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Presentation

Political repertoires in transnational labor struggles and new forms of global labor governance

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The broad diversity of issues associated to the “world of work” affect not only the industrial relations domain as such but also a set of political and social groups in society. There is a long tradition in sociology of work that links capital and class to wider themes such as industrialization, development, capitalism and populism. Needless to say, wage labor has become dominant since the eighteenth century, and with it the growth of the labor force as a “commodity”. At the same time, it was against this logic that the workers’ movement and its unions emerged, conquering broader labor and social rights, in a long conflict process that in Europe culminated in the triumph of the welfare state. Most of the analyses inspired by Karl Marx’s thought – who experienced the Industrial Revolution and other popular rebellions in Europe closely – became fundamental for a sociological understanding of these processes, from the first revolts of the English workers to the Paris Commune, through the Revolution of 1848. The rapid social transformation unleashed since then has highlighted the conflictual relationship between the main social classes of modernity. The wild capitalism of the first phase of industrialization favored the profitability of technical innovation, but at the same time it stimulated the collective action of the working classes, paving the way for broader civilizational conquests.

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But despite the historical ambitions for emancipation and international worker solidarity, the national basis of labor movements and trade unionism prevailed (Tilly, 1995; Costa, 2006). Such reality could be explained by a complementary range of factors: i) the strong relevance of elements of national labor regulation (legal regimes, wages and working conditions); ii) a global unionized workforce of only 7% of the world population (Ituc, 2014); iii) a scarcity of financial resources (most notorious in the context of economic crisis, deeply reinforced by pandemics) to encourage travel to the same physical space and common times of protest, despite the virtualities that today are associated with electronic unionism and distance communication; iv) an incorporation of logics of competition and conflict in the transnational union speeches and practices – do not forget, for example, that labor solidarity can be undermined by situations in which the struggle for better wage conditions in a given country can mean the degradation of the wage relationship or even rising unemployment in another country; v) employers' violations of labor rights in multinational companies; vi) the weakness of the channels of representation of labor interests at the transnational level (where the International Labor Organization appears isolated or secondary due to the presence of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development etc.); vii) the absence or fragility of political agenda(s) with aggregating and mobilizing global dynamics, led by credible political actors able to maximize the content and the claiming power of social and labor struggles.

Such national basis has been strongly challenged by globalization and neoliberalism. Post-Fordist states (Jessop, 2013), flexible accumulation process (Harvey, 1989), precarization (Standing, 2001), global value chains (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1990), and new factory regimes (Nichols *et al.*, 2004) have all cast important changes in the political and organizational realm where labor was used to act and fight. A new global configuration of production and demand within national economies and across countries threw workers and their representatives into a turmoil of insecurity and destructuring. However, global responses also emerged, some of them linked to the old and established frame of international unionism (Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005; Hyman, 2005), some associated to a more horizontally oriented form of activism close to social movements' style of action or setting up different types of possible coalitions (Waterman, 2001; Webster *et al.*, 2007; Costa & Estanque, 2019).

Key issues treated by scholarly literature on this theme are not conclusive. Governance of global value chains (Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon, 2005) – which includes forcefully the role of labor– and global union networks (McCallum, 2013) are pieces of the debate related to how globalization process can be regulated and

its effects upon workers in transnational companies mitigated. All of that brings to the fore the crucial issue of transnational labor solidarity (Bieler, 2014). As a result, International Workers Committees at transnational corporations as well as global campaigns addressed to those firms are points of interest which have drawn attention to specialists. Much has been said nowadays about a new role for Global Union Federations (Ford & Gillan, 2015), the promise represented by International Framework Agreements (Stavis, 2010; Fichter & Helfen, 2011), and the open possibilities carried by, among others, Codes of Conduct from global companies (Fichter & Sydow, 2002) and “Decent Work” flag from multilateral institutions.

As a matter of fact, it is in this light that the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined the principle that “work is not a commodity” (Philadelphia Declaration, 1944), which culminated in the recognition of the right to collective organization and negotiation (according to ILO Convention C098, approved in 1949). This has been an important factor in the generalization of “social dialogue”, encouraged by ILO on an international scale. However, neoliberal globalization reversed this course from the mid-1970s onwards, with the first oil shocks and productivity crisis related to high levels of work conflagration. Broader structural trends, such as an aging population, stagnating economic growth, increased competitiveness on a global scale, financial crises, among others, have provided the basis and arguments for neoliberalism, helping to legitimize measures that have moved back certain social policies and put the European social model at risk. The *Washington Consensus*, in the late 1980s, would open space for the consolidation of a new monetary policy favorable to the dominance of financial capitalism, stimulating the opening of borders to global trade, under the coordination of the most powerful economies and banking institutions (G20, IMF and World Bank), trying to force this model as the way forward for emerging economies.

A rich and variegated scholarship was already settled in this area recently. Stimulant approaches such as the Power Resources’ view (Visser, 1995; Jensen, Madsen & Due, 1995; Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003; Schmalz & Dörre, 2013; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013; Crouch, 2017; Lehndorff, Dribbush & Schulten, 2017; Costa et al, 2020; Estanque *et al.*, 2020), which is spread out throughout not few recent contributions over the field, vivifies the theoretical vein of the sociology dedicated to unions and the workers’ movement today. From the contextual viewpoint, since the emergence of the Brics’ group of intermediate-developed countries (some of them ex-colonies) in the globalization map, a more informed and scientifically-based report coming from the situation of capital and labor in those countries is felt as advisable and even necessary (Munck, 2010; Nichols & Sugar,

2004; Nichols *et al.*, 2004). They enter into a running debate which needs to be constantly fed by new findings based on research and reflection.

The thematic of this issue rounds not only around all those topics but goes also further. They show empirical paths to develop under the established issues and themes already well circumscribed. New perspectives and *angles d'attaque* are tried. This is auspicious in every sense, irrespective of position within international division of labor. However, countries from the Global South put particular challenges to a supposed common agenda in sociology of work. First they remember to us the problem related to different temporalities: development is unequal, uneven and has different logics depending on historical grounds of the territories it affects. Secondly, development is not neutral; it implies a critical assessment of notions such as growth and income: not every growth lead to progress in terms of social standards as much as not every income leads to satisfactory and human needs to be fulfilled – environmental damage and labor exploitation (e.g. informality), respectively, remind us that development *per se* is not enough to draw emancipatory scenarios for the future. Latin American countries have had a rich intellectual history associated with developmentalist ideas, with original insights taken seriously by mainstream social science, particularly in the sixties and seventies of the last century. Those ideas and insights remain a source of uneasiness and defy, since many of the bottlenecks then found out by researchers and thinkers are today still prevalent in those societies – poverty and the bourgeoisie's role towards ruling classes of the center or imperialism are just two of them. Thirdly, uneven temporalities may imply a dialectical approach of old and new: many aspects of the “old” industrialist order (let's say, Fordist regulation, including a salaried society as a norm) may appear currently as plausible somehow, while the “new” appeal to multilateral sovereignty may sound as a demise of the state to rule national questions. Labor law frame is a good point of observation: the rhythm of change from corporatist influence to more pluralist atmosphere is misleading depending on when the reading of events is taken – for Brazilian labor movement, for example, the complete removal of the old *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* (1943) has today a completely new meaning than during the iconic times of “new unionism” when Lula first come to the front. As a result, the ‘social movement unionism’ associated to CUT-Central Única dos Trabalhadores lost a lot of its fascination of the heroic days of fighting against dictatorship. Another point of observation that amplifies unequal temporalities is when the “contractualist” culture within capital and labor is carried out to the field of lawful class struggle. Mistakenly understood as similar to “anglo-saxon” pattern of labor relations, when anti-union and individualistic prospects were invoked to marginalize collective initiatives, the contractualist vocabulary was rather an imaginative political reper-

toire used by Brazilian unionists to call to attention the lack of democracy both at the bottom (the shopfloor) and at the top (the concertation arena) of the national industrial relations. Contract-like vocabulary kept an eye in the social-democrat style of neocorporatist experiences in North Europe, at the same time as criticized the statist-corporatist tradition of Iberian codes of labor regulation from the past. Leftist currents also wrongly interpreted at the time the contractualist mood bore by CUT leaders as a betrayal of socialist early times. National contract along industries and sectors remain today in Brazil a fundamental piece of every negotiation round between unions and employers; the fierce resistance from the second against that flag sponsored by the first tells eloquently about that (right) choice made by workers.

