
PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE: Decolonization, Liberation, and Education for Civilizing Change. Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural Keys from Latin America.

Abstract

In their resistance, struggles, and construction of life alternatives, women and men also produce/reproduce practical and theoretical knowledge. Reflecting critically on the reality in which they live, they become aware of the injustices of gender, class, and race, among others. This gives rise to pedagogical practices that shape a proposal of liberation while constituting a central and irreplaceable component of the transformation-liberation process. This practical pedagogy/pedagogical practice is revolutionary; it strengthens the construction and development of subjectivity and (individual, sector-collective) political consciousness in workers, original indigenous people, popular sectors, rural communities, etc., contributing to the convergence and articulation of one collective plural subject in all things local, regional, continental, and global. Recognizing this pedagogy's centrality in the processes of social change is vital for planning comprehensive action in politics, culture, ideology or epistemology. That is the focus of this paper's reflections.

Key words

Pedagogía, esperanza, descolonización, educación popular.

0. PREMISES:

NEW THINKING FOR NEW CIVILIZING HORIZONS

The reflections that I share here cannot be referred to or explained based on the predominant left-wing thought paradigms of the twentieth century. Rather, feeding off of those paradigms, the proposals, concepts and perspectives that I hold find their place in an updated understanding of the world system, a system ruled by capital in times of the globalization of the latter's hegemony. And this has just as much to do with critical analysis of the present as it does with reflections on surpassing it in favor of life.

¹ **Isabel Rauber** es doctora en Filosofía y educadora popular. Además es profesora de la Universidad Nacional de Lanús. Directora de Pasado y Presente XXI. Integrante del Foro Mundial de las Alternativas. Estudiosa de los procesos políticos de los movimientos sociales e indígenas de Indo-afro-latinoamérica.

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The current crisis and global downturn of capitalism is not due to coincidence, nor is it the result of “errors” or deficiencies in the application of the neoliberal market operation model: it is what neoliberalism has reaped and sowed; it is the perversion of the system ruled by the growing and insatiable voracity of large financial corporations, which express themselves through the worldwide banking industry and which today have brought their pillaging to a new level, inaugurating a new cycle of accumulation and colonization of capital on a global scale. Having preyed on nature and human beings in its genesis, capitalism is incapable of solving the problems it creates; to the contrary, it can only make them worse.

The strength to resist the onslaught of capital and its one crushing thought, which it attempts to assert (impose)—namely, that this is the only world possible—emerges from the people’s resistance, creation, and construction. In their everyday practices they seek alternatives, create them, and continue moving forward, advancing elements that will one day be the things of a new civilization, anchored in *good living and coexistence* among all men and women, a reunion of nature in the interest of making humanity’s collective and individual plenitude and happiness a reality by emancipating the market.

1. FROM INDIVIDUALISTIC “WELL-BEING” TO COLLECTIVE “GOOD LIVING”

The expression *Good Living* or *Living Well* (“*Buen Vivir*” or “*Vivir Bien*”), typical of the native peoples of Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru... means, first and foremost, “Living well among ourselves.” It advocates communal living with interculturality and without the asymmetries of power. As Evo Morales affirmed, “One cannot Live Well if others are living poorly.” This expression condenses the crux of the solidarity approach: This is about living as part of the community, with the community’s protection and protecting the community, in harmony with nature. “Living in balance with what surrounds us” and also “*good with you and good with me*”; it differs from the individualistic “well-being” promoted by the market, erected on the backs of “the rest” and against their interest, and separated from nature, which it considers its “object.”

Good Living includes social affectivity, recognition, and prestige; it corresponds to a comprehensive understanding of society that brings together development and democratization, in which **development and democracy** are based on and project a civilizing option in which the possibility of **life** beats strongly.

Good Living encapsulates and projects key principles for the construction of the new civilization, anchored in solidarity, in the equality and complementarity of differences, in respecting natures as a spring of human identity, that repositions *life* as an indivisible *gift of being* in nature and society. This is not a question of a compendium of dogmas that we must follow; it is not a new kind of fundamentalism, but rather a civilizing fountain with life as its axis; it exists because of life, it defends life and it

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projects its development around life. For this reason, this proposal is open to the creativity of human generations.

A comprehensive understanding of development, democracy, rights...

Respect for human and collective rights, a sense of belonging, safety, respect for manners of social organization, and minority and majority rights constitute part of the central nucleus of *Good Living*. These reasons, among others, make the debate over the **development of a debate which, besides being economic, is also political, social, and cultural**, an idea that—in our lands—goes hand-in-hand with the debate on poverty and wealth, on ownership of energy resources, on access to services, on the enjoyment of rights, that is to say, with democracy.²

Attention to those problems and the search for stable solutions underpins development processes that simultaneously belong to intercultural democratization, and vice versa. Development, democracy, interculturality and decolonization have a direct two-way relationship in this understanding of the world that is incompatible with the *capitalist schizophrenia* that plays economy against society, society against politics, humanity against nature, public against private, macro against micro. The old paradigms on civilization, development, well-being and progress based on consumerism, wasteful spending, and the use and abuse of nature, today more than ever reveal their irrationality and end up being unsustainable.

Nature as the center of life

The commercial-quantitative conception of development considers nature an object that humanity can and must conquer, dominate, and exploit in the name of “well-being.” Capitalism turned nature into “object-merchandise,” into a territory that, through its private *division into lots* and appropriation, can be sold, bought, confiscated, pillaged, emptied, bombarded, transferred, etc. Nature was considered a kind of bottomless resource incapable of reaction until it gave clear indications to the contrary: the growing hole in the ozone layer, tsunamis and earthquakes, the depletion of energy resources, droughts and floods, contamination... have all been part of nature’s language and message.

Today it is clear (and recognized) that the biosphere does not just generate life and energy resources, but also regulates the homeostasis of the global system. This fully coincides with what the peoples of the Andes have for centuries called *Pachamama* (Mother earth, Mother water, Mother forest). According to this perspective, nature is not just a source of resources and raw material, but also responsible for maintaining

² “The key to development lies in suppressing the prevailing structure of cultural domination and racial discrimination, and in instituting dialogue, cooperation, complementation, reciprocity and understanding. In this way economic growth is conceived as a process of consolidation, reinforcement, and interaction of identities, as the joining of exchange networks and interculturality.” (UNDP, 2006, 16)

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certain important, indispensable balances in order to preserve our heritage of biodiversity for future generations.

In this *ecological dimension of reality*, we human beings recognize ourselves as an intrinsic and indivisible part of nature. Such is the cosmo-centric perspective which makes it possible to think about the future of humanity with a different sense and understanding of progress and well-being. This can be summed up in *Living Well*, which at its roots is the defender-promoter of humans in harmony with nature. In this sense it is clear that questions of ecology or which reference nature, like those of poverty, development, or democracy, cannot be analyzed in a vacuum... Life's comprehensive systemic focus (economy, politics, culture, way of life...) in every moment's social realities is essential.

Cultural-worldview change clears a path

Removing the cultural blinders from other eras and developing the ability to face new realities, situations, and problem areas also ends up at the heart of political transformations and of the democratization and social justice processes developing in Latin American countries.

In this sense, the core problem is not; to quote Laclau (2004), a problem with liberal democracy's values of *liberty, equality, and fraternity*, but rather with the *power system* that continually redefines and limits the operation of those values. That is why, during power disputes like those currently at play in Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela... a struggle springs forth among indigenous communities and peoples, among peasants and diverse social sectors, fighting to fully participate in democracy, to widen it, that is to say, to extend *equality and liberty* to their social, economic, cultural, and political links. This is about a **transformation of democracy at its roots** that resolves to deepen and change the tools that it itself offers in the name of ending the power relationships established by the exclusive and elitist democracy of capital, moving deep into the construction processes—from below—another democracy, another power, another State, another State-society-citizenry relationship, another hegemony: the hegemony of the people in defense of life. One must be attentive in order to keep clear of the neoliberal paradigm's trick, which considers democracy (and the State) an abstract realm, a conflict-free terrain, a *space which is neutral* to the competition of interests.

