

Re-territorialization, new social and cultural movements and participatory democracy in Latin America

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Abstract: Globalization has caused an important and never-ever-seen re-territorialization process in Latin America, with significant effects on nature, as well as on social and cultural movements, and also on democratic struggles. These effects have not been properly noticed due to the colonizer speech of global economic uniformity prevented the comprehension of new diversity experiences and regional identity dislocation. Nevertheless, the impact on the local power structure caused by this new re-territorialization process is inevitable and redefines the character of collective mobilizations. In this context, reactions against colonization accurately revealed these processes and the new perspectives for participatory democracy.

Key words: reterritorialization, democracy, new social and cultural movements, post-colonialism.

Resumen: La globalización ha provocado un importante e inédito proceso de reterritorialización en América Latina, con efectos relevantes sobre la naturaleza y los sentidos de los movimientos sociales y culturales, así como sobre la lucha democrática. Tales efectos no han sido ampliamente observados, debido a que el discurso colonizador de la uniformización económica planetaria impidió comprender el alcance de las nuevas experiencias de diversidades y desplazamientos identitarios en la región. Sin embargo, el impacto de la reterritorialización sobre las estructuras de poder locales es inevitable y redefine el carácter de las movilizaciones colectivas. En este contexto, las reacciones anticoloniales revelan precisamente estos procesos y nuevas perspectivas para la democracia participativa.

Palabras clave: reterritorialización, democracia, nuevos movimientos sociales y culturales, poscolonialismo.

Introduction

Our purpose in this text is to demonstrate that the complexity of social and historic modernization of Latin America is nowadays revealed by facts and collective mobilizations inside a broad process which reorganizes the territorial fundamentals of region in the context of globalization. The reterritorialization process arises from the appearance of new social and cultural identities and from new modalities of conflicts and struggles in a context of political and historic uncertainties.

Said complexity of regional modernization becomes clear in the same declining movement of the developmentalist imaginary and of the belief in a centralizer State that would be promoter of economic and social development. This imaginary heavily marked the sociologic field in between the 1950's and 1990's, and it is still the intellectual horizon of many economists from the region. However, the developmentalist cycle closes under the weight of the complexity of regional modernization; it reveals the limits of an occidental-centrist project of planetary uniformity, legitimized in the expansion of the mercantile economy and technologic development for consumption goods (Latouche, 1994), which many call in an inaccurate manner globalization. Hence, beyond the discourse of planetary uniformity, we see as from the 1990's a series of important and unseen changes that verify the complexity of the modernization process. It is about demands oriented to the differentiation of cultural practices for the emancipation of new collective movements and active minorities, and for the appearance of a new important critical postcolonial theory. This criticism turns significant to deconstruct the image of globalization as a unifying process which would make the historic summary of the experience of developmentalist States, revealing the richness of the socio-cultural and political mosaic of the region (Casanova, 2002; Mato, 2004; García Canclini, 2006; Escobar, 2008).

For S. Latouche, the image of a universal regulation of the international processes, from the expansion of Occident, would be both the echo of the colonization process of southern societies and the generalization of National States in every continent. In practice, nevertheless, the author reminds us, the "white remained in the racks moving the cords" and said universal model was not "a triumph of mankind but a triumph over mankind" (Latouche, 1994: 26-33). From other perspective, B. Santos complements this reading of globalization as a struggle to affirm that occidental modernity does not correspond to a universal socio-cultural paradigm, "but does to a local paradigm which was successfully globalized, a globalized localism" (Santos, 2000: 18). All these conditions have a central value in the development of our text; these unmask an exaggerated reading of globalization, identified as an irreversible economic, financial and technologic

movement, and thus allow unveiling other territorial, political, cultural, religious and also economic processes, much broader than that supposed by the dominant economic reading. English sociologist R. Robertson (2000) comments in this respect that the current moment of the crisis of the occidental capitalism is, from this perspective, opportune in order to think of the counter-hegemonic discourses of the social and cultural planetary processes and of the appearance of new articulations between the global and the local, “glocalization”.

In this context we will try to demonstrate that these practical and theoretical changes have promoted important reorientations of the local power and of the “place”, opening interesting possibilities for the experiences of participatory democracy. Particularly, we look for calling attention on practices and significations of the quotidian, which are relevant to make participatory democracy effective as a “total social fact”; *i.e.*, as an experience of collective action that mobilizes all the objective and subjective aspects of social life. This implies considering the collective and public value of experiences from the world of life, traditionally seen as scanty significant, but nowadays revealed as fundamental to think and practice social empowerment. In this sense, practices, beliefs, symbols, myths and values that mark the logic of common sense shall not be seen as obstacles for the appearance of expressions of political solidarity at the level of local, communal and associative life, but as resources that can be positively actuated in organizing the social sphere as they are taken in by the public local spheres, as we will see further in the text.

This is to say, the practices and ideas of the world of life are not automatically transformed in positive sources of the democratic game; nonetheless, they are indispensable resources to organize solidarities and empowerment actions in quotidian life, as long as they can be integrated as decisive resources of the experiences of the democratic audience. Here there is a void in the social theory that needs to be filled by a sociologic exploration beyond the merely quotidian; not only is it about understanding that common sense inspires specialized knowledge, but also comprehending that common knowledge is ruled by particular logics which not always are intelligible for those who dominate specialized knowledge and the knowledge of public planning, in particular.