Fourthly, globalization has a history and the ever-invoked Polanyian notion of a pendulum between the market forces, on one side, and protectionist forces, on the other side, may be now moving towards the second pole. Besides the wider trend, though, the *direction* of change can never conceal the *rhythm* of change: the timing of how public policies and statist institutions are transformed into neoliberal support also counts. Again, the impressive resilience shown by the Labor Law throughout more than seven decades is a landmark of the weight of societal forces acting through different political and ideological spurs.

Linking the historical grounded basis to the global lines is the track we see as the more fruitful. Of special interest is the matter on models of representation for local unions, labor committees and global structures of international unionism. Another fascinating topic is the relationship between the existing structure of unionism and the local social movements (Anner, 2011) – sometimes linked to truly global issues (environmental protocols, fair-trade etc.) – and how they invigorate labor struggles (Evans, 2010).

Points of intersection with the traditional labour process analysis (Moody, 1997; Durand, 2007), e.g. how is the quest of workers' control before the new globalized scenario for dispersed sites of production, or rather how is the management's control divide between head office and branches throughout the world, are especially challenging, although still requiring a great deal of engagement and interest among specialists – the intellectual production at present days is far from shouldering the previous rich scholarly on conflict and consent, autonomy and control, at the point of production. Perhaps it is time to venture on those kind of pathways.

The promise of a “new labour internationalism” capable of revitalizing workers' movements in the era of globalization has been a matter of contention in the field of labour studies, either North and South. Labor internationalism interpellates sided and conexas problems such as how far modernization process could lead and to which point it has to stop in order to keep “society” alive and prevented to be

engulfed by every-man-for-himself policies (translated today into entrepreneurship ideals): while North has gone too far (eg. wasting natural resources and rationalizing work), South has maybe some road to be tracked ahead before leaving behind modernization promises. Modernization only (as the growth path conducted by some economic policies led by peripheral countries suggest)? Hindered modernization (as proposed by the social scientist Oliveira 2003)? Or simply uneven and combined development?

Those are the kind of dilemmas involved when international solidarism and working class global politics comes to the front. As organic cellules of society, labour forces are forcefully intertwined to every political choice made by ruling classes or global elites. The choices national unionisms make reflect the prevalent political economy at stake within national economies: in other words, what is the place reserved to the latter in the actual international division of labour? The answer to this question, albeit general and somehow abstract it can be, helps to understand the complexities involved when the empirical findings on union responses to globalization emerge from research. This one is not conclusive at all. It sheds more doubts and questions than offers definite answers. In the lines below this Dossier offers a contemporary and informed mapping on how is the state of arts of the topic globalization and labour.

Regional solidarities and trade union networks, global economic planning, globalizations of just transition, forms of transnational organizing, informal work, North and South, platform workers, digital communication processes are some of the themes debated in this Dossier, all finely commented by Ronaldo Munck as the final contribution of balance, perspectives and action.

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Abstract

Political repertoires in transnational labor struggles and new forms of global labor governance

Despite the concerns about wages and the increase in the quality of life of the working class having acquired a historical centrality in the struggle repertoires designed at national level, the ambition of internationalist solidarity and the emancipation of the forms of collective organization of workers has always been an end in yourself. In the light of current times, it is an ambition that can be witnessed in the way that the trends of globalization and contemporary neoliberalism demand adequate and organized responses, sharing experiences, contributions to new forms of global governance, more just and dignified. And also new learning outcomes for the classic protagonists of the world of work. By gathering contributions from international experts on the world of work, from different national contexts and disciplinary affiliations, this dossier fulfills this purpose of critical debate, supported by concrete experiences. Here the reader can find contributions on regional solidarity and union networks, political regulation processes, global economic planning, climate transition, forms of transnational labor organization, informal work, North and South relations, work in the platform economy or digital communication processes. Keywords: Transnational labor struggles; World of work; Global labor governance; Sociolaboral regulation.

Resumo

Repertórios políticos nas lutas trabalhistas transnacionais e as novas formas de governança trabalhista global

Apesar de as preocupações em torno do salário e da elevação da qualidade de vida da classe trabalhadora terem adquirido uma centralidade histórica nos reportórios de luta desenhados em escala nacional, a ambição de solidariedade internacionalista e de emancipação das formas de organização coletiva dos trabalhadores constituiu sempre um fim em si mesmo. À luz dos tempos atuais, trata-se de uma ambição que pode ser testemunhada no modo como as tendências de globalização e neoliberalismo contemporâneo reclamam respostas adequadas e organizadas, de partilha de experiências, de contributos para novas formas de governança global, mais justas e dignificantes. E igualmente de novas aprendizagens para os protagonistas clássicos do mundo do trabalho. Ao reunir contributos de especialistas internacionais sobre o mundo do trabalho, provenientes de distintos contextos nacionais e filiações disciplinares, este dossiê cumpre esse propósito de debate crítico, apoiado em experiências concretas. Aqui se encontram contributos sobre solidariedades regionais e redes sindicais, processos de regulamentação política, planejamento econômico global, transição climática, formas de organização laboral transnacional, trabalho informal, relações Norte e Sul, trabalho na economia de plataforma ou processos de comunicação digital.

Palavras-chave: Lutas trabalhistas transnacionais; Mundo do trabalho; Governança trabalhista global; Regulação sociolaboral.

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Building a regional solidarity network of transnational activists

An African case study

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Introduction

Constructing a labour internationalism does not involve a choice between going global or remaining local; it requires that unions navigate between the local and the global. This combination of the local and the global has led to the emergence of what Sydney Tarrow calls “rooted cosmopolitans” (Tarrow, 2005, p. 42). Rooted cosmopolitans, Tarrow suggests, are activists who think globally, but are linked to very real places. In his words: “They move physically and cognitively outside their origins, but they continue to be linked to place, to the social networks that inhabit that space, and to the resources, experiences, and opportunities that place provides them with” (*Idem*, p. 42).