Construction, from below a new hegemony, a new power, a *new State for Good Living and Coexistence*, requires a kind of political organization and leadership which differs fundamentally from the modalities and methods of work, organization, and management, particularly in the public realm. This is a reasoning that seeks to bring together and construct collective prominence and consciousness as popular power's foundation, based on solidarity and opposition, on recognition and acceptance of differences without attempting to eliminate them, on understanding them as enriching factors and not as "defects." This reasoning cannot be based on antagonism and exclusion of the different, but rather must be based on the search for spaces where

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diversity is included with increasing ease, fostering the interwoven, intercultural work of diversity.

Recovering the analytic and systemic dimension of the “mode of production” category
Together, the debates surrounding development, democratization, citizen participation, education, jurisprudence, ecology, etc., form the entirety of the processes under way to search out and construct civilizing alternatives (practices and epistemologies) that can break through capitalist civilization. Within these alternatives, the indivisible nature-society interrelationship is part of the key to the defense of all life. This epistemological-worldview anchorage is fundamental, given that it sums up the conceptual foundations for the creation of *a new mode of production and reproduction* of social life, that is to say, of a *mode of life* anchored to the indivisibility of human and natural life. In this sense, the worldview proposal constitutes part of the new civilizing horizon.

The manner of *producing* the means of men’s lives depends, first and foremost, on the very nature of the means of life with which they find themselves, and which one must *reproduce*.

“This *mode of production* should be not considered only in the sense of reproduction of individuals’ physical existence. It is, rather, these individuals’ predetermined mode of activity, a determined mode of manifesting their lives, a determined *mode of life*. What they are coincides, therefore, not just with **what they produce** but also with **the mode in which they produce**. What the individuals are depends, in other words, on the material conditions of their production”³ (Engels and Marx, 1976, 16), (authors’ original italics; bold by IR).

Marx brought economic production and social reproduction together and uncovered that the *conditions of production simultaneously constitute the conditions of reproduction*. While social reproduction forms part of economic reproduction, it guarantees—in capitalism—the expanded reiteration of the social class system to which it belongs, with each cycle further strengthening and deepening the *salability* condition not only of manpower, but also of nature (transformed by the market into an object, raw material, etc.), and increasing the material-spiritual action of market mechanisms (hegemony).

From here on out the breakthrough civilizing change does away with civilization marked by capital, which means changing—by positively overcoming it—its mode of production and reproduction of social life as well as the mode of its interrelationship with nature. This hypothesis profiles one of the great cultural, economic, political and social challenges in the process of substituting-overcoming capitalism: transforming

³ Note that the concept of *production* here does not refer strictly to economics, but to all of human beings’ interrelationships, among themselves and with nature, in both their social and spiritual lives.

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the mode of economic-social production from its roots. This entails a historical-cultural process of creating-learning from humanity, a process oriented towards a new historic horizon anchored in the principles of *good living* and *coexistence* among ourselves and with nature. It is not comparable, therefore, with relevant projects that, for example, suggest changing the “production matrix.” In spite of their good intentions, these projects prop up the modernization of the capitalist mode of production.

Dealing with this historical-cultural challenge means that the economic productive-reproductive ability of the people—the only ones capable of seeking out, creating and constructing a social metabolism that can overcome the one we currently know, and whose inspiration is the principles of *good living* and *coexistence*, that is to say a metabolism that is not subjected to the regulation of market mechanisms—must be positioned for comprehensive development.

But as President Nicolás Maduro recently pointed out: *The socialist project is advancing politically and socially, but it is lagging behind economically.*⁴ That is: it is subject to the capitalist market and the predatory, hierarchical, subordinating, exclusive working logic of the same. And this constitutes one of the greatest limitations and challenges to the blossoming of renewed socialist alternatives.

Boldly facing the search for and construction of alternatives for a new mode of production, the basis for a mode of life that can overcome the one imposed by capitalism is among the first political and cultural tasks of the civilizing socialist emancipation project. This heralds a transition period (and the arrival of the new), a transition that is characteristic of the decolonizing revolutionary processes already in progress in Indo-Afro-Latin American countries.

Within these processes, given the prominence of sectors historically discriminated against and marginalized, today (self-)reclaimed as citizens with full rights, little by little a new mentality, a new world, is emerging from the practical. Cultural (social, economic, political) change is underway. There are no guarantees of success, but they lie in the acceptance of the challenge to create something new and daring to set out in search of it.

2. INTERCULTURALITY AND LIBERATING DECOLONIZATION

In Indo-Afro-Latin American societies, diverse cultures coexist in the same territory, defined as a “nation,” “State,” “country,” etc. Throughout the conquest and colonization of America, there occurred a construction and establishment of hierarchization, subordination, discrimination, subjugation, and exclusions of original indigenous people and their cultures, to which we can add the exclusion of slaves torn from Africa and China. It was on this foundation that the hegemonic predominance of

⁴ Interview with Tarik Alí, July 24, 2014

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the remnants of the colonial culture associated with local powers was constructed. This summarizes the complex root of the interrelationships among the diverse cultures that live in the same territory (country). As the subordination and exclusion chain becomes more intense, so too will its interrelationships become more complex and troubled. In this sense, the intercultural proposal of putting an end to monocultural colonial power in popular democratizing revolution processes is central.

The intercultural, unlike the multicultural, from the liberating perspective and the perspective of liberation, refers to the interrelationship among different men and women in conditions of parity and complementarity, that is to say, without establishing a hegemonic cultural center. From the political point of view, this means equivalent recognition and relationship among all cultures,⁵ identities and worldviews, and calls for the construction of legal platforms that can function as institutional support so that social and cultural diversities, etc. can interrelate with one another in an effective legal support of equality. The equitable coexistence of different men and women demands institutional recognition of civil, political, social, sexual, reproductive, and cultural rights, and a guarantee of the real exercise thereof. This requires, at the same time, the will to understand one another; it requires that tolerance⁶ takes a step ahead of accumulated intolerance in order to move—from there—toward mutual acceptance. This is why **liberating interculturality is different from multiculturalism and inclusion**.

Interculturality—like pluriculturalism—is oriented toward the register of foundational social ethnic diversity, and possibly points toward the need to seek out channels through which to think, construct, and bring the public to bear with other modes of (political, economic, social and cultural) interrelationships.⁷ But neither

⁵ When I talk about **culture**, I am alluding, in the first place, to the **modes of life, thought, and worldviews** of the social and political classes, sectors, and actors, and to their possible interrelationships, inter-influences, and inter-significations, that is to say, also, to **shared intercultural interstices**, configured in and for complex interrelationships—consciously or not—by human beings that fit in a determined community, social sector or society. While diverse and complex, a society's culture cannot, then, be considered a sum of its parts (the material and symbolic production of its distinct sectors, ethnic groups, social classes and actors). The root of the culture is intangible and invisible; it is part of the inner world of the men and women that produce, reproduce, and share it, over which they mold, seize, and coin their habits and customs, the foundation of their human interrelationships. It is for this reason that culture, while producing and reproducing, also individually internalizes itself in the everyday practices of production and reproduction of life. And upon being permanently shared and resignified in social interrelationships and interactions, it becomes a ubiquitous process in the dynamics of social movement.

⁶ The concept of “tolerance” is employed here only as a transitive concept. Tolerance and intolerance are concepts that shut away the interests and positions of power: Who tolerates who, and why? The objective is the *natural acceptance* of the different and diverse, but to get to that point in the cultural battle, appealing to tolerance can contribute to the modification of the relationships of intolerance, exclusion, and discrimination.

⁷There is a marked tendency to identify, equalize—and therefore confuse—multiculturalism with ethnic diversity and, more concretely, exclusively with indigenous peoples. This restricts multi- and inter-

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multiculturalism nor pluriculturalism presupposes an interrelationship among equals; there is a multi- or pluriculturalism that in reality only accepts diversity “for the photo op,” but maintains subordinating hierarchical relationships between those that would be situated at the heights that “know, decide, and give orders” and those below who “don’t know, don’t decide, and ought to take orders.” It is multiculturalism which is accepted by the powerful: the one that does not ask questions, that changes nothing, that proclaims a plurality that leaves them in the center with the scepter. This is why it is so important for multiculturalism to be conceived in-hand with interculturality, a movement which it anticipates.