From this viewpoint, one of the goals of this article is to demonstrate that the perspective of formation of local public spheres is the same that inspires the appearance of territories appropriate to channel the new identity expressions: the conjugated actions of social and cultural movements, the networks of solidarity of the quotidian and the spontaneous manifestations of the everydayness; from this perspective, we have to recognize the validity of the ideas of J. Dewey, for who the mere experience of association does not create society, the acts of perception

of the individuals on the consequences of their actions are necessary. Thereby, the “audience” —and the democratic audience— will always be the result of tensions between social integration initiatives and the capabilities of the individuals (Dewey, 1991: 193).

We do not attempt to defend here any form of communitarianism linked to the local private life and outside public spheres, but to seek the bases for new forms of global and differenced egalitarianism that always refer to politics (Mouffe, 1996) and spontaneous associative life. For the associative forms that do not refer to politics may become hostages to collective passions, reminds us another defender of pluralism, M. Walzer. For him, such depoliticized forms are impediments for a global equity that respects the differences and the particular ways of commitments between civil society, the national State and associations (Walzer, 2004: 138). Following this reasoning, we believe that the new political mosaic in Latin America, and in particular that of participatory democracy, demands considering the ways of constitution of public spheres from diverse articulations between civil society and State. Ways of constitution that must consider, C. Cooley (1998) brings to mind, that public opinion formation, democratic in particular, is always fragile, as it reveals the diversity proper to complex organizations.

Reinterpreting globalization in Latin America

Up to the 1980's, inspired by the developmental imaginary, many researchers thought that globalization would bring in its core the territorial, economic, social and cultural uniformity of national societies, which turned out to be an error (Martins, 1992; Latouche, 1994).¹ As from the 1990's, in the context of the crisis of the developmental State and emergency of the neoliberal discourse, various prestigious intellectuals in Latin American revised developmentalism in views of discussing once again the foundations of regional modernization. As an instance, let us remember Celso Furtado, who analyzed the model of growth demonstrating sensibility for cultural issues (2002), or else R. Stavenhagen (1997), who went on to perform a series of conceptual reviews on Latin American modernization in

¹ There is consensus among the scholars that globalization has caused an unseen reorganization of worldwide capitalism, which has affected the established domination systems, it has taken the national States to a relative weakening and has strengthened the transnational power centers (Giddens, 1991; Giddens, Bech and Lash, 1997; Bauman, 1999); for some, even the world globalization would be almost a synonym of de-territorialization, which is the same as saying that local memories, traditions and institutions would be undergoing a wiping process by the world society and global culture (Ianni, 1992).

an article called “Thirty years later” (*Treinta años después*). In parallel, A. Quijano (2000) advanced into the theoretical criticism from the topic of coloniality and wrote a clarifying text “The ghost of development in Latin America” (*El fantasma del desarrollo en América Latina*). On his own, P. G. Casanova (2002) sought to discuss scenarios for the project of regional modernization with his text “The dialectics of alternatives” (*La dialéctica de las alternativas*).

Inside sociology, the criticism to the developmental and standardizing imaginary (Fiori, 2006) opened perspectives for important reviews elaborated by the theoretical principles of social movements, such as A. Touraine.² In this direction, M.G. Gohn makes us remember that the demands of social movements have been altered, including topics like subjectivity, belonging, and participation in the public sphere. The movements begin to include in their programs the struggle for the defense of local cultures, ethics in politics and quotidian areas, which are difficult to penetrate by political parties, unions or churches (Gohn, 2003: 16).

The disenchantment from developmentalism also contributed to the emancipation of new theoretical approaches, widely known as post-colonial, which grow in influence on the intellectual work of rethinking Latin America in the context of worldwide modernization. In the understanding of B. Santos, post-colonialism is a set of theoretical and analytical trends which have in common to grant theoretical and political primacy to uneven North-South relationships in the explanation or comprehension of the contemporary world (Santos, 2008: 28). Here, we necessarily have to recall the names of N. García Canclini (2006), W. Mignolo (2003), A. Escobar (2008), D. Mato (2004), S. Costa (2006) and A. Quijano (2005) who have advanced in important projects to deconstruct the imaginary of developmentism, in order to present Latin America in its rich plurality and social, political, economic and cultural diversity. Nowadays, it is recognized that the idea of Latin America begins to take off in practice, from the diverse modalities to

² For Touraine, nowadays one cannot discuss on social movements without considering the cultural and moral aspects that limit social action. In this sense he proposes to deepen into the discussion considering the differences between societal, historic and cultural movements (Touraine, 1998: 136) in order to bear in mind that a conceptual category that exposes the plurality of manifestations and mobilizations that do not longer directly refer to a certain social category. Hence, the author suggests that cultural movements are more centered on the affirmation of cultural rights than in conflict, with an adversary that may continue being vaguely defined. In the cultural movement there is a stake on identity diversities, such as the movements of women, ethnical minorities or political ecology (Touraine, *op. cit.*: 127-128).

articulate the global with the local, the modern with the traditional, the masculine with the feminine, the dominants with the dominated, in diverse organization contexts of Latin American societies and of cultural and historic memories.

