 la informatización/computarización de los procesos, procedió de una enorme inversión externa de las empresas que se quedaron con el oligopolio del acero (luego absorbida por el Estado mediante la estatización de la deuda privada en 1982), incluidos técnicos y expertos extranjeros (Giniger, 2012).

el quehacer concreto de los científicos. El gobierno Macri – a través de la mediación de Barañao – puso estos ejes en el centro del debate. En el período inmediatamente anterior, de expansión del sistema científico, la ‘cuestión numérica’ estaba presente en el sector de ciencia y tecnología pero en un registro más específico: ‘puertas adentro’ del ámbito científico. ‘Puertas afuera’ hacían falta muchos científicos, mucha producción y que se materializara en desarrollo técnico y tecnológico (incluso artefactual). ‘Muchos’, efectivamente, es un término que implica cantidad inespecífica. Es un sentido que se puso en juego y que jerarquizó la necesidad de aumentar el desarrollo de la ciencia y la tecnología. Luego, el ministro Barañao y el MINCyT (con el Plan Argentina Innovadora 2020) lo cuantificaron en política de crecimiento de cantidad de investigadores.

Pues bien, para un gobierno directamente alineado a los intereses del imperialismo como el de Macri, no hay nada más que ‘números’. ¿Qué queremos decir con esto? Que no hay interés específico en desplegar producción científica o tecnológicade ningún tipo. Y los números que el macrismo define van en esa tendencia de convertir al sistema científico y tecnológico en un ‘Teatro Colón’. Eso es: un sistema de élite, para pocos, orientado a mejorar la calidad de vida de esos pocos, cuyos trabajadores tienen condiciones laborales segmentadas (contratos, salarios, condiciones de trabajo diferenciadas entre un sector privilegiado y diversas formas de precarización).

Asumir un registro propio de la cantidad productiva de la ciencia y la tecnología es aún una tarea pendiente de la comunidad científica (que utiliza parámetros internacionales acriticamente, como el caso de Corea del Sur, que pareciera explicar su crecimiento económico – sin tomar en consideración la distribución social de ese crecimiento – no basado en la política internacional y nacional, sino en el desarrollo ‘neutral’ de la ciencia y la tecnología), pero sobre todo del conjunto del pueblo.

4) ¿La ciencia es una cuestión de orgullo nacional para vanagloriarnos de forma chauvinista? El ‘mucho’ en tanto sentido en circulación durante los gobiernos anteriores estuvo ligado básicamente a la producción tecnológica, al artefacto, a ‘lo que se ve’. Tampoco durante esas gestiones ‘el pueblo’ definió cuáles eran sus necesidades a resolver científicamente. La relativa

autonomía de los científicos argentinos – y la tradición democrática y popular de un sector importante del movimiento universitario – hizo que algunos elementos sensibles de las necesidades populares (trabajo, salud, educación, vivienda, habitat, alimentación) formaran parte de los problemas que abordamos los científicos argentinos. Sin embargo, esta ponderación, estas líneas generales de desarrollo no estuvieron presentes ahí. Por el contrario, se intentó avanzar con líneas generales de planificación de forma tan anárquica y relativa, y además no fueron directrices democráticamente definidas sino vinculadas con los sentidos hegemónicos de lo que los científicos deben y debían producir. Estas cuestiones forman parte de las tareas por venir, a profundizar en un gobierno con características populares. La jerarquización del trabajo científico debe expresarse también en un debate soberano, democrático y popular respecto de cuáles son las agendas científico-tecnológicas que se deben llevar adelante.

Entonces ¿Qué es la soberanía científica? La capacidad de resolver de forma independiente los desafíos de bienestar de las grandes mayorías. Pero esto es imposible si no se trazan lineamientos soberanos para nuestro país.

A estos cuatro interrogantes se le deben adicionar otros tantos que permiten componer un sentido soberano ligado al derecho humano a la ciencia y a la tecnología. Y en este sentido es clave ubicar que el neoliberalismo instala la ‘necesidad’ de la ciencia y la tecnología como neutrales, para que la masa internacional existente de científicos y tecnólogos desarrollemos los productos que serán apropiados por las grandes empresas para aumentar la productividad y la competencia. El conocimiento científico no es neutral y aunque los científicos utilicemos las armas de la crítica para producirlo, si el pueblo no lo produce ni se lo apropia, no queda alegremente boyando por el mar, sino que se convierte en beneficio del capital. La propiedad del conocimiento científico-tecnológico, de esta forma, es el centro de la discusión sobre soberanía y desarrollo. Porque los pueblos también comprendemos que con el conocimiento científico-tecnológico podemos mejorar la calidad de vida de las grandes mayorías postergadas. La ciencia entonces es una ‘necesidad’ para el pueblo también.

Pero a esto se le agrega que los productores de ciencia y tecnología no deben ser solo provenientes de un sector social medio-alto, sino que la universidad

como ámbito de formación de científicos y tecnólogos, debe ser una posibilidad para todo aquel que quiera formarse y no de una elite.

La teoría de los Derechos Humanos nos enseña la diferencia que ésta tiene con los derechos subjetivos. Éstos son los que atienden a la propiedad individual y la resguardan. Los derechos humanos por el contrario son los derechos colectivos que nacen de la necesidad, que siempre es social y que se modifica en tanto se despliegan históricamente las relaciones de fuerzas (Barcesat, 2001). ¿Y cómo se hace para que una necesidad social-colectiva se transforme en derecho? ¿Incluyéndola en las leyes? No precisamente, o mejor dicho, no únicamente. Como plantea Barcesat, la Constitución Argentina está repleta de ejemplos de escritura de derechos humanos que no se cumplen: derecho a la vivienda digna, a la infancia digna, a la alimentación saludable, etc., etc, contenidas en todos los tratados y pactos internacionales que Argentina firmó). El ejercicio del derecho colectivo, por tanto, su efectivización, no se produce sino es a través de la lucha por el acceso y la permanencia del acceso del derecho conquistado.