The excluded do not demand inclusion; they demand recognition and justice, as well as equal and horizontal treatment in their relationships. The intercultural perspective does not respond to an attitude of “solidarity” for the excluded.⁸ It is a *life-option* and an *option for life*, a feat that envelops and brings together all men and women. This is why the intercultural perspective does not call for inclusion, but rather for the construction of a new collective identity, a new multinational and intercultural State, *from below*.

Liberating interculturality imagines the decolonization of the mode of life, of thought and social interrelationships, which is to say that it also reconsiders the interrelationships between the State, society, and citizenry, searching for (constructing) a new kind of interrelationship, from the citizenry and society to the State, breathing life into a new kind of State-society-citizenry interaction. And this is only possible on the foundation of constructing horizontal (equity, justice, and recognition) relationships between all sociopolitical actors and all inhabitants of a country, independent of the community or human group to which they belong, in all things economic, political, cultural, and identitary. Interculturality imagines decolonization because it is incompatible with the monocultural, hierarchical, discriminatory, disqualifying, exclusive conception imposed by colonialism and it is ubiquitous in the structuring, organization, and jurisprudence of modern states and in human beings’ interrelationships. The way in which interculturality and decolonization are tangled up conceives and projects itself, for the first time, as an intrinsic part of a process of grassroots liberation: from the chains of capital and its sterilizing culture of colonialism. Decolonization, both internal and external (spiritual, cultural, economic, political, legal and institutional), is the key to achieving interculturality and it is decolonization which is present, in fact, in the growing everyday practices of indigenous and social movements in several Indo-Afro-Latin American countries.

culturalist approaches, on the one hand, to a question of ethnicity and, on the other, leaves a part of the popular camp off the sociopolitical map, taking the same actions as the traditional hegemonic (monocultural) position—though this position uses other means.

⁸ Social inclusion refers to the excluded who would now be included. But who does the including? When there is “someone doing the including,” that person may go back to excluding the very next day. This is why the concept of inclusion ends up being, at the very least, imprecise: it accepts multiculturalism but rejects interculturality.

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Together, the liberating decolonization processes already underway outline and propose a path: the construction/constitution in every country of a decolonized intercultural and multinational State. The process under way in Bolivia, heroically created and constructed by indigenous peoples and workers from below, is the first and most advanced experience for which this—besides being possible—is vital, so that the lands of Indo-Afro-Latin America can continue moving toward a new world.

In the scope of political-pedagogical involvement, interculturality and decolonization immediately remit, in the first place, to the terrain of the sociopolitical and cognitive practices of the diverse sociopolitical actors who constantly contradict the dominating paradigms in thought, knowledge (and the exercise of knowledge), and the dominant “should be;” until a short while ago they were considered the only ones to be valid and efficient.

This combines with the deep crisis that crosses the rationalities constructed and minted until now as universal truths. On the one hand, because interculturality means, at the outset, recognition of the diversity of identities, cultures, modes of life and (economic, political, and legal) social organization, it is necessary to rearticulate all valid rationalities without exclusions or hierarchization in their interrelationships. On the other hand, because this calls to question the sense and content of rationality—of Western power—which until now has dominated. All of this turns gazes toward the creators of different rationalities, that is, to the subjects of the production and reproduction of (communal, rural, urban, social) life, to the subjects of knowledge, to the subjects of social (cultural, political, economic) transformations. Secondly, it is healthy to bear in mind that the very proposal of interculturality is intercultural. That is to say, its contents, definitions and meanings are diverse and myriad. There is no one intercultural proposal, a single and monolithic (dogmatic) interpretation and positioning; interculturality is inherent in the very postulate of interculturality. The collision of this dimension on these pages does not attempt, therefore, to be “the interpretation” of interculturality, nor everything “that one must know” about it. Rather, it offers the key elements based on which I understand interculturality as one of the founding conceptual *touchstones* (and practices) of a new plural, diverse rationality, which is also multidimensional in gestation.

Incorporating the principle of interculturality as a foundational element for thinking about the possible junctions and nexuses among social and political actors and sectors, their life modalities and their political and organizational approaches, immediately demonstrates the existence of the social body’s new kind of dissimilar reconstituting proposals: based on its rearticulation founded on equity, horizontality and equitable recognition of legitimacy and rationality among diverse cultures, worldviews, world perceptions, and ways of life. Álvaro García Linera points out that: “A substantial political leveling-out among cultures and identities requires a political leveling-out of modes of production at all levels of government management (general, “national,”

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regional, and local); that is, a leveling-out of political practices, of political institutions, of the ways we exercise democracy and different systems of political authority, belonging to distinct cultural communities and civilizing regimes that coexist in Bolivian territory” (García Linera, 2006, 79).

It is time for us to move. In this, the “leveling-out”—which I understand as the articulation of the diverse modes of life production at every level on the foundations of equity—sets the stage for cognitive, cultural, social, economic, political, ethical, and value conflicts, which I reference in these reflections.

3. AN INTERCULTURAL-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The intercultural proposal ensures that recognition of differences is present on every plane and dimension of social duty, escaping the abstract posturing which—in such a case—favors traditionally hegemonic or dominant cultures. To refer to this, some authors talk about *critical interculturality*.⁹ This is what calls for the non-establishment of relationships of equality among unequals, in order to avoid or reduce the supremacy of the historically hegemonic and dominant, which would be reissued and re-legitimized even if it were disguised or made invisible by means of a new language, even beyond the will of its participants.

Going beyond the formal-abstract is one of this sphere’s many challenges, and also part of the process of construction of proper power in historically marginalized sectors. This supposes the interruption of new conflicts that make themselves present in new spaces where traditionally hegemonic sectors—even those from the left or, sometimes, most of all on the left—attempt to achieve interculturality only for the presence of diversity, when that is not the real case. This is about opening concrete channels for the expression of diversity in the manifestation of all its differences, enabling them and recognizing their right to be heard for the sake of constructing new forms of plural coexistence. This struggles with the hegemonic power that has been installed in each and every one of us. It thereby constitutes one of the most difficult obstacles to tackle and modify; for wide sectors formerly self-described as elucidated, avant-garde, etc., it means looking within itself and questioning its sources of knowledge, power, and hegemony. It means: *transforming ourselves in order to transform*, evidently something easier said than done.

⁹ See, for example: García Linera, Álvaro, Mignolo, Walter, and Walsh, Catherine (2005). *Interculturalidad, descolonización del estado y del conocimiento*. Buenos Aires, Ediciones del Signo, and Viaña Jorge, Tapia, Luis, Walsh Catherine (2010). *Construyendo Interculturalidad Crítica*. La Paz, Instituto Internacional de Integración del Convenio Andrés Bello.

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The original indigenous people's contributions to this civilizing debate turn out to be absolutely vital, and it is imperative that we be inspired by and learn from them as a key to our liberation. Questioning the dominant colonial civilization, they demand—in addition to historical reparation—the recognition of their rights, knowledge, worldviews, identities, modes of material and spiritual production, and their institutional and non-institutional forms of organization for life. With their proposals they defend the necessity of constructing a new mode of social interrelationship as the basis for a new mode of organizing social communities among themselves and with the State and its interrelationships, advancing toward the emergence of a new kind of citizenship and democracy: participatory, intercultural, and decolonized at its roots.

A manner of synthesis can confirm that critical interculturality and decolonization constitute indispensable qualities in the revolutionary civilizing process because they suppose the ousting and eradication of the homogenous, monocultural, patriarchal, colonized, colonizing, revanchist thought, inherited from the colony and cultural colonialism which the market has minted throughout the centuries.

Collectively constructing emancipating thought and emancipating alternatives requires bringing distinct experiences, knowledge, and worldviews together horizontally, based on equity and equality among diverse cultures. It is inevitable that there will be a demolition of the barriers that colonial power raised and extended through the centuries as a means of blocking and not acknowledging the wisdom of original indigenous peoples, and recovering their thinking, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as that of black and racially-mixed men and women...