Nevertheless, recent empirical researches³ reveal that the presence of globalization in Latin America is much more complex than certain simplified readings in this respect; these make it evident that planetary uniformity is a myth and that the global phenomenon does not head toward an irreversible deterritorialization, as some people thought. On the contrary, as a matter of fact, it appears in the region, by means of multiple modalities of symbolical and cultural expressions that unveil social, historic and political processes, defined—depending on the approach—as trans-territorialized, multi-territorialized, trans-localized or re-localized (Mato, 2007). Hence, moving away from the aforementioned general consensus, there is a large number of divergences on the way that the global processes impact and adapt to different social and cultural realities.

There is in Latin America, currently of course, certain unanimity among social scientist on the nefarious effects of said ideology in the legitimization of political and state decisions, which generate growing economic and social inequalities, and destabilize democratic processes (Ivo, 2001; Zicardi, 2002). The complexity of the Latin American territorial mosaic reveals the predator nature of the utilitarian⁴ logic and the theoretical and practical anti-utilitarian reactions, important yet diffuse. Thus, globalization acquires at regional level several specific

³ CLACSO (Latin American Council of Social Sciences) has had a very important role in the new studies that reveal the deep social changes in the region. Between the varied works that may be related it is important to mention three compilations: one by José Seone and titled Social Movements and conflict in Latin America (*Movimientos sociales y conflicto en América Latina*) (Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2003); another by Alicia Ziccardi titled Poverty, social inequality and citizenship: the limits of the social policies in Latin America (*Pobreza, desigualdad social y ciudadanía: los límites de las políticas sociales en América Latina*) (Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2002); and a third by Alberto Cimadore, Hartley Dean and Jorge Siqueira: The poverty of ther State: reconsidering the role of the state in alleviating global poverty (*La pobreza del Estado: reconsiderando el papel del Estado en la lucha contra la pobreza global*) (Buenos Aires, CLACSO, 2006).

⁴ Anti-utilitarianism is an important theoretical movement against all attempts to reduce social action to economic and egotist motives, which deprecate the complexity of motivations from social experiences. Anti-utilitarian and anti-economistic criticism is already present in the soul of sociology in classic works by Comte, Durkheim, Mauss, Simmel, Weber, Parsons, among others, who show the efforts to prevent the reduction of the representation of human being to that of “homo economicus”. The difficulties of sociology to face the expansion of the utilitarian doctrine that is reflected on the current hegemony of neoliberal thinking has led to a significant revision of social sciences. This

translations: that of the Andean world; that of the European and Asian immigrant communities in South America; that of the large metropolises; or that of the immigrants residing in the U.S; among other. This is to say, the diverse cultural and social translations show the contradictory impact of neoliberalism on the cultural and community systems, which transform and adapt, but frequently also turn into important resistance points against the uniformed neoliberal logic (Martins, 2008).

Inside social sciences there is fierce intellectual resistance against reductionist attempts that seek to minimize the importance of the reterritorialization processes in Latin America and the social and cultural reactions against planetary standardization. The emergence of this intellectual, anti-utilitarian and anti-reductionist reaction becomes a relevant element in the revision of the conceptual and operational foundations of the modernization of the region. However, this is insufficient for the counter-hegemonic critical thinking to surpass the limits between the academic sphere and the emergent forces in the spaces of collective will formation within the State apparatus and civil society in Latin America. The emancipation of a new more-complex socio-historic paradigm that fits mercantilist logic in a more general regulation, propitiated by the very democratic politics and the interest of collectivity, demands that the social sciences from the region can develop an anti-utilitarian logic that denounces the moral, egotistic and individualistic fundaments of neoliberalism.

In practice, this emancipating effort of a new paradigm reveals hints that deserve to be thoroughly studied. One of them is the fact of recognizing that, in the case of postcolonial Latin American societies, the penetration of globalized capitalism introduces the element of “foreignness”; it works as a mirror from which the local social and cultural movements benefit to update distances and proximities between the traditional and the modern, between the local and the extra-local; in any case, between the constitutive dualities of contemporary reality. Thus, the new mechanisms of the capital reproduction, at the economic-financial level, are subjected, by the experience of the reflection on that cultural and political mirror, to a visible process of denaturalization which progressively erases the memories of postcolonial domination. This fatally transforms the imaginary references of the postcolonial national into trans-territorialized national, and conveys growing uncertainties and social and cultural differentiations.

fact arises in the origin of the foundation, in 1981, in France of an important anti-utilitarian movement called MAUSS (*Movimento Antiutilitarista nas Ciências Sociais*) which re-enlivens the tradition of the French school of sociology of the early XX century. In this respect, see the book: *Critique de la raison utilitariste: Manifeste du MAUSS* by Alain Caillé (Paris, La Découverte, 1989).

As a result, we perceive a displacement of the identity, individual and collective meanings that is marked by paradoxes. On the one side, fragmentations of images, values and schizophrenic representations of social life, which in the short term favor the society of material consumption. It seems as if the anxiety of desires that fluctuate without finding cozy cultural representations makes the individuals prisoners of sensorial and libidinal whims aimed at the immediate, physical and emotional survival, which limit their capability of psychical elaboration and of collective production of communal social life. On the other, anti-colonial reactions, which give new tonalities to cultural and social movement in the region, reappear or are born.