Through the work of the Global Labour University (GLU) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa, with trade unionists throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, a cross-border network of labour activist alumni has been formed aimed at developing regional and continent-wide platforms for common engagements and action. Similar to the concept of “Networks of Labour Activism” (or Nolas) developed by Zajak, Egels-Zanden and Piper (2017) in their study of such network formations in Asia, the GLU-based initiative brings together unionists,

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THE SIX REGIONS OF THE AFRICAN UNION

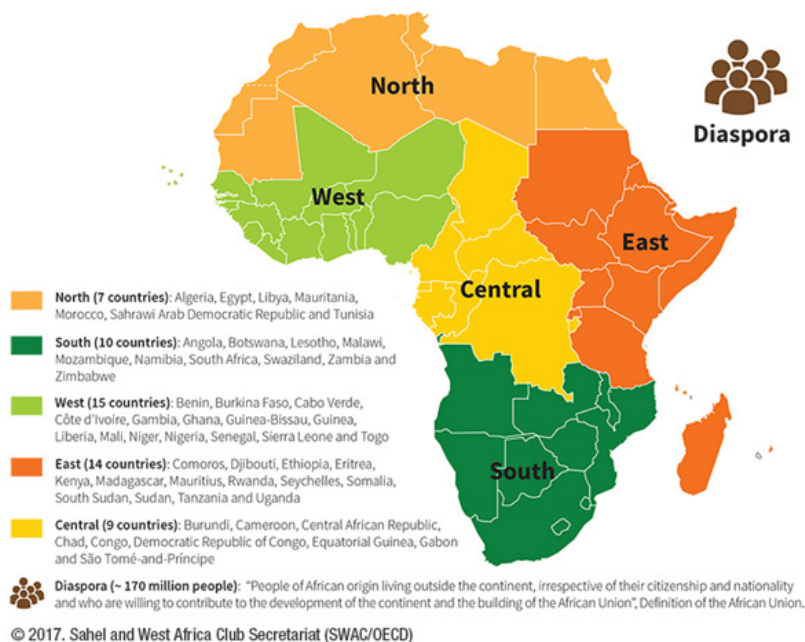


Figure 1: Map of the regions of Africa available at: <http://www.west-africa-brief.org/content/en/six-regions-african-union>

labour activists, their worker organisations and other labour-support organisations into a network of solidarity.

The network operates within relatively shared local conditions of globalised, supply-chains as webs of labour agency, but which are not necessarily only linked to the production process and advocacy coalitions. It is founded on shared and embedded experiences of learning and knowledge transfer outside of existing struggles and campaigns, but which seek to use the regional networks to develop and/or bolster support for such campaigns. These struggles are not solely focussed on “workplace issues”, as the alumni and network are embedded in other forms of activism aimed at improving working class life, such as addressing deficits of local democracy, housing, gender and ecology-based campaigns. It seeks to rediscover labour’s “social movement origins” and dispel artificial divisions between working class labour organisations and community movements (Webster *et al.*, 2008; O’Brien, 2018).

This network is unlike global union federations, who, according to Ford, Gillan and Thein (2020), operate to pursue and resolve grievances in industrial relations and attempt to standardise these. The focus of GLU and, thus, the activist network which springs from it, is to ultimately assist in strengthening worker organisations and worker power on the continent. The outlook is global by locating

specific regional integration into global value chains and its impact on the world of work. Its aim is to then identify new local sources of worker power and link these recognitions into building local campaigns and cross-border activities via skills and knowledge transfer between GLU and programme alumni and amongst alumni across organisational and geographic frontiers.

The GLU programme acknowledges the complexities of labour activism in the “Global South” and Africa in particular. As O’Brien points out in his study of the Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union rights (Sigtur), “[...] southern agency and positions are varied, complicated and often contradictory. Labour groups may simultaneously be supporting the sovereign rights of southern governments against northern states and corporations while engaging in strong opposition to the policies of those governments. For example, they may support the attempt of the Brics [the nation state bloc of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] to challenge US and European dictated trade rules while at the same time they oppose the neoliberal policies of labour deregulation and capital liberalisation implemented by Brics states. The programs [sic] for reform of the global system from southern labour and southern governments can diverge a great deal” (2018, p. 19).

The work of GLU at Wits is supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung’s (FES) Trade Union Competence Centre for Sub-Saharan Africa (Tucc). Although not the full extent of the support, the financial resources made available by the FES are crucial to the continued running of many aspects of the GLU programme. The partnership is based on organisational independence, with GLU in sole control of its academic programme and the alumni of their network and activities.

This paper outlines the structure and work of the GLU alumni network “web” and offers it as an example of building a progressive labour internationalism. Using active alumni bases in particular African states, we argue that it provides a foundation for local and cross-border solidarity and action that links organisations within and between countries.

The paper is divided into four parts: in part one the paper describes the core GLU programme upon which the network is founded and grows, paying specific attention to the concept and challenges of the “representational gap”. In part two the basic structure of the alumni network web and some of the key activities undertaken recently by the non-core layers are outlined. In part three we elaborate on the Transfer Project, a key component of the Engage South Africa programme. In part four we highlight certain weaknesses of organisation on the continent, but also the opportunities created by these challenges.

We conclude by arguing that the recent Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns imposed by governments on economic and social activity and movement

have had a dramatic impact on workers, workplaces, trade unions and organising. We suggest that despite these and other already-existing challenges, including relative trade union weakness, little formalisation of work and workplaces and low union density, the pandemic period offers workers' organisations opportunities to deepen this regional solidarity network of transnational activists.

Part one: the Global Labour University (GLU) programme¹

The Global Labour University (GLU) is a network of six universities that offers Masters (MA) degree and postgraduate academic training to trade unionists, labour activists and labour scholars around the world. Formed in 2006 by key labour academics and officials in the Workers' Bureau of the International Labour Organisation, GLU programmes are located at the University of Campinas in Brazil, Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, Penn State University in the USA, the University of Kassel and the Berlin School of Economics and Law in Germany, and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in South Africa.

The emphasis of the GLU programme at Wits is to offer courses that provide students and participants a global outlook on the issues facing labour, while studying local contexts and organising initiatives. It places the informal economy as not only central to economic life on the African continent, but also a neglected site of union organising. GLU analyses gender and democracy and places these as central to worker organisational development. It sees the need for broad socio-economic change, promotes worker-centred ideas for the development of various forms of worker power and for workers to use this power to put themselves and their organisations as key drivers of this change.

Alongside the MA degree programme, GLU at Wits also offers two short courses – a one-month course called Social Theory for South African Trade Unionists and the two-month Engage South Africa course. All courses are taught by senior University academics and experienced labour activists.

The Engage South Africa course was initiated in 2013 within this general GLU context. It was developed out of the need of potential students who could not afford to spend an entire year immersed in full time study, particularly those from outside South Africa. Over time it has developed into an intensive two-month short course located at Wits University, has graduated 118 participants, and is the only one of its kind offered throughout the GLU network of universities.

1. For more information about GLU South Africa, see: www.wits.ac.za/glu.

Annually Engage brings together activists from around the world – alumni work and live in various countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and North America. The course is comprised of five seminar-based, week-long modules and one two-week active research module. The modules are an interactive combination of lectures and group work interspersed with showings of relevant documentaries and movies.

The course focuses on a “social power” approach, with worker organisations as key actors embedded centrally within wider networks of working-class activism, as opposed to more conventional approaches that seek to develop unions as actors within frameworks and institutions of “social dialogue” with ruling class actors in the state and private sector. Engage seeks to interrogate the rebuilding of worker movements through education and organising by locating different sources of worker power as central to this process. Engage locates worker power as central to any progressive redevelopment of the global order and sees cross-border linkages, both inter-personally and inter-organisationally as key features of that process.