Decolonization calls, in this sense, for an overcoming of old discriminatory prejudices and hierarchies in organization as well as in culture, in order to achieve recognition (of ourselves) and acceptance (of ourselves) in diversity, understanding it not as a "disgrace" that we must bear, but rather as a source of enrichment, a forge of new collective abilities to know and be able to act with collective wisdom, in addition to justice, equity and sharper judgment in that which forms social interrelationships, development, and progress. This obviously means banishing the conception (and proper practices) of a singular way thinking and understanding the truth that corresponds to the ideology, culture, and monocultural colonialist hegemony of the powerful, which also extends—in reverse—to the realm of positioning and political and cultural practices primarily on the left and fundamentally during the twentieth century.

4. DE-PATRIARCHALIZATION, GENDER, AND RECOGNITION OF DIVERSE SEXUAL IDENTITIES

To talk about the contribution of indigenous and social peoples and movements also supposes recognition of those movements of the diversity of sexual identities, of

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women's movements and their political-cultural contributions from feminist understandings of gender. These focuses—anchored in the struggles of millions of women through the decades and the centuries—have clearly contributed to thought on unity, collectivity, on new bases, turning the recognition of differences from an obstacle into a foundation for inter-enrichment, a pillar for sociopolitical articulations. This is a tiny grain of sand contributed by militant women to the crucible of collective, plural, and diverse construction of the new.

It is worth highlighting the concept of gender, given that with gender we can finally see the genealogical nexuses that exist among the relationships of subordination of women to men, with the production and reproduction of the power of (subordinating, discriminating, exclusive and authoritarian) capital, erected in order to extend and defend the interests of a certain class and gender: the class of the pillagers, exploiters and spectators, at the expense of all other human beings, and of women in particular. Upon stripping the exploitative, discriminatory character of class, of power, of capital, its patriarchal-misogynist social, economic, historical, and culturally-constructed contents, built throughout the centuries, emerge, along with the intentional social construction of identities and roles. That is why the concept of gender ends up being joined at the roots with the concept of de-patriarchalization and popular collective empowerment from below, central concepts for emancipatory political constructions.

Upon analyzing the process of so-called “primitive accumulation” of capital, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels tackled the genealogical cross-linking of the existence of gender subordination and discrimination and the interests of certain class. Among their reflections, it is worth highlighting the following:

“With the division of labor, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labor in the family and the separation of society into various opposing families, is given at the same time the *distribution* and, specifically, *unequal* distribution, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of labor and its products; in other words, property, the original seed or initial form of which lies **in the family**, where the wife and children are the slaves of the husband. Slavery, still very rudimentary, certainly, already latent in the family, is **the first form of property**, which, for all others, already corresponds perfectly to modern economists' definition, according to which it is **the right to dispose of others' labor force**. For all others, **division of labor and private property are identical terms**: one of them says, in reference to the activity, the same thing as the other, with respect to this” (1976, 21), (Original italics. Bold and underlining by IR).

It is curious to note that such approaches remained relegated or were directly ignored by the currents of dogmatic Marxism under the reductionist, mechanical prism, which turned economic exploitation into a problem exclusive to the industrial working class (the “proletariat”), and to the sphere of economy separated from the social and the cultural. In tune with this, the left-wing, formed primarily on this thought, made the problems of discrimination and exploitation familiar and turned the socioeconomic

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exploitation of women into a private matter, a “secondary contradiction” of capitalism. The left did not relate it with the hegemony of patriarchal-commercial-capitalist power, nor did it consider it a (fundamental) part of the (class) struggle to put an end to the hegemonic system of capital and the modes of production and economic, social, legal and cultural reproduction... of its power.

Far from contradicting or excluding one another, *gender and class* are concepts that unravel the contents of misogynistic, authoritarian and patriarchal power, exposing its genealogy and the relevance of class: That of those who unlawfully hold power based on the exploitation, discrimination, subordination, oppression and exclusion of human beings in all things economic, political, legal, ideological, religious, cultural, in the social and familiar, private and public spheres. This conforms, molds and assents, first of all, to the production and reproduction of a kind of relationship of subordination of the woman to the man within the family. This relationship has constituted identities and fixed roles.

From there its modification and radical transformation (from the root) suppose a complex inter-articulated social process of multiple transformations and transitions, among them transitions of sex and gender.

In order to socially imitate and reinforce itself, capital’s patriarchal-colonial power has set out to hide its class contents, presenting itself as a “natural” component of social life and, as such, perpetual. To do this it appeals to every political, ideological, religious and cultural apparatus, bringing together the complicity (acceptance) of these practices by large sectors of societies’ men and women. This guarantees the authoritarian misogynistic power of capital, on the one hand, the ability to make its origin, contents, and pertinence of class invisible, while, on the other hand, reproducing the exploitation, subordination, discrimination and exclusion of the overwhelming majority of human beings.

With modern consumerism, capitalism has perfected the old mechanisms and modalities of subordination of the woman to the man (and to the market). Capital has adjusted to the working of public and private social life and the roles of men and women in it, in keeping with the workings of the market, and this has adjusted to the modern necessities of broadened production and reproduction of its economic, ideological, political, and cultural hegemony. The increasingly dehumanizing consequences that this gives rise to in the lives of millions of poor stripped of their jobs, their lands, their homes, and their country, together with the economic, physical, and spiritual overload that this represents, reach unsuspected levels in the era of neoliberal globalization, in the impoverished regions of the planet, particularly for women and children. They see themselves caught up in modalities of violence, slavery and submission that humanity had historically overcome.

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Understanding the strategic reach of the struggle for survival

The cycle of death once again calls to the defense of life, in which are, among the defenders and creators, women, along with men, adults, youths, boys and girls...

Community organizations and local cooperatives whose primary objective is food survival have generally been formed by mothers of families and female heads of the household and, like these women; they represent a mix of interests: women's interests, family interests, and neighborhood interests.

From their work in community kitchens, the organized women provide alternative solutions to different problems of survival, the hunger from cutting down on food expenses is assuaged and diseases in the community are prevented and cured thanks to the nutritional vigilance of communal kitchens and first-aid kits. They assist in vaccination campaigns and attempt to prevent cholera, dehydration, diarrhea and tuberculosis (Códova Cayo, 1995, 109).

Multiple management of the spatial-temporal dimension and conception

Women who participate in community projects do not equate "use of time" to "unreimbursed money." They have a different way of managing (and understanding) time, since they must multiply to be able to carry out their responsibilities in the family and community sphere, and not infrequently also in the working world. Discussing this topic with Peruvian indigenous leader Concepción Quispe, she reflected:

"The Peasant Confederation of Peru (La Confederación Campesina del Perú) pays for my ticket, but not for my time. To come, for example, today, they've paid for my ticket, from one airport to another airport, and from that airport I have to arrange my own transportation, they don't include that. And do you think that in this moment, with this crisis, with this hunger and with this misery, women are going to have possibilities? No. Of course, men say: 'Well hell! I'm going to go out and I must have at least a thousand *Intis*¹⁰ in my pocket, I have to have ten thousand.' Like it or not you've got to give it to them. It's not like that with us" (Rauber, 1992, 109).

Precisely because of this kind of work that they carry out in social organization, women tend to relate the use of time they invest in the fulfillment of community activities with the time they dedicate to their families, making the community an extension of the family sphere. However, contrary to this, in the majority of studies conducted in the Dominican Republic and in Argentina, women who serve in community spheres have expressed that this is time that they "steal" from their families.

Having embraced that their place is in the home and their role is to attend to the family, all that they do in the community and for the community—which is also on behalf of and for the family—is imposed as work that can be carried out in addition to doing their household "duties," that is to say, something that a woman can do after

¹⁰ Peruvian monetary unit.

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taking care of what is considered her “obligation” as a mother and a wife. Perhaps this could explain the presence of guilty feelings that we have found in a considerable percentage of these women, in the places where we have carried out studies on the topic: the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru.

Violence as a response

The abovementioned “guilt” could be part of the cultural foundation of the tolerance many women have for the violent attacks they suffer at the hands of their husbands when they take their first steps outside the home.

In order to put an end to this it is important for women to embrace the fact that they do not deserve such “reprimands” because of their participation in community activities or their presence in social organizations. It is important that they understand that they are not “stealing” time from their families, that they are not “neglecting” their children, but rather that they are developing as the social beings that they are, taking on collective tasks and responsibilities in which their families are also included. Obviously a woman’s option to leave home or to kick out her husband always remains available, but these are not, in the first place, simple decisions to make, because of the economic ties of the lives of each and, above all, due to the woman’s dependency on the man to provide for her and for their children. Secondly, this is due to the cultural weight that the woman carries within: even though she does not share his methods, she tends to justify her husband. It does not work out this way in every case, but it is still a very common attitude among women who are active in their communities.