At the same time foreignness, which is produced during the process of denaturalization that domination causes, also implies new challenges, such as that of the value of translation, central in the new cultural communication, as it decreases the boundaries that blocked the formation of new belonging communities by cultural, ethnical, sexual reasons, among other; in this sense, internet is an indispensable technological resource for the formation, at a certain level, of said new communities that reveal unseen symbolical territories overlapping the old “geographic” territories, duplicating the work of the imaginary institution of the socio-historic of these societies, if we want to resort to the thought of Castoriadis (1975). “Foreignness” also means, in the organization of the social and cultural post-national imaginary, the setting into motion of the cultural difference and of the new capital-community opposition.

According to H. Bhabha (2003: 316), this is the great contradiction that occidental philosophy does not manage to overcome; for the author, the community disturbs the great globalizing narrative of the capital as it breaks the emphasis given to production on class collectivity, undoing the homogeneity of the imagined community of the nation. This introduces a fragmented form and of double identification of the group, which Chatterjee illustrates by means of a specifically anti-colonialist contradiction of the public sphere. From this contradiction arise important reactions of the individuals in the passive belonging to a civil society of servants (or colonized, we add). As if civil society was doubled provoking a “subversive life, potentially subversive in its inside, because it refuses to go” (Chatterjee, 1990: 130).

Well now, the concept of “foreignness” introduces a contradiction in those colonial societies, simultaneous to the dispersion that exercises an important effect in constructing identities that become multiple (Hall, 2006). This stimulates the communitarian reaction of new modalities of the interpretation of quotidian life, anchored in the recognition of experiences, values and common sentiments in the

different symbolical territories: labor, art, health, family, economy, association and politics. The reinvention of the community narrative makes the cultural difference substantial and provides new meaning to social and community struggles, as it is demonstrated by the exacerbation of the fight for the land, the visibility acquired by the inequality of incomes and wealth, and the social movements that revive ethnical and cultural traditions. New belonging networks redefine the organization of the national civil society from associative and expressive efforts, reorienting the field of conflicts and negotiations between the interests of the capital and the emergent communities.

Against the fascination of the utilitarianism —main moral referent of contemporary capitalism and dissemination center of an individualistic and consumerist mentality— there are experiences of community mobilizations and broadened participation of local population in managing projects of collective interest. They are important reactions anti-utilitarian in nature against the domination forms that the globalized and regionalized capitalism knows; such a reconfiguration of force relationships in the sphere of political and cultural practice has propitiated the opening of new debates and the appearance of a relevant critical intellectual movement, as it is perceived in the recent collections and books produced by scholars in Latin America (Ribeiro, 2000; Ivo, 2001; Zicardi, 2002; Seoane, 2003; Mato, 2004; Cimadore, Dean and Siqueira, 2006).

There is, then, two points of struggle as for the review of the impacts of globalization in Latin America: one is directly related to the field of politics and social mobilization; while the other refers to the advancement of the theoretical and cultural criticism. No models of alternative praxis can be built in the regions solely from social activism, nor can they be built from intellectual criticism. Both praxes —the intellectual and the militant— walk together. As a matter of fact these points have been articulated for some decades now, by means of a number of registrations of social movements which survive in spite of having been forced to revise their discourses and strategies before the events in the 1990's and the turn of the century. So, the large mobilizations known by Latin America continue involving social, cultural and intellectual movements, or practical knowledge side by side with scientific knowledge.

The new Latin American theoretical movement and democracy

The current re-territorialization movements of globalization in Latin America have not been able to erase the memories of struggles and resistances inherited from previous centuries; as a matter of fact, the “praxis theory” has renewed with the new times, as it is exemplified by peasant movements, which have always nourished the emancipating thought of the religious left—the theology of liberation—with which they have dialogued as from the XX century and still do it thus far. In this reasoning line, one must bear in mind the contribution from sociology to the social movements for new urban struggles, namely the “*sin techo*” movement* and the fruitful relationship between poststructuralist and postcolonial anthropology with the ethnical and indigenous movements in the Amazonia and other areas of important native mobilization. These social and cultural reactions renewed between organic intellectual work and base mobilizations both renew the indeterminate meaning of dispersion (of those who emigrate and those who remain in their localities) and reinforce the communal idea of those who share old and new identities in the work of reconstructing old postcolonial national societies.

Inside the new theoretical movement in Latin America, a special place must be offered to the discussion on democratic theory. The State reforms, the growing complexity of civil society, the new beliefs and values in politics and the new cultural images are, as a whole, a spectrum of topics; this reveals the limits of theoretical interpretations oriented to a reading of democracy, from the viewpoint of juridical, administrative and electoral procedures, without noticing the ongoing changes in the underground of symbolism, which threaten the social structures established in the spaces of the old national borders. The new social and cultural phenomena therefore demand a more complex understanding of the reality from the consideration of the multiplicities and singularities of the inter-subjective experiences lived by individuals and new belonging communities; these are expressed by new moral codes that pass through the inclusion of classical topics of democracy, such as universality, liberty and equality, and of new topics such as recognition to dignity and convergent love.