Un país como la Argentina, que tiene necesidades vitales de desarrollo y de mejora de la calidad de vida de las grandes mayorías, que debe poner el acento en la universalización del acceso a derechos básicos (alimentación, vivienda, educación, trabajo, comunicación, producción), tiene a la ciencia y a la tecnología como un aliado necesario e indispensable para romper cadenas de dependencia. Esas mismas cadenas que ubican a nuestra región como proveedora de materias primas para los 'países desarrollados' y que obligan a nuestros pueblos a situaciones de pobreza a menudo extrema. La industrialización y la transformación de recursos estratégicos es clave para el desarrollo, pero deben estar orientados en un sentido soberano, de distribución justa de la riqueza social y de independencia económica. Asimismo, debe ser un desarrollo respetuoso del patrimonio cultural, de la identidad de nuestras comunidades, del trabajo como producción humana no enajenada y del medio ambiente.

De esta forma, si la ciencia es una necesidad social, es un derecho colectivo, que debe ser incorporado con estatus de derecho humano al conjunto de exigencias al Estado, para la consecución plena de una sociedad humanamente libre y justa.

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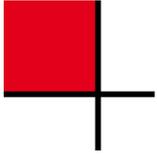
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The protagonism of social movements transforming the world as we know it...

Guilherme Dornelas Camara

review of

Cox, L. (2018) *Why social movements matter: An introduction*. London and New York: Rowan & Littlefield. (PB. pp. xviii + 130, £ 17.95, ISBN 9871786607829)

The title of Cox's new book may call the attention of both new readers and those long acquainted to one of the most relevant references in contemporary social movement theory (SMT). In an unpretentious way, he presents social movements (SMs) as the materialized agency that transforms the social order. Along the text, he employs many anecdotes about how some people get involved, even if incidentally, with a social movement and how this experience changes one's life and her or his more immediate surroundings. This strategy of writing brings some fresh air in the text, although, many times, those stories end up showing how everyday life is dull or difficult and the discomfort with it leads someone to take the initiative of engaging on a SM. Add to it the fact that there are very few quotations, and you have a book palatable to the non-academic reader interested in SMs.

Before continuing, I must say that, being a Latin American scholar interested on the theme of SMs, my reading of the book is obviously influenced by my context of practice and the very reality of SMs in my

region. Even though positioned, my reading was engaged to the text and intends to present it to the audience in general, eventually pointing out particularities of the SMs or some of the concepts presented at the book in my subcontinent.

At the early pages, Cox states that ‘to understand social movements [...] we need to put emphasis above all on the people involved in creating this collective agency, in whatever way, and to ask about the relationships between them’ [xii]. Despite the simple terms of the definition proposed, it states a very important claim about the social movements that goes beyond the acknowledged understanding of them as things-in-themselves and the usual symbolic interactionist focus on how the bonds and networks of sociability of activists within SMs (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996). Highlighting that is it the actual *praxis* of collective subjects that change the world allows that reader to move onto more broaden terrain, where it is possible to see that the objective transformations of reality and the consequent subjective changes of the activists are produced within social struggles. The chapters of the book develop the argument in a very organised way, turning more complex, at each time, the relations within SMs; those of SMs and the Left; those with academia and the *intelligentsia*, as Gramsci (1981) would put it, in both ways, from the university to the streets and from the latter to reflection.

The *Introduction* brings examples of well organised social movements, such as workers unions and peasants’ movements, as well as those of more ephemeral or less structured ones, such as green consumption, solidarity acts to immigrants and refugees that took place and continue to happen in various countries such as Ireland, France, Portugal, Russia, the United States, Brazil, India and China. As part of the book’s argument lays on the fact that ‘movements are widespread and frequent but *not routine*, running throughout the social world and across societies but *not homogenous*’ [ix], there is a great effort of trying to show the reader that ‘social movements, then, are everywhere – both geographically and in the different parts of the social order. They are defeated or decline as well as having their moments of winning. They are not all nice, or right. They are creative and unpredictable, resisting the lazy generalisations of journalists under deadline pressure’ [ix]. Although Cox’s definition of social movements may sound a little loose to

someone - as it affirms, they are everywhere and happen every time - it must be said they are not anything, as the unsuspected reader may find.

According to him,

what makes something a movement rather than something else is above all *conflict*: movements develop (and argue over) a sense of “we” which is opposed to a “they” (the state, corporations, a powerful social group, a form of behaviour) in a conflict which is about the shape and direction of the society, on a large or small scale in terms of geography but also in terms of the scope of the issue. [xii]

In Latin America, the relationship between SMs and conflicts are quite evident, as well as the solidarity amongst activists of different movements. SMs are generally organized against a determined governmental initiative, or a company that threatens directly or indirectly people’s lives. Frequently, workers’ unions, the unemployed, feminist collectives, black people, LBGTQI subjects, traditional communities, ecologists, students’ collectives, leftist political parties and so on, gather together to help each other fighting their struggles, even if the immediate interest is of one of those groups.

As the centrality of SMs lays on the conflict, it is possible to agree with the author that

one thing movements are not, it is dull and predictable: if they settle into routines for a few years, they rarely have the resources that in other kinds of social activity keep people behaving in the same way over decades with only minimal changes. [xiii]

Being an Brazilian academic interested on SMs, I can assure that immobilism and overlapping of the movements by allegedly progressive parties when they get into power bring great damage to the SMs.

As the book shows, SMs involve people thinking hard and creatively about how to win against opponents who are often more powerful, wealthier and with greater cultural authority than them. ‘They are among the spaces people makes them such a delight to participate in and to study – they are among the spaces where people push themselves most fully, in more dimensions of their being than in more narrowly defined contexts’ [xiii].

Another strength of the book is how it may help activists of SMs learning from each other's struggles. Of course, no tactics or strategic elements of actual struggles are presented, but there are many reflections on how social movements help changing local reality and can engage in a broader 'movement of movements' (Cox and Nilsen, 2007). I will address the latter some paragraphs below.