The interconnection of the private and the public in the community

With tremendous effort, through survival solutions, through the struggle for health and literacy, through landless refugee camps or in road blockage protests, these women construct networks and design modes of interdependency and new connections between the public and the private. As they integrate the domestic space into the community, they manage, in fact, to prolong what Vianello (2001) calls the domestic “ovular space.” In turn, this means incorporating community life inside the space of ovular life. Even problems within the family, like domestic violence against the wife, can be treated in a different way when it is part of a community social movement. This is why I expressed in an article on female protesters that:

“In conditions of social exclusion, *poverty* and *gender* are mixed together, giving multiple meanings to the actions that men and women take to confront the situation imposed by the war of survival, in the same way they complicate any debate on possible alternatives, particularly on the level of social-familiar, man-woman relationships. The roles, values, and codes of conduct have gone out the window along with unemployment, the State’s abandonment of its social responsibility to its citizens, the act of extortion for breadcrumbs, the denaturalization of the family and of the responsibilities of each individual” (Rauber, 2002, 160).

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Integration of the social organization as part of family and personal life, and vice versa
In the studies we carried out in impoverished neighborhoods in Santo Domingo, it was confirmed that organized women, unorganized women, and also men, in general, share a positive, prudent vision on the importance of neighborhood organizations in the lives of women. This is owed, on the one hand, to the organizations that help to improve neighborhood life and, consequently, contribute to the improvement of everyday home life. On the other, this is because women appreciate the neighborhood organization as a space of equality and of freedom from the gray routine of domestic chores, and because neighborhood organizations help to stimulate greater participation of men in household chores.

In fact, the neighborhood organization ends up being a *bridge* space between the home and the neighborhood, between the female domestic cloister and her exit into public life. As the women themselves confirm: there they feel equal to men.

One of the most evident positive results of women's participation in neighborhood and activist organizations of all kinds is that there they learn to value themselves as socially active players, capable of thinking and acting for themselves.

Participation and representation

Women's participation is primarily at grassroots level and gradually decreases at levels with more responsibility, in other words, there is less female participation at intermediate representation and even less at general administration level. This is due to various hurdles, which goes without mentioning the fact that —traditionally— the spaces of representation are considered men's, and it sometimes happens that women are reluctant to integrate in these spheres because they do not believe that they have time for it, or because of low self-esteem. Other times, they are not even put forward for senior positions and representation because of the competition and the barriers that men impose on them.

Because we women have internalized what we have learned since time immemorial. First of all, we work within the house, in the least visible bases, feeding and caring. Our role is to occupy a position of service; and not just any service: service to an already-existent power. And we must retrace this which is instilled in our being: always taking second place (Verhooven and Alieda, in: Rauber 1998, 192-193).

This is why the indispensable task of democratization once again arises to shore up the concrete processes of organization with broad female participation, strengthening women's capacities for action and representation appropriate to their lived experiences and necessities. When this emerges in the popular social movements with which we interact, we jointly establish the contents and rhythms of learning: on gender and power, on empowerment, politics, participation, communication, and management of computation, etc. With this our labor forms practice and theory in concrete social spheres. It is not enough to condemn the exclusion of women in places

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where decisions are made; it is essential to reach practical conclusions and commit ourselves to their realization to the extent that it is feasible and shared by the social organizations with which one interacts.

The demand for gender equality is radically democratizing, precisely because it breaks the traditional political ideologies characteristic of the left-wing that separate everyday activities and social protest from political duties. There cannot be a true democratization of the public world if the man-woman dynamic of the private world remains intact, and if, in general, the subordination of the private according to the development of the public is maintained because:

- Male-only democracy is savage and as incomplete as it was in Greek democracy, based on the equality of rights among the members of a small aristocracy, and on the complete absence of rights for the majority of the population.
- There is not nor can there be a democracy in which women do not have the same rights as men and in which, consequently, social life in all its aspects is not constituted and directed by men and women without distinction.
- (...) Without women there is no democracy. Without democracy the people make no progress. Without democracy the homeland has no profound meaning (Lombardo Toledano, 1984, 11-18).

This alludes to three important elements:

- The private world is part of the political world (even though it is not a condition of its existence) and as such, it is liable to becoming political.
- The struggles for democratization of societies must—in order to get to the root—incorporate the democratization of man-woman relationships into the public and private spheres. Consequently:
- Woman's struggles against discrimination and marginalization are concerned with the radical democratization of society. This means transformation of power at its roots, which constitutes a political and cultural struggle.

If each of these actions of power-relationship transformation is a political action, the abovementioned topics of sexual identity, of violence against women, of parent-children and man-woman relationships and, in general, of approaches to the organization of everyday life, constitute as a fundamental importance in current and future political dimensions and actions.

In this sense, the struggle for gender equality brings more complex contents to politics and political action,¹¹ pulling them from the sphere of struggle for State power, joining them with other spheres of social life, hooking political strategy to the everyday and to the vindicatory, as well as to the public and the private. This is not about separate

¹¹ "(...) politics is basically a space where private forces are gathered and adversaries are destroyed or neutralized to the end of reaching strategic goals" (Gallardo, 1989 102-103). The practice of politics, therefore, is that which has as its objective the destruction, neutralization, or consolidation of the power structure, the media, and the modes of dominations—that is, politics.

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struggles or problems. The struggle for women's, gays', lesbians', bisexuals', transsexuals' and transvestites' rights, like the struggles of other social actors, reaffirms that the struggle is vindicatory-political, that is, a struggle against the structures, the media, the values, the culture, and the mechanisms of material and spiritual production and reproduction of the dominating, discriminatory, discriminating, exclusive and increasingly marginalizing power of majorities, while at the same time being a process of its own power and culture.

Among many things, this asserts that:

1. Sectoral vindication is not a "defect" or hindrance that must be "overcome" by the political project. The latter is not located "above" sectoral vindication, but rather is a part of it; it contains it and joins it to a new dimension and range.

a) The political is not hierarchically "superior" to the vindicatory.

b) The vindicatory has no "ceiling" or limit, unless it is the one fixed by the selfsame opposition with the political.

The absence of a link between the political and the vindicatory translates to the fracture between the struggles that point directly toward the rooted transformation of society and those struggles which developed in pursuit of concrete vindication imposed by survival at work or in everyday life. And all that contributes to fragmentation among the key actors who lead the pursuit of that vindication and its awareness.

2. It is essential to link protests (opposition) with concrete proposals (one's own position) that can orient the conflicted sector's struggling population in every case. That is to say: construct concrete responses to equally concrete problems. Encourage immediate responses to immediate vindications, though this does not mean that immediacy and temporality are its horizon and "natural" limit. To the contrary, such proposals hold major political potential which is possible (and necessary) to demonstrate in the very struggle for its solidification. That is where the practical, pedagogical, political-consciousness-formation process reaches its greatest potential.

Accepting this means breaking with the idea —still held by the majority— that political practice corresponds only to political parties and specialists;¹² it means reconsidering

¹² Today this interpretation ends up being indefensible; holding it means supposing that subjects have gradations: 1) those who contribute only to the numbers because they are incapable of transcending the immediate vindicatory horizon: social, neighborhood, union, student, women's, Christian, and other kinds of movements, b) those who are capable not just of apprehending the ensemble of problems and the ways to solve them, but also of guiding the rest: left-wing parties (those of the working class), which traditionally consider themselves the vanguard.

Such parties can no longer think of union, neighborhood, women's and other movements as "supports" of politics that developed outside of these movements. Political action and its actors cannot be defined outside of the terrain in which their leaders cannot even develop on the margins (see Rauber, 1997, 7, 8, 23, 30-32).

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what we consider the political scene, traditionally understood as the field of social forces' *open action* through their representation in parties. But the political scene comprehends a full range of social forces acting in the field of political action in any given moment, independent of whether they are organized or structured in political parties. Respecting everything that party options are or have the potential to become, the citizenry's participation in politics, in fact, calls for diverse actors to enter into discussion and on a larger stage than that of the parties.