A central focus of Engage is the recognition of the “representational gap”. According to Webster and Bischoff “[t]he process of increasing informalization of the labour market is creating a gap between trade unions and a growing number of workers who have no forms of collective representation at their places of work (2011, p. 1). The course aims to explain the creation of this gap and provide participants with ideas and methods to close it. These methods, including research-capacity development, are located in identifying and building different forms of worker power. The modules posit that the re-mobilisation of the working classes around the world rests on the idea that workers are not only “passive victims of forces beyond their control, but emphasise instead the possibility of worker agency” (Schmalz, Ludwig & Webster, 2019, p. 84). This agency rests on utilising available and developing key worker power resources, viz. structural, associational, societal and institutional (Fichter *et al.*, 2018).

Participants in the Engage course are also provided with practical examples aimed at developing worker power through organising. They are tasked with investigating these initiatives that have been developed by worker organisations at local to global levels as examples of strategies that could be adapted and utilised in their contexts.

The course concludes with a two-week long group Power Mapping research project. Research groups identify and conduct a week-long mapping research survey on unorganised workers. The information is then analysed, and groups are tasked with creating action plans. These action plans recommend activities to get the group of workers organised and are based on the collected data. These plans also identify the available power resources and organisational capabilities that would need to be mobilised to implement the plan and its organising drives.

The participants are housed on Wits University campus, side-by-side. It is important to note these details as, over time, the short, intense nature of the individual's experience alongside their fellow participant has allowed for the development of strong bonds of comradeship, their kinship as labour activists, provided ample platform for cultural exchange – in particular, organisational cultural exchange – and laid the foundation for the development and continual reinforcement of the alumni network. Our experience has shown that the strong interpersonal links forged at Wits University through learning inside and outside of the classroom have played an important role in building and maintaining the network and the development of action and forms of solidarity.

Since 2013, GLU South Africa has run six Engage courses graduating 118 participants from different “South” countries.

Part two: the GLU Africa Alumni Network

We envisage the Alumni Network as an “onion”, or a “solidarity web” of activities that centre on GLU South Africa programmes and activities, but which are connected by the various levels of alumni network formation and activity at country, regional and continental levels. We argue that the nature and development of the network frame a new form of labour internationalism that is based on cross-border learning, strategizing and activity and which is held together by voluntarism, consistent interaction and the use of various modes of communication and information technology. It is yet in its infancy, having been launched in 2018, but is based on pre-existing informal networks of solidarity created by alumni of the various GLU programmes during and after their participation in those programmes (these programmes are detailed below). Members, or contributors to the network are African alumni of all GLU programmes in South Africa and elsewhere across the other participant-universities.

The network can be seen as a four-tiered web of concentric circles, each interacting with each other. All four levels interact with each other at various GLU events and across forums and interact with each other through various activities and modes of communication. These include the GLU conference and meetings (as stated), emails, online meeting apps, e.g. Zoom, Facebook and WhatsApp. The phone messaging app is the most popular, cost-effective and efficient means of communication utilised throughout the non-core sections of the network. Certain layers of the web are more active than others – volunteerism (of alumni) and mandate (for GLU South Africa and as set for alumni by network meetings) are at the centre of the functioning of the network, and as such, are subject to the contexts, energies, and desire of those involved. Initiatives, including relevant meetings, sharing information about union

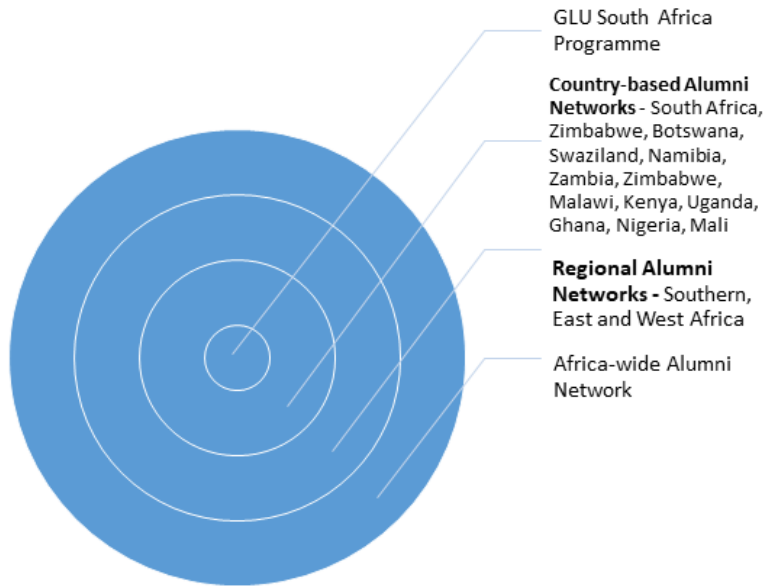


Figure 2: The GLU Africa Alumni Network (developed by authors).

and worker activity, advice and contact flow into and out of the different network circles, allowing for country and regional independence of action, but all founded on principles of collective decision-making and cross-border solidarity.

The layers are the GLU South Africa programme and Programme Coordinator (as its core), the country-based alumni network, the regional alumni network and the continental network (see diagram below). Each layer can function independently of the others, and as mandated by alumni at the annual Alumni Network Workshop (see below for more detail on GLU Conferences and Meetings). This is most appropriate at the core, as the GLU acts through its constituent academic and international committees outside of the direction of alumni, and country-based and regional network levels, as activities here are the responsibility of the constituent members of those committees. In addition, all layers are used and are responsible for sharing GLU-related information.

The activities that take place at the outer layers – at country, regional and continent level – are the responsibility of the alumni. The GLU network and its partners are available to assist where it is relevant and appropriate to do so.

The core

At the core of the Alumni Network is GLU South Africa – its programmes, courses and events. It is at this layer that alumni meet physically (whether in-person or on-

line) and develop their relationships. It is also at this layer that GLU South Africa is able to initiate the alumni network by providing the platforms for these meetings.

At this layer GLU South Africa coordinates its three programmes, viz. the postgraduate Honours and MA degree programme, the Engage South Africa short course, the Engage Transfer Project and the Social Theory for South African Trade Unionists short course. Due to the nature of the Engage course and the Transfer project, and its higher numbers of graduates, most alumni active in the network were participants in these programmes.

The core is essentially responsible for providing the academic content for the Alumni Network and is used as a platform to bring as many alumni together as is possible to meet, network, learn and present their research work. It also disseminates information through the network about upcoming GLU activities, courses and programmes both in South Africa and elsewhere, including information about GLU Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs)².

The country-based Alumni Network

As the name suggests, this layer brings together alumni from a particular country into network with each other. This layer is responsible for ensuring all alumni of that country are, firstly, aware of the existence of and invited to participate in the network, and, secondly, are able to participate in alumni activities. As such, country networks source local and other means of support from their unions and worker organisations and labour-supporting organisations, where appropriate to do so³. The country network has often been the base for regional activities. As the diagram above shows, there are 13 active country networks across Africa.

The regional Alumni Network

The 2018 founding meeting of the Alumni Network established three regional networks that aim at coordinating cross-border activities between country networks, alumni and their organisations (SEE MAP OF Africa). It is this layer that provides fertile ground for this developing new labour internationalism as solidaristic action is based on already-existing relationships, GLU networks, shared learning and exchange and a commitment to cross-border action that seeks to go beyond rhetoric.

2. For more information on GLU MOOCs, go to: <https://www.global-labour-university.org/index.php?id=392>.

3.