Chapter 1 presents reasons why we need social movements as both individuals and part of a society. After three anecdotes about how three people got involved in social movements and how those changed the lives of such people, Cox highlights their importance to one's own life as they are part of everyday and, also, are intrinsically related to human needs. Things such as 'the support group, the leaflet, the website, the small local demonstration to defend services, the email to politicians or the subscription to an NGO', states the author, are 'nothing special; or rather, only some of the time do we even really notice movement activity as out of the ordinary' [3].

To him, everyday life in most contemporary cultures

involves *some* acceptance of *some* kind of movement participation as reasonable and normal. The criteria of normality and acceptance may, however, be the turning point of participating organized groups or social activities into being part of a social movement. [5]

In Cox's definition, a movement comes to reality when there are

networks – formal and clientelist or informal and radically democratic, with many other shades in between – that connect different kinds of formal organisations and informal group, parties and trade unions, cultural figures and politicians and even (in some cases) churches, online media, subcultures, everyday form of resistance, popular memories of past revolutions or lifestyles. [xii]

Being a Latin American scholar interested in SMs, I might say that, at least in the context of SMs in our region, the normality of some kind of participation in movements is optimistic and can drive us to question exactly what kind participation in SMs and social struggles are to be acceptable and reasonable. The *raison d'être* of SMs is indeed to oppose to the social-economic order as it is and to make an effort of changing it. As

Cox usually brings a Marxist standpoint on the book, I feel free to, from that same ground, point out that solidarity to ‘support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of the things’ (Marx and Engels 2010: 34) is contradictory to what is ‘reasonable’, ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ at the capitalist social order, specially under neoliberalism. In our region, even well-known and long-established movements as the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST), the *Zapatistas*, the *Piqueteros*, and many others are usually treated as rowdy, vandals and subversive. In recent years, despite the good will one could expect from progressive governments in the region regarding SMs, anti-terrorism laws were stated by the Leftist governments of Argentina, Brazil and Ecuador. All of them targeted SMs that opposed the governments and or their policies and many activists were arrested, reaffirming the radical authoritarian character of neoliberalism (Puello-Socarrás, 2013).

That very opposition to reality as it is, makes the

‘[m]ovements involve a process of education and emancipation: education in terms of thinking more deeply about different kinds of social relationship, power structure or cultural norms – and emancipation in the sense of taking practical action around this. This practical action, even in small doses, is transformative and contrasts sharply with letting our everyday actions be driven by habit while relating to the world through opinions alone. [10]

Chapter 1 ends with this focus on more subjective results of participating on SMs.

Chapter 2 shows how the world as we know it – in its full contradictions and underpinning conflicts – is a result of the action of social movements. Taking social dynamics in retrospective, the author points out how absolutist regimes and colonialism – this last in a wider sense, including plantations, slavery, submissive oligarchies and so on – were fought to give place to bourgeois democracy as we know it nowadays.

Cox asserts that

we should not imagine *separate* women’s, workers, nationalist or whatever movements which only concern themselves with these issues. Instead, we have different forms of political subject which are subject to constant tensions around these issues and which necessarily represent one choice of

direction as against another. Most broadly movements from below can (indeed are forced to) choose between alliance with each other's struggles or the attempt to assert one's own interests *as structured within the given social order* and hence at the expense of one another. [30]

As the theme of movements from below was brought at this point, and it is not covered elsewhere on the book, it is important to highlight that this concept is opposed to that of movements from above. The latter are

those forms of collective agency which are by definition the most widespread and effective in normal periods [...]. More specifically, forms of collective human agency that can draw on central positions of power (particularly within the state), a key role in economic direction (particularly in the organisation of paid and unpaid work) and high cultural prestige quite naturally draw on these resources, are shaped by these relationships, and are connected to specific social interests. This is the broad field – of alliances between elite groups around particular projects for the direction of society as a whole, and of the consent or coercion of various subaltern groups – that Gramsci (1971) discusses under the term hegemony. (Cox and Nilsen, 2017: 120)

Contradictorily, Nilsen and Cox (2013: 73) define movements from below as

collective projects developed and pursued by subaltern groups, organizing a range of locally-generated skilled activities around a rationality that seeks to either challenge the constraints that a dominant structure of needs and capacities impose upon the development of new needs and capacities, or to defend aspects of an existing, negotiated structure which accommodate their specific needs and capacities.

One might get to the conclusion that SMs are, indeed, those 'from below'. However, Cox considers conservative movements from above and those transformative from below in intrinsic relationship of forces that repulse one another. There would not be a challenge to the dominant order if that order did not promote a movement of totalisation. Neither those above nor those below are static, but tension each other more or less continually expressing in actual days the dynamics of class struggle.

Again, positing my Latin American reading of Cox, I must bring the concept of 'from below' as it is developed by Isabel Rauber (2002, 2004), an Argentinian scholar of SMs. To her, the organisations that are being built in popular social struggles are instruments that should not be misunderstood

as the subjects of political change. The SMs are collective subjects and the way they organize themselves is a mean through which they exercise their protagonism. That is why all those involved in the SMs must take part on the actions and the thinking about the movements.

Building and developing horizontal practices and relationships at the organisational level, in thought and in action, is a component of the utmost importance, especially if we consider that the process of organic-political construction also includes the formation of a new mystique, which is strengthened and fruits when there is no difference of principles between the form of organisation, the functioning and the driving practices between the leaders and the bases. [...] With elitist and authoritarian vertical practices it is impossible to build organisations based on the democratic criteria of participation from below. (Rauber, 2004: 12)

Advancing in the formulation of the concept of 'from below', the author means having a conception and formulating a course of action that articulates all those involved in the process. The term indicates a socio-political position from which the construction of power occurs, putting the participation of those below in a central, protagonist position (Rauber, 2002).