What to do with differences?

Recognizing and emphasizing differences, as these have been constructed by social actors in their real life, is in fact essential, but in order to construct breakthrough alternatives, it is fundamental that that recognition be constructed on a foundation in order to make solid advancements toward the linkage of different people, respecting their differences, problems, aspirations, imaginations, and their needs, while also contributing by these means to society's democratic hub. This means advancing the thought and the integrating practices of a reality which is just as fragmented as it is complex and diverse, bringing together juxtaposed realities and identities that are intrinsically interconnected, inter-conditioned and inter-defined. As Ferguson points out:

"Without an analysis of social domination based on multiple systems, women can achieve empowerment in relation to certain men, but they remain powerless in relation to racism, imperialism, and capitalism" (Ferguson, 2005).

Certainly, reflecting on women's experiences of empowerment, important lessons can be learned on the negative effect —in the impoverishing sense of practices and their scope— of the strictly sectoral, fragmented vision, unilaterally and exclusively focused on the quest to satisfy a "different" social actor's needs.

Pointing out different men's and women's differences helps demystify the negative political connotation that "the different" still has in the political thought in a large swath of left-wing Latin America, where traditional views still predominate, strategizing to unite all social and political organizations appealing to unanimity and homogenization of everything: parties, movements, the people, and —when possible— all of society.

In this sense, the focus on gender(s) contributes to thought on unity, collectivity, on new foundations, turning recognition of differences not into a hindrance, but into an enriching pillar for possible unification. It is an indispensable principle of collective, plural and diverse construction that has been decolonized of the new. This continues to be —from the perspective of alternative-constructing social movements— its primary analytic importance, as well as its fundamental practice. That does not prevent it, however, from situating itself in the terrain of disputes and important ideological

controversies and power struggles, dimensions that I will not deal with directly in this presentation.

5. TOWARD A DECOLONIZING INTERCULTURAL PEDAGOGY

In their resistance, struggles, and construction of life alternatives, women and men also produce/reproduce practical and theoretical knowledge. Reflecting critically on these, from their cultures and ways of life, they become aware of the injustices of gender, race, class... This makes up an inter-articulated practical-pedagogical process that is without doubt part of the central driving nucleus of transformative-liberating processes.

Today in this peculiar dimension of pedagogy (practical pedagogy and pedagogical practice), there is a condensing of the greatest challenges in the formation and development of political-social consciousness *of itself* (autonomy) and *for itself* (transformative), of the sociopolitical actors that lead the way in the social changes already under way in Latin American, towards their (self-)constitution as a popular (collective) subject.

For Marx, the *positive overcoming of alienation* in the working class —and in the various oppressed sectors— is the central articulating and projective nucleus of the class struggle, lending it a concrete sense; *liberation* that corresponds to that overcoming cannot be understood when it is divided into economy, politics, society and culture; it can only be understood as a whole. This is why the process of maturation from a *class in itself* to a *class for itself* is mediated by the *overcoming of fragmented consciousness (and practices)* of the working class with respect to its place in society and with respect to the ensemble of social relationships, of society as a whole. The transformation of all of society ends up being linked at the core to the transformation of consciousness, spirituality, subjectivity, and processes of sectoral actors constructing (themselves) as political subjects.

In this sense, the transformative-liberating pedagogical proposal turns out to also theoretically-practically integrate the social reality as an entirety, and human beings with consciousness and fragmented subjectivities as full (rearticulated) subjects.

This especially calls to attention the concrete processes of construction and subjectivity creation, as well as the individual, sectoral-collective political consciousness of workers, of original indigenous peoples, of popular sectors, of communities, etc. on the national, regional, continental, and global stage. They are constantly changing processes, with the necessary rearticulation of subjectivities — also changeable— at every moment, in accordance with the realities in which they and the practices that they generate are developed.

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World political consciousness to transform and create does not come from “outside”

The Chiapas indigenous uprising is unthinkable without the process of comprehending the settlers surrounding its reality, a process that is interwoven with the resistance, struggles, search and elaboration of proposals to overcome. Similar processes can be seen in the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, or “Bartolina Sisa,” the indigenous peasant women's movement in Bolivia. According to the accounts of its leading players, this process of (self-)consciousness-raising was strengthened when it was linked with the idea and practices of Popular Education.

And this highlights a liberating epistemological-political postulate: Consciousness-raising cannot be “brought from outside” of the realities and practices of its subjects; they construct and develop consciousness based on their participation in struggle and transformation processes, reflecting critically on the conditions of their lives and seeking out alternatives to transform them. This highlights at least three things:

1. Practices occupy a central mediating position.

Based on experiences of life (way of life) and on the people's struggle (that of the working class and of the diverse exploited, marginalized, discriminated against and oppressed groups that compose it), individual, social, and political consciousness is formed and developed. This is why it is key to systematically and critically reflect on these experiences and this struggle.

There are no *in vitro* spaces where “pure consciousness” is cultivated separate from concrete realities and that, therefore, possess “absolute truths” beyond the contingencies of the course of history and of human actions. So long as it coexists with the capitalist system it is, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by commercial, individualistic, objectifying, alienating logic, no matter how conscious or critical it is of that situation. This bolsters the thesis that every educator (militant, political-social leader, ideological referent, etc.) also needs to be educated:

The materialist theory that men are the product of their environment and of their education, and that modified men are, therefore, the product of different environments and of a modified education, forgets that men are precisely those who make the environments change; they forget that the educator himself needs to be educated. This drives, necessarily, to the division of society into two parts, one of which is at the top of society. [...] The coincidence of the modification of environments and human activity can only be rationally conceived and understood as a revolutionary practice (Marx, 1976, 8).

In Latin America, that thesis was creatively rescued by Paulo Freire as the theoretical-practical knot of his groundwork on Popular Education, the exercise and development of which for decades enriched both strictly pedagogical ideas as well as cultural and political ideas, although in the latter sphere its acceptance and full organic integration with collective constructions of thought and organization still lag behind, perhaps

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because of their content and character which deeply, practically, and directly question the elitist and avant-garde thought and practices that still survive among those who consider themselves the owners of “political” space.

2. Inter-subjectification is constant.

If the consciousness of actors-subjects is slowly taking shape and developing while remaining anchored to its participation in the processes of struggle and transformation, subjectivity is doing the same.

The consciousness and political subjectivity of social and political actors is always forming, constantly taking and losing its shape, threading every act, every step, turning them toward its critical reflections on interrelationships with modalities and routes with which and on which the leading players learn the reality that they are slowly creating and in which they are slowly developing as political actors.

One (objective-subjective) reality is the reality that exists in times of opposition and struggle, the other is the reality that slowly takes shape when social actors who lead the struggles yesterday take charge of government, state, and social responsibilities (today). The new situation configures new interrelationships and actions and in all things germinates new subjectivities and identities, for example, once anti-government, today governmental or pro-governmental. And this prefigures a cultural and political conflict with no simple solution.

The internal struggles and fights that take place in the popular government processes on the continent make it clear that the sociopolitical actors who struggled and formed governments, once said objective is reached, re-pose their social and sectoral role, not continuing in the period of struggle that brought them on top of private interests; their subjectivity and consciousness are part of the social dynamics that change with them. The core political challenge in this time is discovering/constructing the rearticulating knots that make it possible for the sectoral actors to recognize themselves and reconstitute themselves as a collective subject *of and in* the new reality.

And that is not a defect or a particular limitation. Subjectivities are always inter-subjectivities that, interacting with other subjectivities and the dynamics of reality, are in a permanent state of inter-definition. As Zavaleta warns, concrete social dynamics are those that arrange so that:

...even that which has been made general, sooner or later tends to become the conservative symbol of the particular. Inter-subjectification must, therefore, reproduce itself constantly (Zavaleta Merca, 1986, 27).

Looking after this is one of the vital political tasks in the socio-transformative process, as the process of democratic-cultural revolution is a permanent kind of social, political, and cultural arm-wrestle, struggling to secure indigenous-popular hegemony inasmuch as it configures and constructs it.

