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POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING

Abstract

This paper illustrates the political and cultural dimensions that shape diversity movements, their critical interculturality projects, ways of politicisation and education proposals in line with decolonising thinking in Latin America.

Key words

Social movements, intercultural education, interculturality, diversity pedagogy.

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POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

Our intention in this paper[2] is to describe the dimensions that shape diversity movements in Latin America, their characteristics that transform them into critical "social movements", the ways acquired by their politicising processes, creating networks and "arches" of social and political-institutional advocacy and reconceptualising orthodox frameworks of the Latin American left, notably those related to the recovery of subordinate collective subjects historically neglected due to their "diverse conditions".

In particular, we will attempt to identify the meaning of self-determination as educational spaces of pedagogical significance and, on the basis of this exercise, identify their proposals of critical intercultural education. This will be carried out whilst acknowledging the "overview" of reality and the uncoordinated approach entailed in an exercise of this nature, considering that although it is carried out within the global Latin American context, the biased analysis will become apparent given that it is conducted from the dynamic of the individual cultural and political domain of the author.[3]

1. Emergence and development of diversity movements

A topic that generates profound political and pedagogical discussion in social movements, indigenous organisations and in various communities that call for recognition of different life situations and that, on the basis of such requirement, suffer discrimination and exclusion, is of a cultural, linguistic, residential, age or gender-based nature. This discussion is heightened in terms of importance due to the need to make sense of the political demands and projects of the varied student, environmental, territorial autonomy, indigenous, migrant, refugee and displaced persons, and gender equality[4] movements that are currently forming a wall of opposition to the techno-neoliberal order.

The strategic question raised in this current cycle of demonstrations in Latin America, as well as in countries such as Spain, France and Portugal, is how to convert these protests into spaces to recreate cultural and social-educational practices that reconcile their neo-paradigmatic demands and projects with "pro-common" platforms that, whilst respecting their plurality, propose critical "diversity strategies", i.e., strategies capable of transforming "emerging issues" and "resistances" into processes of democratic politicisation and social transformation[5].

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[2] This paper was written within the framework of a special edition of this journal on Good Living and in honour of the Peruvian philosopher and educator Alfonso Ibáñez. It gives an account of the author's experiences as a teacher in the School of Psychology at Valparaiso University (Chile) in study seminars on intercultural education practices in the context of ongoing social demonstrations since 2006 (secondary school and university student movements in support of the democratisation of education systems, environmental movements, indigenous and peasant movements, gender equality and civil rights movements) in which he played a prominent role.

[3] With regard to the problem areas and issues inherent to "writing for interculturality" and the proposal of "horizontal texts to address and study the intercultural sphere", see Pérez (2012), Tuhiwai (2016), Bhabha (2013)

[4] See Castells (2012)

[5] See Zibechi (2007). With regard to the emergence of indigenous movements in Latin America, see Bengoa (2016)

POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

The spaces and/or cracks formed by the setbacks and crises of the dominant global-colonist-techno-neoliberal order, as a result of its inability to create both situations of citizen participation and social justice, are enabling the roll-out and advocacy in civil society of "alter movements" that not only question the foundations of the techno-neoliberal order, but also warn against a "civilisation crisis" (Laval & Dardot, 2015)

These movements are characterised by their ways of establishing frameworks for dialectic action at micro and macro level, identifying the ongoing processes in both their structural and subjective dimensions. In doing so, high-impact global processes, such as climate change, the impact of extractivist industries in the crisis of ecological and bio-cultural systems, which affect territories of local communities, as well as the crisis of representation of political systems (kidnapped by the "neo-liberalised" political and technocratic elites and by "de facto powers" that establish the discipline of financial governance on a global basis), are processed via forms of mobilisation that highlight the capacity of subjects to re-engage in collective actions "from the perspective of diversity", from their subjective, symbolic and tangible views of "subalternity". Demands including the following are set in motion:

a) The recognition of the socio-cultural and gender identity of those who set demands and respect for their "variety of conditions" in establishing "demo-diverse" societies;
b) The legal establishment of rights that guarantee this recognition;
c) The implementation of public policies geared towards reparation and effective inclusion by generating direct citizen participation;
e) The reclaiming of one's memory, questioning the "official stories" that have rendered the "subalternity" invisible;
f) The development of community art, literature and cultural spaces that express the creativity of such "subalternity";
g) The generation of networks of self-managed public-communitarian educational organisations that reclaim local know-how and develop culturally relevant ways to socially distribute knowledge, and where popular education (Mejía, 2011; Torres, 2016) and critical intercultural education approaches (Walsh, 2010) play a facilitative role.