Returning to the book, it is important to mention that Cox does not oversee the fragmentation and co-optation of SMs, mostly those related to identity or ecological agenda that are not able to create bonds to other movements outside their most immediate interests. As he points out, after 1980s,

it would become clear that neoliberalism was more than capable of co-opting isolated elements of each of these movements – arguably it had to do so in order to shore up its own legitimacy. Thus (for example), female, gay or black professionals used radical rhetoric to advance their own interests at the expense of the large majority of people in each of these categories; ecological and countercultural movements became channelled into forms of 'lifestyle' consumption; or defeated, demobilised and individualised working-class populations were targeted by right-wing media and politicians as bases of support for their racist, militarist and misogynist policies. [34]

Maybe that is because of the broad definition of SM that he holds. Looking back to SMs in my region of the world, I can notice that reuniting forces against stronger opponents – generally corporations of the governments – is usual and, many times, part of the logics of organizing the SMs. Landless

peasants' movements, workers' unions and many others are usually together in solidarity to each other. These bonds are characteristic of what Dussel (2012) calls 'people', as the collective of the 'poor' – the popular masses that are victims of the neo-liberal capitalism in the region, as the oppressed women, the poor elderly, traditional communities, and so on.

That brings to question what is the role of SMTs and studying social movements.

Where, in all of this, is research on social movements and revolutions? In my own work, I have been strongly critical of 'actually existing' social movement studies, and this book does not follow the freakonomists and evolutionary psychologists in proposing ourselves as some new master science. [...] [S]ocial movements research is such a varied field that it can hardly play this role, even if it wanted to. [39]

The answer relies on the fact that SMs regularly try to learn from their own experience: 'trying to articulate those lessons theoretically in order to think about the big strategic picture; and trying to develop appropriate forms of education and training to return these ideas to the world of practice' [42]. Scholars on SMTs may also have a role there.

Chapter 3 approaches the relationships between SMs and the Left in a historical perspective, articulating parties, movements, unions and popular struggle in general. Since the pan-European attempts of 1848 up to Temer's and Zuma's coups, passing through 1968 in France and the First International, Cox asks about the contributions of the so-called Left (and what this is exactly?) to the development of SMs in the world history.

The theme of the alliances between the movements themselves and supposedly organic intellectuals (academics, journalists etc.) is brought under a programme that the author calls

learning from each other's struggles: one in which the basic position is not one of a separate elite judging popular movements and approaching them in an instrumental way, but rather one of activists involved in different ways in the many different learning processes that go on in social movements, who come to understand their own needs, struggles, and visions more clearly in the encounter with each other. [58]

As Cox puts it, SMs have not only an educational purpose for the activists within them, but also for them to learn with each other. That can be the linkage that allows someone who identifies with a particular struggle to consider how far that movement

[...] reach beyond themselves to make allies, to generalise the struggle at a higher level and to understand the structure they are resisting more deeply – and to ask themselves how they can contribute to sharing what they have learnt from their own struggles with new generations of activists in other movements, other places and (as history and age catch up with us all) other times. [60]

When take a look at the movements on a broader way, it is possible to perceive that they respond to various issues such and that the ones involved in such movements are, in fact, fighting for or against something that affects his or her life more immediately. Although everyone involved in a movement is a singularity, there is not only one sole issue that affects one's life. Being a worker at my University does not make me less member of the LGBTQI community neither less Marxist at my theoretical-political orientation. I might be engaged in a specific struggle as member of the board of the Professors' Union but that cannot obliterate my commitment to other causes that affect me and my local context and even less undermine my solidarity to any other popular struggle. The opposite is the truth: being involved in a SM opens my ears and my eyes to popular causes even though I might not be directly related to them.

Chapter 4 addresses the learning that develops through collective practice in SMs and the action-oriented thinking that flow from there. Being part of a movement makes one see being the strict limits of the action of the movement and to have a grasp of the linked phenomena of reality, where racism, gender prejudice, LGBTQI-phobia, xenophobia, genocide of original communities and many other forms of oppression are articulated under a neoliberal agenda that advocates the individualization of society and communities in order to achieve a greater accumulation of capital. All of these people 'are movements and not things, people and not objects, actors discovering and inhabiting their own agency rather than pawns to be moved about in a hypothetical chessboard' [65].

The popular character of movements, stated by Cox above, transcends the limits imposed by traditional analysis that point out the workmen as those responsible for the overcome of capitalism. In the South of the world we have many examples of SMs that are not typical workers movement, but the struggles of the poor, the natives, non-Caucasian races, women, LGBTQI subjects, traditional communities, and those in defence of nature bond together in what Dussel (2012) calls people (*el pueblo*): the collective subject that reunites those with a (partly) shared socio-historical reference. Broader than the workers fighting in class struggle, popular struggles are determined by it, but are not reduced to it.

Not only in our region of the world, but even in central countries, popular struggles and SMs with reference on people's needs and demands are facing the same enemy: the development of neoliberalism. Cox calls that 'the movement of the movements', as it is '[...] a grounding of the attempt to develop a wider challenge to neoliberalism in the lived reality of people's concrete lives' [35], expressed in the complex reality of different struggles in different places.

Chapter 5 focus on how movements 'think for themselves' and how this thinking is manifested in institutions as the university. Cox states that 'the pages of the mainstream press, the books of radical celebrities or high-status theories within academia [...], all these are structured in ways that systematically obscure their relationship to SMTs' [85]. Scholars interested in SMs must, then, find the less glamorous spaces within the movements themselves in which they actually think and argue about who they are, what they want and how they are going to get there.

Overcoming the traditional academic thought, even in SMTs that are still attached to structuralist or symbolic interactionist analysis, is fundamental to those engaged with the reality of SMs. As he defends the need to go beyond structuralism, searching for agency within the movements and in their transformation of reality, Cox stresses the need to observe beyond the very logics of each movement, taking a glance of 'the movement of movements' facing neoliberalism.