3. Reality is objective-subjective

The old Marxist-Kantian tradition that separates the objective and the subjective, and which for that matter considers that there are “objective conditions” —that is, a social reality— independent of the actions of subjects in conflict and that, consequently, there are subjectivities that have been formed or that can be formed independently of these “objective conditions,” is a co-creator of the stagnant, regressive situations of living social processes, whose inter-subjective-objective dynamics they do not manage to capture, project, or potentiate.

6. RECOVERY AND COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

In the social framework, the colonialist and colonizing posture rolls over differences because it excludes the different in order to instate and strengthen a single civilization as “legitimate.” The design of the States and the law, and the institutions that support them, respond to this posture in perfect accord with the economic-political interests of the powerful and their representatives.

In order to retrace these roads in Indo-Afro-Latin America, education for decolonization and the decolonization of education are essential. In addition to the abovementioned concepts, the proposals of Popular Education, Participatory Action Research (“Investigación Acción Participativa,” IAP), the histories of life (through oral histories), and the construction of collective knowledge through intercultural management of knowledge, will contribute to the construction of this education and decolonization.

Intercultural Popular Education for decolonization from below

Popular Education is a critical concept with respect to the hegemonic power-knowledge-consciousness relationship. In order to untangle it, join the conditions of life —the practice that develops distinct actors and social actors within it— to the consciousness that these actors have or can come to have with respect to it when —by way of critical reflection— they (re-)appropriate their task and their reality, in accordance with their subjectivities, worldviews and identities.

This is about a proposal of a worldview-cognition that is both of liberation and itself liberating; it proposes —with the active and direct participation of its subjects— the preparation of proposals that can overcome the state of things. Knowledge and social transformation thereby end up being knotted up in the educative-pedagogical process on which its subjects’ concrete (community and collective) practices are fundamentally based and realized: subjects like the women who are nourished and learn to reflect critically on these practices and return to them strengthened with new or improved proposals; these proposals are simultaneously pedagogical and transformative. That is

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why, for Freire, education is a key dimension of the revolutionary process, inasmuch as this process is the same for education

Political practice, critical appropriation, thought-action, transformation... It's a dynamic that could sum up Freirian pedagogy; its central contribution being the idea of social revolutions that germinate from below in the struggles and creations of those peoples that —equipped with a common strategic horizon— continue changing the world, as such establishing a new one. As the new world is unprecedented, the idea and pedagogical practice of popular education is part of the creative processes, of the production of the new.

Breaking with the exclusive, excluding and hierarchical position of power with respect to knowledge and the resulting employment of knowledge as power, Popular Education proposes and prepares the construction of a horizontal relationship between wisdom, knowledge, and facts among actors-subjects who are also different. It turns out, therefore, to be an intercultural proposal at the core in its presuppositions and in its conclusions. And, together, it reinforces the decolonizing visions and processes from subjects' practices. In this sense it transcends all of the methodological or morphological variations that have often attempted to reduce it.

Popular education is present in Latin America in social organizations, in training processes, and in the practices of life and organization on the foundation of horizontal and participative practices. That educational practice —upon constructing knowledge based on concrete modes of life— raises the basic bridges that expose the nexuses and inter-conditionings between the private world's fixed mode of existing and reproducing and the public world's fixed mode of existing and reproducing. It helps the men and women who participate in the educational process to discover the nexuses between a supposedly private and individual, apparently caustic reality, and the reality of a certain economic, political and cultural mode of existence in the society in which they live. Because of all that, for the militant men and women in popular social organizations, popular education is an important tool: it legalizes their participation, it confers social sense to their supposedly limited, everyday, "unimportant" knowledge; they discover themselves as citizens, and through their knowledge —by way of their formation— they contribute to the deepening of the concrete empowerment processes in which they participate, changing them "for themselves," that is to say, bolstering themselves as fully social and political actors.¹³

¹³ If one bears in mind that in such organizations women make up the majority and key force, it becomes understandable that popular education's systematic employment is characterized by giving speech to those with no voice, that it contributes to making the social and political presence of women in socio-transformative processes visible, that it contributes to the dignification and valorization of their words, thoughts, and actions. It holds this attitude toward both those outside of the organization and those within, and in every woman, in the elevation of her self-esteem and her capacity to form herself as a full and active citizen.

Toward new emancipatory thoughts

As there can be no social revolution without a revolutionary theory, and as the theory is not an a priori command that “comes from above,” every social revolution simultaneously constitutes a synthesis of practical pedagogical-educative processes. These are linked with the transformation of the conditions of life and construction-reconstruction of knowledge from below so that, based on this, the leading players can continue re-elaborating revolutionary thought based on minimal principles common to the shared liberation horizon, in accordance with the demands of the historic period, its socio-cultural and economic realities, its experiences, its consciousnesses, and its subjectivities. Together and at the same time, this shapes the construction of liberating epistemologies, intercultural political-pedagogical decolonization processes of the subject’s popular (self-)construction in the revolutionary creation-transformation of the world.

Popular education’s place and role

As the abovementioned processes mean taking up the work of recovery and critical systematization of the experiences of struggle, organization, and proposals of indigenous and popular movements, of recovery and conjoining of the people’s historic memory with social organizations, they cross paths with *popular education*. This results in a political-methodological proposal and at the same time an intercultural decolonizing tool in interaction with participative research for the systemization of experiences, testimonies, and life stories, appealing — fundamentally— to oral histories. All of this will bear fruit in the enriching and refounding of emancipatory collective, intercultural and decolonized thought.

Critical epistemology emerges from the decolonizing practices with cultural and pedagogical leadership among the people. They have the practical skills to create, defying the established monocultural, hierarchical structure between knowledge and power, and the consequent relationships of subordination and dependency that are built on that structure. For precisely this reason, it would be erroneous to claim that there is a group of people, intellectuals, or left-wing political parties that are called to carry out the work of decolonization. Decolonization is a new collective historical process, there are no decolonizers that are going to decolonize. We’re talking about a civilizing undertaking to create a new world; that is, unprecedented, and no one, therefore, can claim that he already knows how it will be and attempt an a priori construction of the future. New emancipatory thoughts are part of the living process of revolutionary change. It requires the collective interpenetrated and inter-defined efforts of organic intellectuals, who are part of the process, in constant practical-conceptual dialogue with the subjects and their experiences of struggle and creation. It is in those experiences and with all of those (collective) subjects of change that revolutionary thought is formed, updated, and also created. Thus there is no revolutionary movement without revolutionary thought, nor is there revolutionary

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thought without a revolutionary movement; the dialectic must be multidimensional or it is not dialectic.

Interculturality and decolonization do not emerge from abstract conceptual definitions, detached from the concrete practices of creation-construction of new realities on the part of popular actors-subjects. Collective community practices are those that give shape, in turn, to processes of self-constitution of those actors-subjects fragmented in a collective, plural subject, yoked to a political subject.

So, the process of new emancipatory thought construction today ends up getting tangled up with the political practices of dispute and subject transformation-creation, and these with popular education, interculturality, and decolonization, which converge and bear fruit with the maturation of the processes of (self-)construction of new subjects of knowledge and the sociopolitical task.

In this task, popular education is a tool and political positioning *sine qua non*, given that it opens the doors to reason and the heart of recognition of the other, of valuing the other, of *listening and being listened to*: intercultural keys for the construction of intercultural competencies for the formation and the management-construction of a new kind of emancipatory thought and, also, for the transformation of social and political institutions as well as state-governmental institutions at their roots, opening the flood gates to significant participation on the part of indigenous and social movements in those institutions, potentiating the decolonizing intercultural impact of their action.

One can affirm, then, that decolonization, interculturality, popular education and social revolutionary/revolutionizing practices of that which already exists are inter-defined, inter-conditioned and inter-potentiated. It is precisely for this reason that they develop from below and within the socio-transformative process and its leaders. Together they form part of the rooted support of the current cultural battle to overcome a world governed for and by capital.