There are three regional alumni networks, and these link country networks of that region of the continent: Southern Africa, East Africa and West Africa. These networks act as information and resource-sharing platforms and have been used to coordinate regional network meetings, workshops, solidarity work and inter-personal and inter-organisational exchange. These layers also attempt to involve alumni from countries that have not been part of previous meetings into the network fold and also to link alumni who are the sole graduates from their particular country, e.g. Mali has one active GLU alumnus. He is involved through the West Africa network.

The Africa-wide Alumni Network

This is a network that functions primarily to share GLU-related, network and worker organisational information to all alumni in the “web”. Although it does connect alumni via email, WhatsApp is the primary tool of communication. However, it has been used recently by a South African and Nigerian network user to coordinate a continent-wide zoom meeting to which all alumni were invited (see details below).

The vast geographical spread, severely limited resources and the more recent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, continue to play an important role in translating the ideas alumni in the network have into concrete action. However, despite these challenges, participants show an ingenuity and ability to adapt to changing conditions and use the available opportunities at their disposal. Maintaining contact with each other within and across network layers is a success in itself. What follows is a brief account of activities undertaken and challenges faced by alumni utilising various layers of the network.

Kenya has the largest active country-based alumni network. It has an active WhatsApp group of 15 members, from the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers, the Kenya Union of Hotels and Allied Workers, the Kenyan Union of Post Primary Education Teachers, the Union of Kenya Civil Servants, its Banking Insurance and Finance Union and the Kenya National Union of Teachers. The group meets regularly online due to lack of resources and the impact of Covid-19 on internal movement. Kenyan alumni are usual participants in online courses, the coordinators of the East Africa network, ensuring the participation of Ugandan and Tanzanian alumni, and continue to advertise GLU programmes, playing a major role in ensuring many Kenyan applications to these programmes and courses. The GLU network and its alumni have contributed, too, to the thawing of relations between unions organising in the same sector which ensures that multiple unions are represented and work together in the Transfer projects (see below for information on these and other GLU programmes).

Alumni are regular participants on discussion forums hosted not only by regional counterparts, but, via the Africa-wide network, have participated in GLU alumni meetings held in other regions by those networks, contributing ideas and solidarity in those meetings and its coordination.

Zambian GLU alumni have developed and are at the forefront of establishing the nascent Labour Institute of Zambia. By linking Zambian graduates from the Brazilian and South African GLU programmes, alumni have sourced funding from an institution of the Danish government for its establishment. Alumni are very active in the regional and Africa-wide communication networks and were participants in the 2019 Regional Alumni Meeting held in Harare, Zimbabwe.

In Mali, the sole alumna has been working with GLU alumni in Nigeria, not only to become active in the West Africa network, but to use that network to draft a research and solidarity action initiative which will look at the impact of Covid-19 on the mobility and transnational movement of West African workers and migrants. It is planned that the outcome of the initiative will be used by trade unions and community organisations to implement recommended cross-border action to assist those workers and migrants. Alumni were also involved in running a two-week long workshop for youth workers involving an academy of unions from the region. Many of these alumni also were part of creating a youth activist network, formed in Gaborone, Botswana. This activist network comprises representatives of African trade unions, as well as political and community-based activists.

Two alumni, one from Nigeria and South Africa respectively, in November 2020, recently collaborated and produced a continent-wide zoom online meeting. It was promoted as a GLU Africa Alumni event and was titled *Promoting Quality Public Service Delivery in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Issues, Opportunities and Way Forward*.

In Ghana, alumni have stated that the most important means of communication between alumni are various forms of social media. There is a commitment to continue interacting with and reaching out to alumni in neighbouring countries, despite their recent focus on local Ghanaian issues due to the impact of the pandemic. Alumni represent the Trade Union Congress, the Public Utility Workers Union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union and the Mineworkers Union. They continue to work together despite the tensions between their unions and the different trade union federations each are affiliated to.

Zimbabwean alumni have been very active across the layers of the network, especially prior to the pandemic. In September 2019, they organised a regional network meeting to which alumni of other regions and GLU academics were also invited and who attended. The Zimbabwe group faces very interesting challenges as most alumni no longer reside in Zimbabwe. The state of their local economy, Covid-19 pressures

and state repression on trade unions, has placed severe restrictions on recent local and regional activity. Despite these challenges, alumni have worked with the local Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) country office to source meeting space and technological support. As with many other African alumni, internet connectivity and thus the availability of data is a primary concern for modern day worker organisers. Yet, the Zimbabwean contingent continue to forge ahead, and have created a country-wide database of local alumni. Their template has been used in the development of similar databases for the regional and Africa networks and these have been used to support Zimbabwean alumni in the early stages of the development of their own labour research institute. It is not yet active and is facing challenges and lack of recognition by potential union partners and local labour centres. The GLU alumni network is using its meetings to try and assist the Zimbabweans on this matter.

The Alumni network and communication groups continue to grow year-on-year. Due to this growth, there has been a recent drive to more meetings which have proposed more regional activities and networking. Alumni have suggested that this has allowed for greater spread of available resources – personal capacity, financial and technological – to areas that are in need. The recent GLU Africa Alumni Network meeting held online in November 2020, having noted these ideas, also resolved to develop new country-based research projects. This idea was inspired by the recent involvement of alumni from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Turkey and Brazil in a research project investigating categories of “excluded labour” – country reports on those who work, but who are not categorised locally as “employed” and as “workers” and are thus outside of formal representation and organisation, recognition and coverage by local labour policy. Alumni, thus, resolved to conduct more network meetings and new research aimed at identifying challenges facing workers, impacted on, especially by the recent pandemic.

Part three: the engage transfer project

As has been stated above, Engage South Africa has been designed to provide experienced trade unionists from around the world (and, in particular Africa) access to high level academic, theoretical and research training. The programme is aimed at providing participants with opportunities to tackle the impact of neoliberal globalisation on work. It focuses, inter alia, on the growing informalisation of work and the need to close the above-mentioned representation gap (Webster & Bischoff, 2011).

A crucial part of Engage is to ensure the transfer of the skills developed by the participants to their union in their country of origin. The skill introduced to “close the representation gap” is that of mapping, both vertical and horizontal, and, as

has been stated above, participants are tasked with identifying the available power resources to develop an organising strategy or action plan.

Once alumni have returned home from their participation in the course at Wits University, the Programme Coordinator at Wits initiates the Transfer project. Alumni from various Africa countries who have volunteered to participate, form research teams comprised of local officials from their organisation. The Programme Coordinator subsequently visits each country to conduct a two-day Transfer Workshop at which the groups are officially formed (with the support of the worker organisation/s represented in the group) and where he introduces the parameters of the project – the research subject (unorganised, vulnerable workers), timelines and nature of the presentation of the project's key findings. Over an established period of months, these groups conduct Power Mapping research projects, as alumni had done in South Africa, on the identified sample of unorganised vulnerable workers their organisations may have had an interest in organising. Representatives of the research groups later travel back to Wits University to present their projects and key findings at the annual Engage South Africa Transfer Conference (which takes place the following year). This conference is attended by the new cohort of Engage participants, members of the GLU South Africa Committee, GLU associate contributors and professors, officials of GLU South Africa partner organisations, invited academics and representatives of workers' and labour-service organisations.

Since 2014, Engage South Africa has coordinated 15 such projects over five years in 11 different African countries. These are: Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 2021, Engage South Africa intends to conduct six more projects, one each in South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The locations and outcomes of the Transfer projects each year are dependent on the willingness of the alumni to participate and the support of their worker organisations. The Programme Coordinator also acts as a supervisor of the various projects throughout the project timeline, assisting the various teams at the various stages of their project – data collection, data analysis, developing the action plan and the creation of the presentation.