* TN: “Movimiento los sin techo” (*Those without a roof Movement*) is a nongovernmental organization that works for the integral development and communal organization of the marginalized sector in Santa Fe, Argentina. As from 1985 it has developed different alternatives tending to find answers for the structural problems of the poorest people (<http://www.sintecho.org.ar>).

The spontaneous experiences of volunteering in popular neighborhoods intended to develop housing, street parties and pranks which enliven plural coexistence at the local level and the new relationship modalities are proofs that the associative character is still alive, even under circumstances deemed as unfavorable, before other cultural references which have been integrated. These practices and rituals of the quotidian, which were previously seen as scantily interesting for political action, are now revealed as decisive symptoms of affective mobilizations that consolidate social and political solidarity.

This theoretical and critical movement is invited to convincingly explain the reasons and contexts wherein new plural identity forms are produced that do not any longer directly refer to class (economic) or national situations, nor to traditional union or partisan struggles. The theoretical criticism is being stimulated to overcome the tyranny of modern technical progress to penetrate into the minds of the actors and agencies to rediscover the marginalized frames of the socio-historic occidental imaginary. In this archaeological search, which vanishes the myth of progressive rationalization and the “abstract universalism of Enlightenment” (Mouffe, 1996: 26), the symbolical roots of lost identities, of experiences condemned by modernity appear. In any case, the multiplying and universal character of singular and localized experiences, thereby, of struggles broadened by recognition and participation.

There is a series of facts produced in the sphere of family, neighbors, lovers, friends, partners, communities, neighborhoods, cities and regions, which explain the complexity of the quotidian in this context of new demands for social, affective and moral recognition, and which are shaped in the limits of the new transnational matrix re-territorialized from the diverse places and experiences of re-founding the socio-historic (Mato, 2007). Similar facts are in the origin of the pressures in favor of new citizen rights, as it is the case of indigenous, black people, women and immigrant mobilizations, as well as conflicts and discussions on the legal system that allow glimpsing struggles for human dignity, sheltered in this communitarian and cosmopolitan logic.

Particularly in respect to participatory democracy, there are limits and challenges to be overcome; they demand a certain deepening of the symbolical, moral and cultural determinations present at the micro-social and inter-subjective levels. Here, social theory also finds difficulties to rethink the new mechanisms of symbolization and organization of alliances in the spheres of interpersonal relationships and worldly life.

There is a whole theoretical universe that manifests from the organization of the spatial and temporal matrix of Latin America and the new modalities of symbolic agency of the territory, revealed by the novelties of the linguistic, cultural, economic, political and moral levels. However, these novelties cannot be perceived as long as the intellectual and planners remain excessively attached to objectified indicators of reality, which barely allow for a superficial contribution of the archaeology of social life. A dialogic and hermeneutic comprehension that involves the second-order critical observers, open to sociopoietic programs (Arnold-Cathalifaud, 2006) is essential to broaden the approach of scientific and critical literature of the re-territorialization movements of the region, under the impact of foreignness and the new transnational forces. This sociopoietic comprehension of said complex systems that are on the making in the continental space, above all, allows revealing the moral hierarchies that are hidden behind the power and domination systems of collective actions, in a general manner, and also of the organization processes of democratic citizenship, in particular.

Our hypothesis is that insufficiency of theoretical debates on the level of inter-subjective relationships and on the transformation of the intellectual audience prevents social theory from questioning more severely the limitations of objectivist theories that hide the motivations of social action, in order to excessively value the institutional, administrative and juridical procedures present at the surface of social institutions. Thus proceeding, one loses sight of the central object of social criticism: interpret the re-significations known by Latin America, in terms of its imaginary, historic, social and political institution.

Rescuing the inter-subjective fundaments of associative practices

We understand that systematic reflections on the symbolical fundaments of social life, in general, and of *associative symbolism*, in particular, would be of the utmost importance for the better comprehension of the new modalities of motivations and collective will, of the mechanisms of alliance formation, and of political and cultural action implied in the values of trans-territorialized and re-localized democracy.

The symbolical meanings everyday shared, such as birthday parties or wedding anniversaries, pranks and street games, petty services, favors, kindnesses are expressive moments of the new cultural territories and of a participatory pedagogy, decisive for the democratic game at the local level. We have to underscore that said multiplicity of facts connects with a whole that was perceived by Mauss which made him propose —deepening a first approach by Durkheim— that society is a total social phenomenon, with symbolic and material value, in which every element is important to construct it (Mauss, 2003; Caillé, 2002).

There is a displacement of reality as a whole, which implies a generalized topographic re-dimensioning, and whose new variables are propitiated by the moral, community law and liberalization of the individuality committed to social dignity.