For him, the twilight of the neoliberalism has two reasons:

(a) as a strategy it no longer convinces that it is capable of meeting long-term interests; (b) it has increasingly lost the consent of large swathes of the population who initially supported it, as a situation not altered by the willingness of voters to support such candidates when the alternative is the far right. [89]

Indeed,

a substantial part of what has undermined neoliberalism is precisely popular movements ‘*desde abajo y a la izquierda*’, from below and on the left, allied in the form of first the anti-capitalist movement of movements from the later 1990s on, and more recently the wave including the Arab Spring, Indignad@s, Occupy, Gezi Park, Black Lives Matter or Standing Rock. [95]

One last point I would like to call the reader’s attention is to when Cox refers to our task, as academic, in this greater movement. It is

[...] to question the fields we are in and their wider social purpose; to seek to reclaim academic territory for movement purposes that go beyond our own contexts at the same time we attempt to change power relations and culture within those contexts. [105]

To the Latin American academics of SMs this task is even harder, and, just because of this, more urgent to be accepted by our community.

Finally, I must say that this book, which seemed introductory at a first look - helping better those who were interested in SMs but were not acquainted to SMTs - brings important alerts and lessons to those who are already part of the field. Cox demonstrates he continues to be politically engaged with SMs and an intellectual committed to the transformation of the world.

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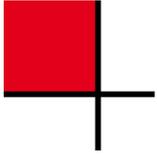
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Rethinking workers self-activity and mobilization: Solidarity as the foundational moment

Fernando Nichterwitz Scherer and Fabiano Milano Fritzen

review of

Atzeni, M. (2010) *Workplace conflict. Mobilization and solidarity in Argentina*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, (PB, pp xv + 171, \$120.00, ISBN 978-0-230-58464-8)

Maurizio Atzeni is Lecturer in Labour and Industrial Relations at Loughborough University School of Business and Economics, United Kingdom, and a Research Fellow at Centro de Estudios e Investigaciones Laborales (CEIL/CONICET), Buenos Aires. Born in Italy, the author completed part of his education in Europe before moving to Argentina, where he currently lives and works. Thenceforth, his work has been deeply influenced by European Marxist tradition, especially by Richard Hyman's developments and criticisms of labour process theory (Hyman, 2006). As Atzeni argues, 'studies on the nature of workplace conflict in the Marxist tradition of Industrial Relations provided the theoretical bedrock for the research' [xiii] that gives rise to workplace conflict.

In the book, Maurizio Atzeni presents the outcomings of his qualitative research on automobile plants workers' struggles in Córdoba, Argentina, straightened by 'the study of the past sixty years of Argentina's social

history' [xiii]. Among 2002 and 2003, in fieldwork for his doctoral research, the author collected interviews with several former CIADEA-Renault and FIAT workers that participated on protests in 1996 and 1997 at these companies' plants. At that point, six years after the emergence of these mobilizations, as he argues, the workers' original collective passions and struggles became individual and distant memories that, nevertheless, contributed to the rediscovery of forgotten opposition experiences to labour flexibility and neo-liberalism in Argentina.

The book consists in an important contribution to the discussions about working class' mobilizations and the alternatives and possibilities that they create. Atzeni's approach 'rehabilitates a vision of collective action as a structurally determined and grassroots-based expression of workers' power' [13] by assuming that the contradictions within the capitalist labour process are enough condition for workers' collective action. Starting from Marx's insights about the particularity of the commodity labour, i.e., its inseparability from the worker, that 'imposed a first, natural, obstacle to its free consumption by capitalists' [20] and, consequently, about the structural class conflict, he offers an understanding of workers' mobilizations from a radical point of view that he defines as 'a Marxist perspective on workers collective action' [12].

As the author argues, the structural conflict of interests and antagonism that exists between capital and labour have in themselves the potentiality to produce spontaneous forms of resistance to capital domination and thus, necessarily, to increase the pressure put on by capital to overcome that resistance. 'This resistance often results in the constitution of collective organizations representing workers' [12]. Such organizations that develop further, as trade unions, for example, take a mediation role amid labour's and capital's antagonistic interests, and so they tend to contract and reproduce the same contradictory relations along their historical development.

This theoretical construct relies in a political choice, favoring a bottom-up analysis of workers' collective action bent over the concrete day to day conflict existing at the workplace. To Atzeni, because its inherent nature concealed by this mediation function, trade unions activities are neither an

ideal starting point of analysis nor a reliable framework for studies that seek to understand workers' self-activity – especially to those leaning over what he calls 'micro cases of mobilization' [xiii]. Instead, in his work, the author analyses empirical evidences of the relations established between trade union activists and FIAT and Renault workers on struggle with which he adds to a theoretical explanation for the unions' fails in supporting grass-roots interests.

The 'conflicting nature of the capitalist labour process, as an organization of production driven by valorization' [22] is crucial in Atzeni's comprehension of workers mobilization, also because it adverts for the capitalists' needs to undermine workers' collective action reinforcing the individualistic form of the labour-wage exchange contract. But no matter the efforts made in this sense or how contradictory is the cooperation that takes place in the capitalist labour process, the fact that labour is a collective activity can never be completely burked. For workers, this implies, at first, the need to act together. This need generates a sense of mutual dependency and a need for support: the embryonic form of solidarity, or what can be called

solidarity not yet activated'. This unity has a very practical nature, it is just to perform the job, but it is also the first step in the recognition: (a) that the employer has the power to order the forms and times for the execution of the work and (b) that who gives this order is by, their very nature, on the other side, opposed. [*ibid*: 28]

In highlighting solidarity as 'the social relation that expresses the collective nature of the labour process' [27], the author explicitly rejects a subjective appropriation of the concept that would dissociate solidarity from its material and objective soil. By assuming that solidarity is 'the foundational moment of the collective action' [28], his perspective pinpoints the pre-existence of solidarity to any other organizational developments that may or may not follow; in what it adds an original tribute to debates in organization studies. By conceiving solidarity in its movement and dynamics – and not as a static concept – Atzeni draws on the contradictions of this fundamental relation that reflect the contradictions of the labour process itself. Moreover, he stresses that an 'active' form of solidarity depends on the combination of the forms of labour-capital opposition both in the workplace and in society.