Participatory Action Research: constructing knowledge from below

Participatory action research (“Investigación Acción Participativa,” IAP) put the construction of knowledge in place, taking as their starting point actors and the everyday realities of their lives, their organizational practices and their struggles (from below). As in popular education, in IAP there are no traditional (academic) “research goals” or “subjects of investigation,” but rather participating subjects in the investigative process, co-researchers, critical analysts of their own situation who work in unison as educators, intellectuals or academic specialists. In this sense, one could say that IAP recognizes and joins subjects, actors, terrains, problems, themes, and searches that are jointly undertaken by investigators “from outside” and “from inside.” It means, therefore, a common intentionality and a horizontal interrelationship —of equality— among participating subjects.

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In this sense, the IAP shares the objectives and foundations of Popular Education, with a clear vocation to interconnect —systematizing— the experiences, facts, knowledge, and wisdom of diverse subjects, acquired/developed over the years. These subjects have ample knowledge, identities, and yearnings to contribute to the theoretical-practical process of social transformation, and this is vital in the construction of new emancipatory thought in the decolonizing intercultural perspective. And this implies the mediation of root-based research, from and with leaders.

Supporting itself on processes of systematization of concrete intercultural management experiences, experiences that are generally developed in community and/or municipal spheres, IAP contributes to the collective identification and/or construction of the elements that form intercultural competencies.

In order to achieve this it is important to bear in mind that *giving back* and *dialogue* among the participants in IAP's process are an inescapable and substantive part of IAP. They constitute an important source of self-knowledge and self-awareness, simultaneously resulting in a rooted process of self-consciousness, formation and/or strengthening of the participants' collective abilities.

Giving back supposes the collectivization of knowledge that remained individual within one same experience or private in relation to other experiences. Without it, that which has been collectively learned would be appropriated by one individual sector or group of individuals, independent of the methodologies that are applied during the knowledge process. It means submitting the conclusions/definitions elaborated by the group that systemizes and conceptualizes the participating gathering's discussion, in order to reaffirm, modify, and expand upon the results, proposals, conclusions, and knowledge in a collective and horizontal way. By virtue of this, the investigative-formative processes form, at the same time, practical processes that bring together and construct networks of knowledge, thinking, and doing among diverse subjects with identities, worldviews, world-perceptions, experiences, and diverse subjectivities. And this is one of the keys to the cultural change necessary in the current, enormous task of constructing the intercultural-collective, the formative base of new identities as well as social and political interrelationships among human diversities.

This strengthens its political-pedagogical intercultural and decolonizing dimension and demands a profound *cultural change* in participating social and political organizations in every process as well as, in the first place, in the "researchers": it means recognition of knowledge that is not "official," that is repressed, denied, or disqualified, it means the resignification of other knowledge (feminist, gender, academic...), and the preparation and promotion of open and horizontal participation of all subjects in defining the course, rhythms, and proposals of social changes.

Life stories and testimonies

The systematization of experiences refers explicitly to the recovery of the history of life's operation in rural and urban communities, in neighborhoods, in the family, and in social organizations; it refers to the recovery of its philosophical foundations and of the concrete experiences of collective life through time or in set periods of particular political-cultural interest. Within systematization several ideas stand out: that which identifies and differentiates those experiences, the historical and social context in which they have taken place, and their meaning for current struggles and future scenarios.

Within the political-pedagogical perspective of intercultural decolonizing *popular education*, it also turns out to be more important to combine research with the *testimonies* of the oldest and youngest members, of men and women, regarding their relevant experiences in the process being researched.

Besides the *testimonies*, there are also *life stories*. These may belong to individuals or groups, or may even refer to organizations and movements. In this last case, we are talking about a chain of individual-group stories that one must identify or reconstruct step by step, shaping a process of research and reconstruction of historic collective memory. In this sense, the greatest wealth is won by interconnecting the life stories with IAP's comprehensive process in order to construct or reconstruct the concepts, contributed by various knowledge and thought artists to the formulation-reformulation of knowledge —recovering those that come from wisdom, affirming or reconstructing them as interculturality— both as a group and comprehensively.

In the reconstruction of popular knowledge oppressed or denied by the dominant power, both testimonies and life stories strengthen the processes of recovery of the involved subjects' experiences. Oral reconstruction of their vital experiences with respect to their modalities of life, their identity, their aspirations, their resistances and social struggles, their ancestral practices of administering the collective, etc. contribute to this.

Keeping in mind that knowledge and culture are formed and developed in all human beings from birth on, in the family, at home, and in the community where they live, in other words, they precede and exceed scholarly institutions, it is very important assimilate with intercultural knowledge, the cultural family and community wealth. That is what tends to be conceptually distinguished, to put it succinctly, as *wisdom*.

7. THE CENTRALITY OF SUBJECTS

If we are talking about a rooted breakthrough of colonial power-knowledge, all *power appropriation* on the part of popular sectors is mediated by the destruction/overcoming of the old colonial power-knowledge of capital and its

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hegemonic tentacles, simultaneous with the construction of a *new, popular power*, different at the root, revolutionary, decolonized and intercultural. This opens the irrigation channels to sociopolitical actors' *processes of collective empowerment* (which are also particularized).

The transformation of preexisting hegemonic relationships and the construction of the new popular revolutionary hegemony are, in the end, key. This is the case because the anti-colonial struggle produces a constant dialectical interpenetration between preexisting power, appropriated power, and new, constructed proper power. In this sense I assert that *one takes what one constructs*. Because we are not talking about "taking the power" that exists, but rather about *occupying it* temporarily in order to transform it from its roots. Here is precisely where one of the great challenges to the Latin-American democratic-revolutionary processes already under way resides.

The *proper power appropriated constructed-power* inter-dialectic is liberating or prepares the way of liberation if it results from and is the synthesis of full (multifaceted) and major empowerment of the social and political actors that construct it. It means the configuration of a complex collective social, cultural, ideological and political process, articulated and oriented towards overcoming the colonial system of capital and its institutions, on the foundation of a (new) ethic and a (new) logic of the social constructed metabolism from below by diverse actors connected in every moment in accordance with the tasks and demands on the foundation of the decolonization and interculturality which —like the revolutionary transformative process— will also continue developing historically.

This is the case because the ideology of change —like its strategic definitions— is part of the living social process, of its dynamics and contradictions. It is not a dogma established from outside the peoples' struggles by some left-wing party's *vanguard*, preaching that "the rest" have only got to "assimilate." Ideology, which is part of the political consciousness, is forged and grows in the processes of resistance, struggle, and construction of alternatives on the part of the subjects. Definitions, like paths and strategic goals, continue being constructed (and modified) by the subjects based on their ways of life and their experiences of struggle and survival, which are diverse in every society, in every community.

In the political time open for popular governments, the strategic debate is open. And it manifests itself, in particular, in the political-social struggles led by the subjects of change, who organize and construct alternatives in their mission to advance the definitions, the implementation, the perfecting, or the deepening of the roots of the changes achieved throughout the process. This, at a time when they are simultaneously constructing paths that comprehensively question the current system-world, and are redesigning it "beyond the domain of capital" (Mészáros).

In this, it is essential to deepen the processes of *popular power construction* joined *from below* with the political-pedagogical processes that drive the democratizing and

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decolonizing struggles, for the sake of contributing to the formation/strengthening of the social and political force of liberation. Social transformation supposes —like everything social— to walk freely, full of doubts and obstacles, but with a key trench for advancement in the name of the new civilization: permanent (self-)construction of the collective revolutionary political subject.

Pedagogies of hope are those that contribute to this process in every moment and situation. Those with which, day by day, oppressed subjects can transform their realities of exclusion and discrimination, preparing the collective process of intercultural interstice-construction that are key for the transformation of the current society, creating and advancing the elements of a new civilization in their practices, strengthening ties of solidarity, relationships of equity among diverse ethnic groups, genders, and classes in search of their equalization in the only universally full qualifier: “humankind.”

Pedagogies of hope are all of the pedagogies that feed and cultivate consciousness and collective creativity, those that construct and strengthen themselves based on confidence in the epistemological, political, and cultural vitality of the people, with good will and faith in the idea that it is possible to change the world, opening it for justice, for equity, for united coexistence in diversity, in complementarity, in harmony, in peace, and in happiness.

The key, the Gordian knot of the new civilization and the strategic vitality and impact with which —in this regard— the present collective struggles and creations can reach, resides in the men and women of the people; they resist the buffeting of capital and continue creating the new. And by making changes a reality, they constitute subjects of their history. ☺

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