The large collective mobilizations, such as those performed frequently in the XIX and XX centuries —protests of laborers, partisan struggles, nationalist mobilizations—which have subsidized the democratization of social movements up to the present, still pinpoint the new forms of political and ideological agency. These movements, fruits from other symbolic territory clearly marked by the modern geographic and state space, continue influencing mentalities and practices, becoming historic references that cannot be discarded. To sum up, the question is not to substitute an imaginary of democracy with another, but to broaden the processes of knowledge, translation, interpretation, valuing and shared action, including all the present elements and those previously excluded from the democratic practice. The idea of participation, therefore, does not substitute that of representation, but it helps broaden it (Godbout, 2008).

The important is the fact that together with these memories new motivations are born, marked by the dialectics between foreignness and nativism, by images of dispersion and a new material and spiritual re-signification of the world, and also by the new cosmopolitan subjectivities that sprout at the surface of the quotidian in the shape of unseen fragmented and diversified movements. As for their degree of chaos, we must recognize that these unseen movements have as a common characteristic a strong demand for recognition and visibility at the cultural and civil society levels; this demand frequently hides a new modality of communitarianism that is anti-colonial, while being cosmopolitan. In this sense, the social theory has to proficiently articulate the micro and the macro, the individual and society, the total and the singular, the symbolical and the formal. Hence, on the one side, it will be able to capture the processes of change that refer to the institutions objectified and incarnated in the parties, unions, enterprises, governmental organs, in law and justice, in the media and the cultural industry. On the other side, the social theory has to train to understand the value of mythical and symbolic constellations, of the new desires of social insertion and cultural emancipation, which are only revealed in their phenomenological nudity by the prism of the theories capable of focusing the angle of inter-subjectivity and symbolism (Castoriadis, 1975).

It is necessary to denounce the cognitive and anti-spiritualistic limitations inherited from illuminist and rational thinking in order to rescue the principle of society and community as a totality. In this sense, one cannot overlook the contribution by Marcel Mauss to the renewal of sociologic thought, as he produced an adequate synthesis of the interchange movement that the associative link between the symbolical and material generates (Mauss, 2003).

Mauss designed that general rule that underlies any social barter and direct practice between individuals and groups with the title “gift”; the author states that giving, receiving and rewarding not only is the key to understand the alliance between men, but a form of wisdom that should not be disregarded: “from end to end of human evolution”, he said, “there are no two forms of knowledge”. There is no risk to deceive ourselves, then if we adopt as a principle in our lives that which has always been a principle and will always be: leave ourselves, give freely and obligatorily (Mauss, *op. cit.*: 301). Updating the theoretical finding of Mauss, A. Caillé says that gift and recognition are the same thing, as the first gift is the one that identifies the other, in its difference and proximity, as its companion or opposed (Caillé, 2008).

Against an abstract comprehension, general and even corporatist of society, which devalues the quotidian and the interiority (Taylor, 2005), in order to value the great institutional topics —market economy, State, deliberative democracy, political parties, etcetera— emerges, in a different manner, a reading of the social sphere from its inside, of the modes of production of symbolism, making the multiplicity of contexts and possibilities of narratives of social and community life evident. This epistemological twist progressively distinguishes the inter-subjective meanings present in the quotidian; hence, it allows comprehending the vertical and horizontal amplitude of the general organization conditions of the social and cultural imaginary, and also of the historical appearance —even in adverse conditions— of the set of formal institutions of contemporary societies: the *barrio*, the association, the family, the neighborhood (Martins, 2007).

The fact is that there is still intellectual and theoretical negligence as for the proposals that escape the way put forward by the rational and illuminist tradition of social sciences, which is hostage to objectivism, preventing the revaluing of the civic and associative tradition designed in the anti-utilitarian criticism from Rousseau and Comte. This was updated by the end of the XX century with the expansion of anti-utilitarian reactions at worldwide level and which in France have a concrete expression in the figure of MAUSS (Anti-Utilitarian Movement in social Sciences), founded in 1981.

The movements of re-territorialization of the symbolical boundaries of Latin America have been led by a series of new actions in the shape of networks (women, indigenous people, groups that suffer from syndromes and adversities, victims of violence or diseases such as AIDS). These must be interpreted as expressions of an anti-utilitarian reaction that renews the anti-capitalist struggle; hence, said movements denounce in the practice the risks of theoretical reductionism and moral apathy to honor human being in its moral, psychic and cultural integrity.

According to the orientation suggested by Mauss, it is proposed to recover a vision of totality, so as to understand that the ongoing changes are enormously complex and impact in a differentiated manner the diverse national societies, organized in earlier centuries by the colonial and postcolonial State apparatuses.

It is important to understand that the critical discussion on contemporary modernization must consider the fact that those new anti-capitalist socio-cultural and political topographies are no longer supported on the ancient national order, constituted by the expansion of occidental imperialism; on the contrary, they are anchored to the sign, symbolical and mythical complexity of the new forms of agency of human life, present in the foundations of the quotidian, as well as in the new configuration forms of socio-historic reality.

In this sense, we believe that policymakers, when defining the criteria and necessary procedures to execute policies of social security and promotion of local, regional and national modernization, should consider the value of this context of shared symbolical meanings, present inside social practices and social institutions in general. Likewise, they should comprehend that the success of public policies fundamentally depends on the possibility of creating actions of collective value that power and broaden mutual and spontaneous understandings, which are born firstly inside social activity, be it productive, playful, formative or associative.