This frame of reference is often reinforced by authors that recapture Marx's writings, once he states that it is in the struggle that workers come together and become a class for themselves (Marx, 2013). Wood (2003), for example, advances the conception of class as a process, highlighting that both the formation of working class' and its consciousness emerge from class struggle. By this means she avoids concepts of class stratification, focusing on the social relations that underpin class formations. Atzeni's concept of solidarity seems to chase the same thread, once it is based on the social relation that it expresses, i.e. the collective nature of the labour process. From this point, he analyses the constraints that historically hinder solidarity to reach or sustain its active form with the intention to understand the emergence of protests and mobilizations.

The book is divided in six chapters. The first chapter presents the broad theoretical context in which the studies of workers' struggles and collective action must be located. Thus, the author addresses four inherent dynamics between workers and capitalists' struggles: the relocation of productive activities, the transformation of labour processes, the investment of capital in new sectors and financial speculation. The first two, says the author, concern the study undertaken by his research in Argentina. It also deals with the model of institutionalized collective action and the spontaneity of struggles, the importance of grassroots mobilizations and the intrinsic contradiction of trade unions aforementioned.

In chapter 2 the author discusses the Marxist perspective on workers' collective action. The chapter is subdivided into three parts: (i) criticism of Kelly's theory of mobilization (1998); (ii) Marx's understanding of the nature of the capitalist labour process, and (iii) the importance of solidarity in the light of its centrality in the work process. In presenting Kelly's theory of mobilization, which takes injustice as the basis for all mobilization, the author argues that the notions of 'just' and 'unjust' are moral judgments and depend on the value and meaning assigned. Thus, there will always be a sense of injustice in various forms and, therefore, it must be considered in relative terms. Notwithstanding the focus on injustice reinforces collective action as a mere contestation of rights, obscuring power and class relations.

On the Marxist understanding of capitalist labour process, the chapter points out that the methods used to control, direct and discipline workers are generally coercive. Given the need workers have of their wages to survive, these coercive conditions are naturalized in the day-to-day work, and exploitation is revealed when abrupt or radical changes are implemented. The author also highlights the workers' struggle motivations, their role in the transformation of the system that exploits them and the contradiction intrinsic to the process of exploitation versus cooperation. Solidarity is presented at this point, as the author argues that any attempt to explain the workers' resistance must consider the centrality that solidarity has both theoretically and in the practical, militant discourse.

The third chapter presents the historical analysis of social and labour mobilizations in Argentina since World War II and subdivides, as well as the previous chapter, into three parts: (i) how the use of repressive practices, adopted systematically by military governments in Argentina until 1983, affected workers' potential for mobilization, (ii) the investigation of the complexity and contradictions within the Argentine trade union movement, and, (iii) the socio-political context that dominated in the 1990's, the time of the events at FIAT and CIADEA-Renault.

In general, the author concludes that violence and repression at the macro and micro levels, such as workplaces, led to depoliticization, individualism and the search for political and charismatic leaders. From the analysis of the Argentine trade union movement, he concludes that bureaucratization acquired different forms and methods according to the way in which the unions structured their relationship with the state and the dominant power. Finally, in a socio-political context of pressure of multilateral financial agencies on the government, economic reforms implemented under IMF auspices and the trade unions' contradictory position relating to the government and its economic policies, Atzeni states that mobilization found a fertile soil, offering workers a base around which their demands could be formulated, and solutions provided.

The fourth chapter emphasizes the importance of cases of workers' direct, spontaneous action for the theoretical understanding of collective action, putting into question the use of morally grounded, subjective concepts such

as injustice while at the same time revealing the existence of other necessary conditions for mobilization rooted in the structural contradictions of the capitalist labour process. Therefore, the author presents the chronology of the conflict in both FIAT and CIADEA-Renault plants, describes the companies and the unions involved in the cases and looks for possible preconditions for mobilization. Comparisons between workers' perceptions of injustice and the process of solidarity formation in the two cases are presented.

The main conclusions of the chapter indicate that injustice is not the basis around which a mobilization can be produced since it can be perceived differently according to the moral/ethical values of certain epochs and the specific cases to which it applies. Besides, he points out how different conditions act upon the formation process of solidarity interfering with the possibility of making it active. Finally, from the cases studied, the author concludes that mobilization has to be seen as the result of the combination of specific internal conditions although considering external factors.

Chapter 5 is subdivided into three sections which present, respectively: (i) how leaders emerged from within the context of mobilization and the role they had in catalyzing workers' grievances, (ii) how workers changed themselves while collectively contesting the social reality surrounding them, and (iii) how effective the company's counter-mobilization strategies of eliminating leaders, dividing workers and breaking solidarity were. As a conclusion, the author presents the perspective of workers and companies on the conflict through the help of a graphic. This double perspective is important, according to the author, both analytically and theoretically. Analytically, considering the complexity of collective action, it contributes to clarify the different outcomes from the combination of divergent forces that drive workers and companies' actions. And theoretically, it draws attention to increase knowledge about these driving forces.

In his final chapter, the author highlights the importance of thinking about collective action as a process and approaching it from a radical perspective. It also warns of the emphasis on detail and micro-conditions in studies in the social sciences, which sometimes turns reality into an abstraction. States that the study of workers' resistance should not seek the development of

generally applicable models and, finally, leave some questions for future reflections.

Despite the local and historical specificities that mark Atzeni's work, we argue that many of his reflections and contributions can be thought of in Latin American broader context – which implies to rethink the historical importance of grass-roots mobilizations in the whole continent.

Just as in Peron's time in Argentina, Brazilians trade unions, for example, underwent a process of institutionalization and subordination to the state during Vargas regime in the 1930's. The counterpart to this subordination was the consolidation of labor laws, which nevertheless granted rights and protections only to a portion of workers; and the state's recognition of unions as the legitimate working class' instance of representation (Braga, 2012). Later, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed similar dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and other countries. Atzeni's reports of repression and violence against workers, union activists and social movements in Argentina find correspondence in all these countries (Antunes, 2013).