Some interesting findings have been made by Transfer groups. In a 2017 study by the Namibian group on unorganised retail workers of a major South African transnational supermarket chain, research detailed an action/organising plan that centred on a union campaign around transportation to and from work to mobilise local support. It also highlighted available, but poorly implemented legislation denied to workers due to little knowledge of it. It also sought the assistance of a South African retail union sympathetic to its cause as well as the UNI Global Union Retail Shopstewards' Network to mobilise cross-border advice and solidarity. The

project, through the Namibian Engage alumni, brought together three unions (rallying around their sister retail union), their federation and the local labour research organisation in joint collaboration at all stages of the project.

In Kenya, the 2019 study on Community Healthcare Volunteers (CHVs), saw the medical professionals' and general workers unions (KMPDU and KUDHEIHA respectively) join efforts. This group of workers were of interest and allowed for cooperation between the two unions involved in the project. The research was conducted in four counties in Kenya, viz. Baringo, Nandi, Uasin Gishu and Nairobi.

The project showcased a superb application of the research methodologies, a project in which 214 respondents were surveyed. Based on their findings the group identified that although CHVs had little associational power and institutional power, their close proximity to local communities and the necessity of the work they do gave them tremendous potential societal and structural power respectively.

A note on Mapping

Mapping, in this context, is used as a tool to facilitate the organisation of vulnerable workers. Our focus is the key arena of vulnerable work, and these workers are a large and growing pool of unorganised workers, and thus a new constituency for organised labour. Vulnerable workers are identified as precarious workers in formal waged work relationship and informal workers outside of standard employment contractual relations.

There are two ways of conducting mapping: horizontal (HM) and vertical (VM). HM refers to the method used to document and identify the characteristics of the worker, their location and industry sector, by contacting individuals in their homes or communities. HM focuses on gathering data on demographic characteristics of workers, their home situation, their work processes, their employment relationships, payment amounts and processes, problems and issues that they face. In contrast, vertical mapping (VM) refers to a process that identifies the chain of production linking home-workers, subcontractors, intermediaries, buyers and brand owners (Burchielli, Buttigieg & Delaney, 2008, p. 169).

Drawing on trade unionists from countries in the various regions of Africa, Engage research groups have developed the skills for a new type of union organiser, one who understands the global context, but is rooted in their local community. There are five ways in which this is being achieved.

Firstly, the participants are able to identify through, horizontal mapping, new constituencies of precarious workers, such as truck drivers in Malawi, domestic workers in Lesotho, private security guards in Swaziland, cleaners in Zambia and

hospitality, retail and street vendors in South Africa, to name but a few of the research subjects in recent years. Importantly, the research group participants are identifying what Jennifer Chun calls the “new political subjects of labour... women, immigrants, people of colour, low-paid service workers, precarious workers... Groups that have been historically excluded from the moral and material boundaries of union membership” (Chun, 2012, p. 40). Secondly, it forces union organisers to interact with vulnerable workers face-to-face and become aware directly of their work and living conditions. Thirdly, vertical mapping is especially useful in plotting supply chains and discovering the way globalisation functions in the various African regions. Fourthly, through responding to the survey questionnaire, those interviewed have begun to develop an identity as workers. Fifthly, it has helped workers to frame their grievances and sense of injustice in ways that enable them to organise collectively.

In engagements with alumni, particularly in alumni conferences and meetings, certain challenges have been noted. Internal democracy is a key challenge facing many African unions and certain key union leadership positions. Certain alumni returning home, imbued with greater knowledge and more radical and democratic ideals, have mentioned that they have been viewed as threats to power by some of these leaders. Acting in their own interest, these leaders have, at times, attempted to block the influence and progression of alumni in the organisations leading to certain instances of internal organisational conflict.

In order to deepen our understanding of the challenges facing transnational activists we examine in Part Four the distinctive nature of the African labour market.

Part Four: The Africa labour market and the challenge of Covid-19

In Africa the industrial working class is very much a minority of wage earners. The labour market is best understood as divided into “classes of labour” (Bernstein, 2007). In other words, there are men and women who need to sell their labour power in some kind of a market – either directly on a wage labour market or indirectly through some form of product market – in order to reproduce themselves and their families. Categories like worker, peasant, employed and self-employed are fluid. Working people alternate between “earning a living” through wage labour and “making a living” through a variety of livelihood strategies.

“In practise”, veteran Africanist Henry Bernstein suggests that:

[...] what you have in African cities is a large group who simultaneously and ambiguously combine employment and self-employment...In the shantytowns are large numbers of in-

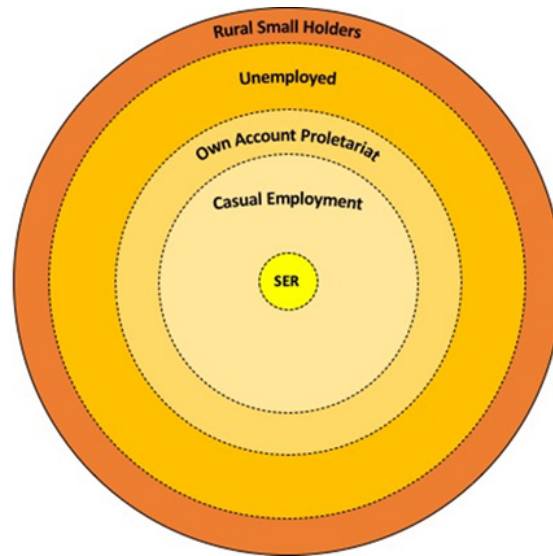


Figure 3: Fluid Classes of Labour (developed by authors).

dividuals who are sometimes unemployed and work intermittently in wage labour in small workshops or performing services. In short, there is no “homogeneous proletarian condition” within the “South”, other than that essential condition... the need to secure reproduction needs (survival) through the (direct and indirect) sale of labour power. (Bernstein, 2007, p. 5).

It is possible to identify five broad “classes of labour” in Africa, as illustrated in Figure 3.

- With the exception of South Africa, a minority of workers are in formal wage employment – the Standard Employment Relationship (SER) – usually in the public sector. These jobs involve a degree of security through an employment contract, a regular wage, social protection in the form of benefits, and some form of workplace representation. It is what the ILO has come to call decent work (Webster, Budlender & Orkin, 2015).
- There is a majority in the cities involved in casual paid wage work, either temporary or part-time, sometimes paid in kind, and often employed by a third party such as an employment agency or labour broker. This includes dependent contractors – usually people like Uber workers and other gig economy workers. This is not traditional wage employment but has some characteristics of wage employment because those in this category are dependent on the owners of, say, Uber. Wage labour, it has been persuasively argued, is the dominant employment status in the informal economy (Rizzo, Kilama & Wuyts, 2015).

- There are what are called “own account” or self-employed workers. These are usually workers involved in informal survival activities such as street traders, waste pickers or small enterprises making clothes or selling goods and services, often employing family members. These “self-employed proletarians” engage in complex sets of employment relationships. For example, the workers found at the points where the buses congregate in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, include many occupations – e.g. callers, supervisors, agents, loaders, sweepers, vendors, money-changers (often women, who have bags of small change which they sell for a fee to the conductor who needs change). There is also the “pigga setti” – a seat-warmer (the bus will not leave till it is full) and side-mirror menders.
- Then there are the unemployed with little or no unemployment benefits as there are no welfare states in Africa, not even South Africa with its extensive system of social grants. The unemployed survive through retreating into their households where they share economic resources or through various survivalist activities. (Mosoetsa, 2011). They create what can be called an informal security regime (Webster, Britwum & Bowmick, 2017).
- Finally, there are the peasants or smallholders based in agriculture, using mostly family labour and often dependent on remittances from household members who often spend their lives oscillating between town and countryside (Scully & Webster, 2019).