The simplest modalities of primary practices, such as the interchange of niceties, namely: morning, afternoon and evening greetings, offering small services, caring for the children of other neighbors while they are at work or, on the other side, reciprocity services, such as volunteering, convey utterly important teachings for democratic theory, timely pointed out by authors such as (1966) and Dewey (1997) in the early XX century from their experiences with local democratic associationism in the U.S. There is in such modalities of the quotidian a range of moral, affective and playful meanings that orient, through transversal ways however, the collective representations on life and limit the organization of the cultural, social and political pact of the micro-spaces, such as communities, associations and family centers.

This it is to say, there is in the quotidian life of individuals and community and societal systems, in this XXI century and in Latin America, a common re-signification movement —nourished from the different translations and interpretations— on the large scale of the social and cultural postcolonial and national state imaginary. The almost schizophrenic presence of the imaginary of dispersion, reinforced by the increasing desire to migrate, reveals a new symbolical and revolutionary meaning, a desire to break, to leave, to stand, to reconstruct, reintegrating at the same time collective memories and liberating the desires

of individuation and becoming autonomous. Therefore, a new experience of autopoietic community arises, expressed in symbolism even before appearing as a political experience of collectivity and associative pact, assuming institutional forms more visible because of the rules and action procedures.⁵ Then, it is necessary to stimulate another reading of modernity that considers the universe of changes of inter-subjective meanings (Santos, 2002) and the new modalities of institution of the social which in this complex modernization of the region are appearing.

Thinking in terms of democracy in Latin American and Brazil, we assure that this understanding of the relation between symbolism, gift and politics is particularly important to find some exits for the social sectors marginalized or excluded from the organized labor market. Although they do not find any other reason to mobilize than union and wage struggle, said individuals and groups produce new political and cultural motivations when it is perceived that the practical issues of quotidian life, such as security, water, electricity, food, school and healthcare services are at stake, which demand solidarity and mutual reciprocity.

Reinventing governability by means of participation: new theoretical and practical challenges

There is a verifiable gap in public policies that does not only come from the loss of State vitality before the mercantile system, but also from the incapability of the State and non-State managers to organize actions that stimulate participation and solidarity at the local level, mainly between the social sectors that are outside the organized labor market and which live unemployed or in informal labor.

Without the understanding of the inter-subjective aspects, which articulate the new associative forms nowadays, the collective interventions oriented toward the citizenry from the State or non-State organizations would become precarious and insufficient. Given that the bureaucratic logic, the system of law and parliamentary political action remain hostages to an impersonal understanding of social and cultural practices, these turn insensitive to the comprehension of the reflection proper to interpersonal relationships, at the level of public or community local

⁵ Such symbolical signification can be understood as a mythical thought inside of which an experience of feeling and awareness of the I/Me (Mead, 1967), and which can only occur from a reference community, traditionally represented by clans, tribes (Cassirer, 2004: 298) and that in current societies is reproduced by family systems, of neighborhood and association. In complex societies the organization of that I/Me is supported upon numberless insertion networks, “circuits of solidarity that deeply differ from the image of the politically organized actor” (Melluci, 2005: 97), appearing as networks of segmented and reticulated character.

spheres. Since in at the level of inter-subjectivity that permeates the quotidian, decision making is not directive and geometric, as it is verified among institutional planners, but in a dialogical, sinuous and shared way.

In such manner that, frequently, similar initiatives adopted from top to bottom, in the State and the large development organizations, without considering the time proper to community, social and cultural reflection, broaden the entropic tendencies and of social, cultural and moral disorganization of the primary associative systems, such as family, neighbors, friends and associative groups. As they are not mere oversights, said punctual interventions on social reality verify the uncertainties of public and State policies in the new contexts that do not only refer to the individual-laborer, but to community systems that, despite fragile, are reactive and potentially subversive, as Chatterjee (1990) states. In other words, this inefficiency of State action reveals the deep crisis of the old mechanisms of social security present in modernity in central countries (Rosanvallon, 1995) and even peripheries (Martins, 2005), between the XIX and XX centuries, and which nowadays are insufficient to respond to new social demands.

In practice, this becomes a growing waste of resources and weakening of social coercion that tends to broaden when State and non-State actions do not fully consider the subjective determinations of the primary associative fact and the process of social reality institution. This is to say, these actions do not integrate quotidian life and the processes of interiority as indicators of a comprehension of society as a “total social fact”, founded on the circulation of gifts, which cannot be perceived from hegemonic utilitarian and mercantilist perspectives that valued the merely qualitative.

If the State apparatus does not have mechanisms and criteria to apprehend the new modalities of social action, public policies end up affecting the superficial, creating palliative solutions and too frequently generating new previously-inexistent problems. An instance of this would be assisting the nascent underdogs disregarding their socio-cultural network composed of the family and the origin community or to measure the infantile motivation to learn only from the resources of didactics and school teaching without considering the conditions of life, cultural, affective and nutritional aspects of the poor children.

Considering the symbolic fundaments of social and cultural practices allows rethinking democratic topics from other perspectives, in such manner that democracy is observed in contexts of growing demands for recognitions, on the one side, and on the other, the loss of vitality of old regulatory and distributive mechanisms, particularly the State apparatus.