Latin America is also the place where neoliberal policies were first implemented and tested. In 1973 at Chile, with the military coup that deposed Salvador Allende, the first experiment on the effects of these policies was made (Puello-Socarrás, 2015). Ever since, many Latin-American authors, such as Antunes (2011) and Braga (2012), have been concerned with the understanding of workers responses to this attack in which consists the neoliberal stage of capitalism (Puello-Socarrás, 2015). Also, about the threats that the so-called flexible forms of labour relations pose to working class' struggles (Lourenço, 2015; Marcelino, 2006; Santos and Souza, 2017).

Thus, it is reasonable to state that similar mechanisms of cooptation, repression and fragmentation of working class' organized representation bodies can be found in other countries in the same region. Braga's (2012, 2017) denouncement of the historical tension among union leaders and workers base in Brazil reveals the same trade unions power relations as Workplace Conflict in Argentina. If necessary, this further validates the assertion that union activities are not a good starting point for

understanding workers' collective action and reinforces the historical importance of workers self-activity and bottom-up mobilizations as one of the main alternatives to transform Latin-American workers reality.

Furthermore, by highlighting this alternative, Atzeni's contributions may help Latin-American researchers to 'reject a trade union-based pessimistic view regarding the possibility for social change' (Atzeni, 2010: 26). This pessimistic bias is mainly produced in Europe, where workers' struggles, gradually organized through associations and unions, made real gains and advances for the working class in recent history. Currently, under the neoliberal stage of capitalism and the consequent dismantling of the well-fare state, these institutions are losing power and influence, not being able to avoid significant setbacks in workers' rights neither face the challenges that new forms of employment relationships place to workers' organization. This process engages many authors - usually those departing from unions activity to understand workers collective struggles - in a pessimistic comprehension of workers' possibilities and future (Bryson et al. 2004; Standing, 2013).

At least, this perspective appears to be displaced in studies about Latin-American social reality that do not consider the high rates of informal jobs, underemployment and unemployment, and the low percentage of unionized workers always present in the continent as Antunes (2011) work denounces. Taking solidarity as the foundational moment of workers collective action, in other hand, habilitates an approach that do not underestimates the working class' power to change their own faith - what does not imply disregarding the structural constraints that oppose to this change, but, on the contrary, to anchor these possibilities in the contradictions of capitalist labour process itself.

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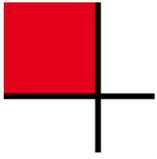
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A critical theory of hope

Lara Monticelli

review of

Dinerstein, A.C. (2015) *The politics of autonomy in Latin America. The art of organizing hope*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (PB, pp. 282, £ 34.99, ISBN 978-1-349-32298-5).

Latin American cosmologies of autonomy

The politics of autonomy in Latin America. The art of organizing hope published in 2015 by Argentinian scholar Ana Cecilia Dinerstein for the Palgrave series *Non-governmental public action* is an engaging book, relevant for researchers interested not only in social movements and critical social theory, but also for those working in the field of organization studies and political economy, and for everyone else interested in alternatives to the dominant socio-economic system that is capitalism. What makes this book so important is the ambitious theoretical framework that Dinerstein accurately unfolds throughout the entire volume, a framework that deploys the oft-contested concept of autonomy and depicts it as a tool for imagining alternatives to capitalistic production and reproduction systems. Autonomy, to Dinerstein, constitutes indeed a 'tool for prefiguration'. The book is composed of three main sections and follows a circular narrative for which the critical issues outlined at the beginning are fleshed out through the four stories examined

in the central part, and are contextualized in a holistic epistemological framework at the end of the book.

In the first section, *Theorizing autonomy*, Dinerstein explains that understanding ‘autonomy’ in the context of indigenous movements and struggles entails becoming aware of unique cosmologies where meanings of time, progress, and nature have been shaped by customs and traditions throughout the centuries. The encounter with Western radical-left debates on autonomy happened much later, in the Sixties and Seventies. For this reason, Dinerstein’s endeavor differs from the study of struggles for autonomy in other contexts. In her words ‘Latin American movements have tended to lead a “rebellion from the margins” rather than be part of the mainstream network of social movements’ [33].

The second section, *Navigating autonomy*, includes an in-depth analysis of four well-known cases of Latin American social movements and mobilizations that took place during the past twenty years. The Zapatista uprisings in Mexico, the ‘!Que Se Vayan Todos!’ protests for dignified work in Argentina, the indigenous mobilizations against the privatization of water and oil in Bolivia, and the Brazilian Sem Terra, a peasant-led movement organizing against land expropriation and fighting for food sovereignty. The third section, *Rethinking autonomy*, constitutes, at least for the reader, more a beginning than a conclusion. In this final section, Dinerstein delivers her ‘prefigurative critique of political economy’, a theoretical perspective that she will further develop in the edited volume *Social science for an Other politics. Women theorizing without parachutes* (2016). This represents the core of the book and probably its most pioneering part.

Beyond Marxist critique

The point of departure is the realization that, on one side, Marxist scholars have rarely gone further than a mere critique of capitalism, and on the other, that anarchist scholars have been mostly focusing on alternatives to capitalism without properly engaging in a critique of political economy. However, as I have discussed in a recent article (Monticelli, 2018), it is worth noting that, especially after the Great Recession of 2008-2009, interest in

projects aiming at embodying alternatives to capitalism has been growing amongst Marxist scholars, as if the scope of contemporary critiques had finally broadened to include the analysis of possible alternatives. Erik Olin Wright's theorization of 'real utopias' (Wright, 2010) constitutes probably the most famous example.