This ambiguity over class location raises difficult questions for union organisers. Who is a worker? Is a person who owns one minibus and drives it (as a taxi) themselves, a worker? If they own two minibuses and hire a person to drive the second one, what are they? If they own 200 minibuses, what are they? Is a street trader a worker or an entrepreneur? We turn now to the responses of working people to the ambiguous nature of work in Africa.

The GLU, its programmes and alumni networks operate in a context of relatively weak trade unions and workers’ movements. Despite growth in trade union membership in certain sectors, unions remain largely unable to direct macro-socioeconomic policy at state and global levels, with struggles waged largely defensive in nature such as for wage increases and to prevent job losses.

The picture of unions in Africa is bleak. They are weak, fragmented and largely in the formal economy. It is estimated that only 5% of African workers are unionized. Where unions do exist they are largely in the public sector, although we have seen innovative responses in a number of sectors in recent times. Often these initiatives are the result of support from global unions such as UNI-Global, the International Transport Federation (ITF) and the Building Workers International (BWI).

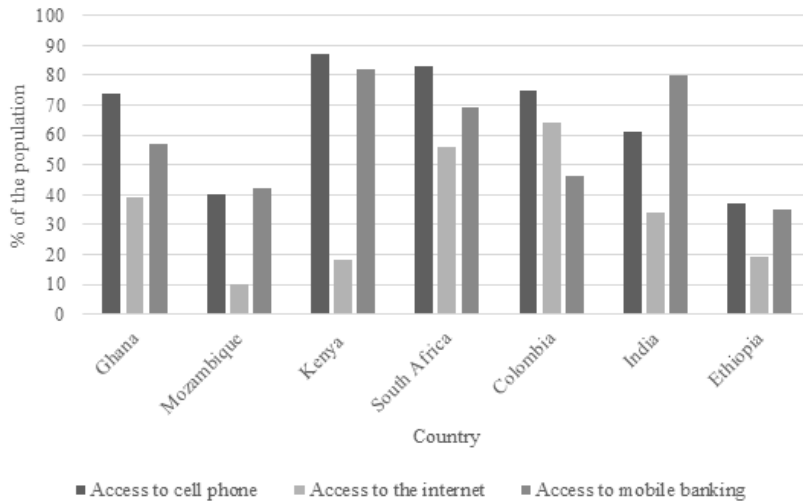


Figure 4: Access to New Technologies. Source: Castel-Branco *et al.*, 2020.

The situation worsened with the arrival of Covid-19. Clearly the impact of the pandemic has been devastating on the lives and livelihoods of working people. The high proportion of informal workers in sub-Saharan Africa – estimated at 80 % – has made the impact of Covid-19 especially harsh⁴. If you are, for example, a street trader and you can no longer make an income on the street, you face hunger and deepening poverty. Covid-19 has revealed the weakness – or non-existence – of an adequate social protection system in Africa.

A key question is whether the pandemic and its associated responses offer the opportunity for a revitalization of labour in Africa, or a further weakening?

Covid has brought to the fore opportunities to revitalise worker organising. We identify five.

Firstly, new technology opens up the opportunity for digital organising. This is not a substitute for face-to-face organising, but online organising can reach a much larger number of people at dramatically reduced cost. However, it is important to recognise that internet penetration is very uneven in Africa. Disparities are even larger when one looks at internet usage. In South Africa, for example, it is estimated that 56% of the population has access to the internet. However, if one looks at coverage at the household level, only 11% of households have access to the internet. Although South Africa has higher levels of internet coverage than most countries on the continent, access to the internet is concentrated in a minority of

4. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 89.2% of employment in sub-Saharan Africa is informal. It should be noted that informalisation is uneven across Africa, highest in Western Africa (92.4%) and lowest in Southern Africa (40.2%).

households. The graph below compares access to digital technologies in selected countries in the global South.

Secondly, the experience of Covid-19 has broadened the demands emerging from workers. In particular, it has highlighted the global nature of the challenges they face and the need for workers to deepen international connections.

Thirdly, it has widened the constituencies of labour. There has been a major shift in the recognition of the informal economy, particularly in areas such as food production and distribution. These “essential workers” are often in sectors dominated by women workers, such as retail, hospitality and varieties of paid and unpaid care work.

Fourthly, the growth of working from home during Covid-19 opens up an opportunity for worker organising. Home-workers are workers and should be recognised accordingly. This has been recognised by the ILO as long ago as 1996 in the Home-Work Convention (n. 177). Trade unions need to recruit them as members and employers need to recognise the existence of home-based workers in their value chains and ensure they get a fair income. National governments should include home-based workers in their national statistics on the labour force and give them a voice in decision making (Delhi Declaration of Home-Based Workers. New Delhi, 9th February 2015).

Fifthly, the pandemic provides an opportunity to increase worker participation and ownership of the workplace. One of South Africa’s largest unions has developed a counter strategy to retrenchment consisting of four pillars:

- The establishment of Workplace Recovery Committees that must include managers, workers, unions, staff, and non-union members.
- Work-sharing instead of retrenchment – not for more than twelve months.
- Reskilling of workers through training programmes.
- Wage concessions and debt-to-equity swap. What the company owes can be turned into shareholding through a debt equity swap through the idea of Employee Share Ownership Schemes (Esops)

Conclusion

We have identified in this paper the emergence of a transnational network of “rooted cosmopolitans” that navigate between the local and the global. Their future is contested. On the one hand, we could see the consolidation of labour displacement, a growth in unemployment and a deepening of inequality as workers and unions turn inwards and increasingly xenophobic. On the other hand, we are presented with a situation similar to that in post-war Europe, which precipitated an egalitarian mo-

ment which led to significant advances in the de-commodification of education, health and transport through the Keynesian welfare state. The period also saw significant advances in human rights, beginning with the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and major transformations in the rights of women.

But Africa, as with much of the global South, is different in important ways from Europe and the rest of the global North, most notably due to higher levels of informality, a serious public debt issue, a deep digital divide, and a lack of capacity in the state. This has implications for the impact of the pandemic and the structure of the responses. In particular, the ability of the state to coordinate and implement redistributive projects is very different to that in the global North.

The pandemic and the associated lockdowns imposed by states restricting everyday movement, have already had a dramatic impact on union activity. The usual organisational contact meeting has been replaced by various online platforms. Participation in these meetings is determined by the individual's ability to access sufficient data, but it has also limited collective decision-making. GLU had to shift its short courses online (with the 2020 Engage course was held via the Zoom platform in March and April 2021, and the 2021 postgraduate students, too, receiving their lectures online). More pressingly, Francis, Valodia and Webster (2020) show that the Covid-19 pandemic has deepened already existing high levels of inequality in South Africa, which, to be sure, have been replicated in other countries around the world.