Certainly the contemporary socio-cultural environment in Latin America and the world is burning and marked by conflicts, rivalries and generosities inside the different structures of domination that escape the control of any centralized power, as it is the case of the State. This creates an unavoidable tension between direct and indirect action, between primary and secondary democracy. It provokes the displacement of senses and the appearance of new collective meanings that are expressed as norms, values, beliefs, and social rules translated in the spaces of the individual and group, passing through the old-fashioned modern geographic borders.

Therefore, the perspectives for the appearance of an authentic participatory democracy culture, valid in the macro-sociologic sphere and not only at micro-sociologic levels, become dependent on the regulations forms that are capable of dissolving the diversion tensions between the individual and collective purposes, interest and detachment, freedom and obligation, State and civil society. This movement is made in favor of the expansion of new community and associative spaces that release the conflicts of psychic and moral nature and enable the formation of an enhanced and diversified anti-capitalist front. This is necessary to prevent the predatory logic of capitalist corporations from reaching the symbolic fundaments of the universal collective memory, imposing a new sort of slavery on the basis of the control of the transgressive desire of limited consumption.

Democratic struggles need to be re-codified in new cultural and institutional scenarios; however, the traditional representation mechanisms such as elections, the organization procedures of the authority of collective power, inherited from the national State, the representative chambers, parties, unions and the national juridical and legal systems shall not be demounted. New polyphonic, open and transversal devices of regulation, horizontal and vertical at the time, are still demanded by the new political pressure, cosmopolitan in nature. These are indispensable to respond to the different pressures—individual, group and corporative—, safeguarding the principles of universality, diversity and social, individual and community justice. Nonetheless if these devices of political-juridical regulation were irregularly and ephemerally existent, without being sufficiently legitimized from democratic audiences formed in the diverse representational level, of the communities, districts, cities and regions, they would not be able to effectively serve the emancipation of a participatory democracy of transnational associative and community base.

It is necessary that said devices are permanently regulated by representations and collective beliefs around alliances in favor of the associative fact and by the creations of new public management and regulation devices that help short, middle and long term effectiveness. Governability must be reinvented in order to allow reversing and controlling the anomic processes, generated by the deregulation of traditional social control mechanisms and the weakening of the national institutions, revealed by the insufficiency of representative democracy, popular mistrust, the increase of exclusion and violence.

Because of this, political reforms in the broad sense (law, public policies, councils, forums and representative chambers, etcetera) should advance very decisively in the creation of regulation and redistribution devices, legitimized upon systems of decentralized power, which rearticulate the relations between local, regional, national and transnational power. The creation of public spheres is essential for the liberation of local community mobilizations and the exercise of associative practices founded on the rules of gift and solidarity. This necessarily takes us back to a in-depth discussion of the commitments of the public manager with the redistribution of the goods of citizens (Martins, 2004), based on the criteria that value reciprocal relationships, of responsibility and of solidarity, in the public spaces. The new participation devices shall not overlook the fact that localized interests must be subjected to the imperative of the differenced and egalitarian common good, which has a guardian to all that exercise legitimate and legal authority: in associations, public and private organizations, in political and governmental systems.⁶ This is the environment for the appearance of a new democratic and associative culture, of a culture of the gift and the alliance, which favors at the same time identity diversity and the common and public good, at the local and extra-local levels.

⁶ In this sense, the “gift of citizenship” (Martins, *op. cit.*), as a fundament for an associative culture, has the merit of allowing the collective obligations to be lived as a virtue and a means of liberation and not as an oppressive one.

In any case in this article we wanted to demonstrate three aspects: in the first place, that an effective change is occurring in the regional socio-historic imaginary by means of an ample process of re-territorialization with the appearance of new social and cultural movements, which do not only refer to the local, but to a localized experience of the global. Said mobilizations expand the horizons of the traditional social movements. In the second place, we would like to demonstrate that the complexity of regional modernization poses important changes for the critical theory, imposing relevant epistemological revisions and the rereading of the power relation between Northern and Southern societies.⁷

In this sense, the postcolonial theory offers a significant contribution to this theoretical revision as it debates or challenges a participatory democracy that broadens the historic gains of representative democracy. In the third place, we would like to point out that the set of theoretical and practical changes have to contribute to reveal the limits of State policies and the importance of new public actions that actively integrate local social and institutional actors in making decisions of collective interest. Without the consideration of the multiplicity of viewpoints and practices there is no possibility to create a democratic public sphere and motivate participation. This is a political, moral and cultural challenge.

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⁷ Not only does this revision of the theoretical praxis imply the opening to new ideas, but also mainly to a critical work on the deconstruction of colonizing processes to make the specificities of colonial domination and the struggles against this domination emerge. A context as complex as the current one demands to rethink the importance of translation between territories and knowledge, memories and innovations designed between the modern and the traditional, the local and the extra-local, allowing a clearer understanding of the emergence of "cultural identities that are not fixed, but suspended, in transition, between the different stances" (Hall, 2006: 88). The translation work is not only technical, but above things political and emotional, enormously increasing the number of available experiences that may be appropriated by diverse groups, giving fundament to common knowledge and inspiring the renovation of scientific knowledge.

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