Dinerstein's perspective attempts to tackle the limitations of both orthodox Marxism and anarchism by salvaging, we could say, the 'best of both worlds' and coming forth with a perspective that dissolves this long-established dualism. At this point, one could be tempted to relate Dinerstein's intellectual endeavor to the one pursued by *Autonomous Marxists* thinkers like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. This is not the case since Dinerstein's critique does not spare some of Hardt and Negri's most acclaimed conceptualizations like 'multitude' or 'alter-modernity' (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Dinerstein explains that both these concepts are the result of a Western-centric vision of society and therefore ignore the forms of resistance and the cosmologies affecting the political imagination of indigenous populations: the main subject of the book.

For our purposes, it is enough to point out that Dinerstein belongs to the school of *Open Marxism*, a group of scholars, among which we find John Holloway, Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, whose goal is to 'emancipate Marx' (Bonefeld et al., 1995: 1) by emphasizing the unity between theory and practice, between philosophy and the human world. The aim of *Open Marxists* is to get rid of 'the massive deadweight of positivist and scientific/economistic strata' to find the true emancipatory vocation of Marxism (*ibid.*). This emancipatory aspiration and the willingness to surpass the dualism between capital and labor is the underlying red thread recognizable in the book and, more broadly, in Dinerstein's entire scholarship. Coherently with this intellectual mission, she finds in the writings of two humanist Marxists like Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin the foundational concepts for the construction of her argument. The art of organizing hope – prefiguration – is a process composed of four 'interlocked modes' [219]: negation (of the existing given), creation of a concrete utopia, translation/disappointment, and production of 'excess'.

The first moment is a negation, well exemplified by the Zapatista tenet ‘Ya Basta!’ (Enough is enough!) against the Mexican state. Negation is the fundamental and essential starting point for any prefigurative endeavor. To be truly prefigurative and going beyond mere resistance though, any moment of rejection needs to be followed by a creative one: the realization of a concrete utopia. The proclamation of a *de facto* autonomy from the Mexican state by the Zapatistas, the implementation of community projects and worker-owned cooperatives in Argentina, the self-management of water systems by the Aymara indigenous population in Bolivia, and the establishment of alternative modes of agrarian production in Brazil. These experiences all constitute concrete utopias.

Integrating change in the logic of power

Embodying and realizing alternatives is far from being an easy endeavor. Dinerstein’s concrete utopias are, in fact, ‘deeply embedded in [the] capitalist/colonial/patriarchal power relations’ [223]. Any protest, mobilization or prefigurative project aiming at opposing the status quo – be it represented by authoritarian or repressive states, by unjust laws, or exploitative economic practices – eventually culminates in a moment of confrontation. This leads to the third mode of prefiguration as theorized in Dinerstein’s four-movement model: translation and, in many cases, disappointment. In her words: ‘My question [is] not whether autonomous organizing can produce radical change without taking the power of the state, but how do the state and capital ‘cope’ (mediate) with the radical prefigurative power of autonomous organizing’ [224]. A moment of integration in the ‘logic of power’ is thus inevitable, but the outcomes of it are uncertain. These outcomes can take the form of co-optation, repression, translation into (neoliberal and/or reformist) policy agendas or revolutionary appropriation. By consequence, this stage in the process of organizing hope can entail, in many cases, feelings of disappointment and unexpected, contradictory outcomes.

To Dinerstein, indigenous populations, differently than non-indigenous ones, are subsumed in capital *by exclusion*: indigenous cosmologies, practices, stories, and imaginaries are excluded by the universalizing and

‘totalizing’ force of capital valorization [217]. Dinerstein very effectively deploys the empirical cases in the book to illustrate different forms of translation. In the case of the Brazilian Sem Terra, for instance, claims for re-appropriation of land and food sovereignty have been translated into a neoliberal agenda through the implementation of World Bank-led policies and a constant process of renegotiation between the movement and the state over the agrarian reform. In the Bolivian case, struggles for autonomy brought to what Dinerstein calls a ‘revolutionary appropriation’ and the proclamation of a ‘plurinational’ state in 2009 under the presidency of Evo Morales.

The fourth stage, or mode, of the art of organizing hope, is the product of the ‘contradictory swinging movement between rebellion and integration’ [47]: a positive, surplus excess. What kind of shape does excess take in the case of Latin American indigenous struggles? To Dinerstein, this excess is not translatable since it is not legible by the lenses and the language of capital: ‘Autonomous organizing confronts value with hope, thus disputing the meaning of the not yet’ [226]. In this un-legibility, in this impossibility of subsumption or co-optation by capitalism, lies the emancipatory strength of prefigurative movements.

The final chapter of the book is entitled *Living in Blochian times: Opening remarks* and includes an overview of the four key concepts that Dinerstein adapts from the utopian thinker Ernst Bloch in her effort to ‘put autonomy in the key of hope’: the real as a process, concrete utopia, contradiction, and the not yet. These are the foundations of her theoretical infrastructure.

The art of organizing (and spreading) hope

Dinerstein’s book paved the way, in the aftermath of the financial recession in 2008-2009, for the now flourishing scholarship on sociological alternatives. For this reason, the book is an essential read for any researcher interested in the study of prefiguration and it has the potential to offer insights for the study of struggles and emancipatory projects beyond the case of Latin American social movements. This book offers as well a universal toolkit for activists to help them critically reflect and frame their

ongoing actions and strategies. A recent project led by a European transnational network of European activists and cultural organizations working on several issues ranging from LGBTQ rights to urban commons, explicitly borrows the subtitle of the book "The Art of Organizing Hope" (TAOH). The idea that 'we can shape the not yet' was at the center of a three-day long forum held in the city of Ghent (Belgium) in November 2018. Dinerstein attended the event and engaged in discussions with activists, politicians and researchers. If we agree, as Dinerstein claims, that 'we are in the midst of a possibly terminal crisis of capitalism' (TAOH 2018: 3), the reflection on alternative forms of production, reproduction and organization should be placed at the core of the research agenda. Dinerstein offers a much-needed humanist, feminist and de-colonial perspective that goes beyond mere critique, but incorporates it, while focusing on the ontology of affirmative and creative action: a critical theory of hope (TAOH 2018: 6).

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