2. Problematising the political and educational dimensions of diversity and critical interculturality in social movements

During the 20th century there was a predominance of political projects that, under the purpose of building an equal society or with the aim of establishing modernisation processes within the framework of "inclusive and reformist capitalism", aimed to create societies shielded from demands (tangible and symbolic) that expressed the "rebellions" and "resistances" of collective subjects founded on a diverse range of conditions of a cultural, gender or linguistic nature, among others. In the 1960s, a critical Latin American leftist tendency questioned the "pauses" in "progressive" thinking with regard to these "resistances": thinkers such as Iván Ilich (1974) , Paulo Freire (1975) and Orlando Fals Borda (1970) and the movements they inspire, such as popular education

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POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

and participative action-research, among others, include the incorporation of new subjects in the agenda of social movements, without foregoing the problematisation of the historical clash between capital and labour. They enhance the strategic core of the political and pedagogical perspective by "giving a voice" to the rural and urban poor and vulnerable groups (Freire, 1975) and by criticising the modernising practices of "social change" that were in development on the continent and which also attempted to technocratise their governmental proposals in parts of the left by means of an authoritarian approach.

These activist thinkers (intellectuals of social movements) developed analytical tools that helped unleash social and professional practices to break the "deadlock" of the "orthodox" and allow for the opening up to a emancipatory "orthopraxis", recognising the political primacy and wisdom of rural indigenous communities, the poor urban population, and feminist and environmental movements.

Ilich made a large-scale political call to "live harmoniously" with the diverse subjects in processes of decolonisation and political and cultural liberation. In doing so, Ilich connected the Latin American rallying proposals to insurgent political and liberation movements that were being formed in other continents. These included the black civil rights movement in the USA, national liberation movements in countries belonging to the then-called Third World and those which radically sought new ways of life in late western capitalism, such as environmentalism and feminism.[6]

K. Hetherington (1999) –cited by Gunther Dietz (2012)– defines this post 70s wave of social movements (including student, feminist, environmental, human rights, critical pedagogical, ethnic, indigenous and cultural movements) with the following characteristics:
- flexible organisational structure mediated through weak hierarchical networks without authoritarian leaderships
- rising autonomy of movements against other political players, notably from the State and political parties
- rejection of totalitarian projects and orthodox interpretations of left-wing ideologies prevalent in the 20th century, and reclaiming of new "ways of life", resistance against the post-industrial capitalism and proposals of other ways of understanding development ("human-scale development"; ethnic-development; eco-development)
- establishment of pluralistic coalitions in search of "shared meanings" to expand upon different movements
- open-mindedness to new ways of understanding the "subjects" and "agents" of change (multi-classist and intercultural perspectives)

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[6] Ilich's ideas are restored in modern Latin American social movements and in communities of action professionals (educators, social workers, psychologists). See Ghiso (2015). Paulo Freire, through the specific field of education, would play a key role in this global neo-critical movement. His influence is to this day present in "alter-global" and "subaltern" movements. Streck et alter (2015) serves as a key source to grasp the essential dimension of the new educational, political and epistemic paradigm initiated by Paulo Freire and his projections in Latin America and the world.

POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

- development of critical pedagogy and social science

Towards the end of the 80s and 90s and the first decade of the 21st century (Sandinista Revolution and Zapatismo), this profiling was enhanced by the fact that these movements problematise and politically process "diversity" by questioning the civilisation model of global techno-liberalism. They defend, above a unique and mono-cultural westernised line of thinking, de-colonising histories and practices concerning what is human and life in harmony (good living), knowledge, science and common management of biodiversity and natural goods, the plurality of possible ways of communicating and educating ourselves, beyond the traditional school processes and the active-democratic ways of socially distributing and managing political power in participatory, non-discriminative and non-patriarchal terms.

These approaches coincide with critical theories drawn up by new generations of intellectuals and activists regarding the founding contexts and political character of the demands of "subalternity" in Latin America and on a global scale. Political and epistemic points between different social movements are established that in a modern context strive for the constitution of political and ethical foundations of a "participatory intercultural society"[7]

Catherine Walsh (2010) has assessed the component of "critical interculturality" in the process of "politicising diversity" in social movements. Walsh sees critical interculturality as a project under development through the cultural practices and ethos of the movements, insofar as it is: "*permanent strategy, action and process of the relationship and negotiation between legitimacy, symmetry, equity and equality in conditions of mutual respect*", based on "*its understanding, construction and positioning as a political, social, ethical and epistemic project –of knowing and knowledge–, which proclaims the need to change not only the relationships, but also the structures, conditions and mechanisms of power that foster inequality, inferiorisation, rationalisation and discrimination. Therefore, its plan is not simply to recognise, tolerate or incorporate what is different within the established model and structures. By contrast, it is to implode –on the basis of difference– the colonial structures of power as a challenge, proposal, process and project; it is re-conceptualising and re-founding social, epistemic and stock structures that highlight and place on a level playing field different cultural logics, practices and ways of thinking, acting and living*". Walsh concludes: "*This is why the problematic focus of interculturality is not only confined to the indigenous or of African descent populations, but instead refers to all sectors of society, including westernised white and mixed-race people*" (Walsh, 2010):

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[7] We take account of the fact that intercultural "discourse" and practice are not homogeneous and vary according to what Gunther Dietz called the "grammars of identity" of social movements (Dietz, 2007) and their capacities to configure a cognitive, political and cultural power that challenges assimilationist normalcy. For Dietz, the dispute of what is called the "intercultural education policies" of the regional government is a good test to contemplate the "empowerment" of social diversity movements. Regarding the case of Mapuche communities in Chile, see Pozo (2014) and Boccara (2012)

POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

Through this approach we are exploring the ways of politicising the ongoing social movements, both in their local and regional developmental territories, and in their fields of specific demands for identity and historic recognition, reparation, exercise of rights, political participation, educational self-management and the yearning for a demodiversity from a critical intercultural perspective.

We can add another topic: an expression inherent to these movements is their construction as educational and communicative spaces, where pedagogical strategies are developed and geared toward reinforcing the sense of belonging to the movement, their identity and intercultural coexistence policy, their forms of political expression, the recovery of historic subaltern recollections, their cultural and artistic manifestations, safety of their participants and exploration, through the contingent collective experience of the movement, through non-sexist, non-hierarchical, eco-responsible and supportive forms of well-being (Fauré & Miranda, 2016; Fauré, 2016) which are shaped through experiences of "autonomy", "resistances on the basis of diversity", "alter-globalisation" and popular education (Bickel & Goldar, 2015).

Catherine Walsh identifies the following core areas of the "pedagogy" of diversity movements:

- A political and demanding discourse of populations affected by the development of capitalism via land dispossession.
- A discourse of resistance against the processes of colonising territorial occupation (which affects peasant and indigenous populations)
- A discourse of defence and demand of human rights for populations that migrate to cities and live in conditions of exclusion, precarious housing situations, and cultural and economic segregation
- A discourse of "denaturalisation" of the differences that conceal inequalities that structurally emerge in the dominating system
- A critical and de-colonial methodology (episteme) to identify the power mechanisms and the conceivable and subjective conditions to dismantle it.

Walsh goes on to say:

"I propose critical interculturality as a pedagogical tool that continuously questions the racialisation, subalternisation, inferiorisation and its patterns of power; envisages different ways of being, living and knowing; and seeks the development and creation of understandings and conditions that not only articulate and establish dialogue between the differences within a framework of legitimacy, dignity, equality, equity and respect, but also –and in turn– encourage the creation of "other" ways of thinking, being, learning, teaching, dreaming, which span across borders. Critical and de-colonial interculturality in this regard are plans, processes and struggles that are conceptually and pedagogically interwoven, fostering strength, initiative and ethical-moral action that question, disrupt, shake, reassemble and construct. This strength, initiative, action and its practices provide a basis for what I later call "de-colonial pedagogy" (Walsh, 2009)

POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

What can we now expect from these critical intercultural pedagogies in the second decade of the 21st century? The signs we see on the continent are laying out a promising path; these pedagogies:

- are nurtured in "policies to recover memories of liberation" and by acknowledging the violence that violated life and the rights of the subaltern sectors, regardless of their condition that defined them as such (the culture, ethnicity, language, territory of residence, gender, age, ancestral ways of life), and

- should be practised as a collective cultural action, which redefines the historic matrices of liberation processes that are interpreted from a praxis combining the vernacular with the global sphere: by recognising their diverse nature, social movements continue striving to build societies that seek "universal justice", societies that are reinforced by collective inter-cultural ethics and by "collective archives" (which have been defined by key political and epistemological powers as being of a "peripheral" origin) where the pro-community meaning of education, coexistence and the possible new Freirian concepts of this era will be redefined. (Walsh, 2013; Devés, 2014; Souza, 2010) ⊙

POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

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POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

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POLITIZACIÓN DE LA DIVERSIDAD: LA EDUCACIÓN INTERCULTURAL CRÍTICA DESDE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES QUE PROYECTAN OTROS MODOS DE VIVIR.
POLITICISING DIVERSITY: CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT SEEK DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIVING.

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