Despite these very real constraints, the current moment offers some important opportunities. Already, some policy responses which have been implemented on a wide scale would, until very recently, have been dismissed as utopian. For example, the South African government agreed to implement a grant to workers in the informal economy and to the unemployed – while rollout has been disappointing, the idea of such a basic income grant would not have been entertained in a pre-Covid South Africa. If we are to achieve a more equitable and egalitarian society, labour has to take advantage of this moment to introduce new ways of organising and deepen the regional solidarity network of transnational activists described in this paper.

We argue for a renewed focus on the centrality of labour to overcoming the economic, political and ecological challenges thrown up by the present order of neoliberal capitalist globalisation. We identify the necessity of cross-border solidarity as a key in the struggle against the encroaching commodification of everyday life – in turn globalising worker power against capitalist globalisation. Transnational activists, like those described in this paper, can play a vital role in traversing the political, economic and geographical divides imposed on the African working class. To flourish, these networks of activists need to be grounded in viable projects of local, on-the-ground organisational building.

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Abstract

Building a regional solidarity network of transnational activists: an African case study

Drawing on a network of transnational activists, this paper argues that a new type of regional network internationalism has emerged in Sub-Saharan Africa. Initiated by the Global Labour University (GLU), through a short two-month residential course called *Engage*, it has been able over the last seven years to develop the skills for a new type of union organiser, one who understands the global context, but is rooted in their local community. This network works at forging links of solidarity across national borders and regional frontiers. Their solidarity work aims at sharing knowledge and experience between activists and worker organisations and the development of meetings and campaigns to strategize and put into action these new forms of transnational solidarity.

Keywords: Rooted cosmopolitan; Regional network internationalism; Power Resources Approach; Worker education; Covid-19.

Resumo

Construindo uma rede de solidariedade regional de ativistas transnacionais: um estudo de caso africano

Baseando-se no caso de uma rede de ativistas transnacionais, o artigo sustenta que um novo tipo de internacionalismo em rede de alcance regional tem emergido na África Sub-Sahariana. Iniciada pela Global Labour University (GLU), através de um curso de imersão com duração de dois meses chamado *Engage*, ela tem sido capaz, nos últimos sete anos, de desenvolver as habilidades para

um novo tipo de militante sindical, alguém que compreende o contexto global, mas é enraizado em sua comunidade local. Tal rede trabalha forjando laços de solidariedade entre fronteiras nacionais e recortes regionais. Seu trabalho busca compartilhar conhecimento e experiência entre ativistas e organizações trabalhistas, o desenvolvimento de reuniões e campanhas, com vistas a pôr em ação estratégias de uma nova forma de solidariedade transnacional.

Palavras-chave: Cosmopolitismo enraizado; Internacionalismo de rede regional; Recursos de poder; Formação sindical; Covid-19.

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Global economic planning as a challenge for the labour movement

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*The veil is not removed from the countenance of the social life
process until it becomes production by freely associated men,
and stands under their conscious and planned control.*

Marx, 1992, p. 173.

Recent special issues on economic planning in the academic journals *Actuel Marx* (2019) and *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2020) document a renewed interest in the topic, while the global pandemic and the climate crisis demonstrate the actual necessity of global economic planning. This contribution aims to lay out why the labour movement can have a special impact on the debate and practice on planning, and why economic planning should concern the labour movement. It is not only that the labour movement consists of large organised groups within the economy that are able to initiate and implement wider economic changes. Many of the demands and goals of the labour movement cannot be tackled without any recourse to economic planning. On the other hand, economic planning is largely absent from debates around the labour movement or in academic studies on labour.

The central line of argument in this contribution is that the urgency of the economic, social and environmental crises demands to go beyond the efforts of global trade unions to install more Global Framework Agreements or Decent Work

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Campaigns that often only come with piecemeal changes, if at all. The urgency of the current crisis also demands to go beyond green innovation in the sense of higher resource efficiency of product lines or sectors since CO₂ emissions are increasing on a global level (OECD, 2018). In other words, ecological planning across sectors and continents is on the agenda. The social uprisings in various countries around the globe that erupted in 2019 and 2020 demonstrate the emerging pressure from below towards a broader vision of systemic change.

The shift of emphasis towards Global Economic Planning opens up the following perspectives: 1. It allows to study and adapt the methods used by transnational corporations in economic planning for alternative purposes. 2. It allows to retrieve experiences made both in capitalist state planning, i.e. in the framework of industrial policy and developmental states, and in socialist state planning and to apply enhanced versions of both. 3. It allows to intervene strategically in order to exploit the potentials of renewable energy for which investment is stagnating globally since 2015. 4. It offers an avenue for the labour movement to become a reliable partner of environmental initiatives and the global climate movement. 5. It can provide an avenue for mass participation in systemic change with concrete objectives like the conversion of the automobile industry, decentralised renewable energy grids, and public and community based health and care systems.

The proponents of liberal capitalism usually deny that any planning occurs in capitalism since capitalism is allegedly based on a free market where individual entrepreneurs take decisions guided by price signals. But actually plenty of planning is going on within capitalism, but mostly according to the interests of multinational and national capital. For example, there are strategic subsidies and tax breaks by states for a number of economic sectors across the world, and energy and water provision is often planned along with investment in large industrial projects. Plus, spending in defense, security and surveillance infrastructure usually includes some form of state planning, including huge budgets and often very damaging environmental impact (Belcher *et al.*, 2020). More recently, some aspects of planning are debated again under the term industrial policy (Rodrik, 2004; Mazzucato, 2018).

Around 25 per cent of global trade takes place within multinational companies. While those companies engage in coordination among themselves only to a limited extent, they administer their internal financial and product flows, purchases and personnel policies on a global level. This demonstrates the possibility of global planning, as it is practiced inside capitalist enterprises, including illicit or doubtful practices like the use of tax havens, transfer pricing and other means to minimise taxation by using differences between tax regimes and concealing the market value of produced goods or of services (Shaxson, 2021). The global pandemic caused by

the proliferation of the virus that causes Covid-19 demonstrates that these global economic networks are not organised in a manner that benefits the general population. Despite of enormously advanced means of production and highly developed technologies, national orientations of governments, patent regimes and profit interests prevented the availability of vaccines, protective gear, medical equipment, drugs and other urgently needed products.

Historically, the most advanced forms of capitalist planning served as a blueprint for socialist models of planning. The Soviet Union adapted the systems of planning used in large capitalist enterprises in the 1920s and developed them in their own way, largely based on planning in one workplace or enterprise unit. When Cuba introduced economic planning in the 1960s, the country's government used methods that were used in multinational companies during this period, based on planning across enterprise units, while the Soviet Union stuck to the methods of the 1920 to a large extent. These differences in planning in Cuba and the Soviet Union led to a then famous debate between planners from both countries (Dupuy & Irchik 1978; Roca, 1986; Zimbalist, 1987).

It is in the same way that socialist economic planning can evaluate and adapt parts of capitalist planning today. The ideological challenges consist in the fact that many social movements and progressive institutions today focus on piecemeal changes, and especially the labour movement at the level of global union federations develops an increasing focus on agreements with multinational corporations as instruments of labour regulation. In contrast to this stands the global environmental movement which is asking for rapid, urgent and fundamental change, as well as the wave of popular uprisings that is rocking the globe since 2019 in Algeria, Sudan, Haiti, Chile, Ecuador, Thailand, Belarus, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and many other countries. The urgency of the global environmental and health crisis, and the enormous economic restructuring during and in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis with massive losses of jobs, social security and income for the global working class present an opportunity for the global labour movement to re-enter into the scene with a broad agenda, which can turn it into an attractive partner for other progressive movements. The debate around "essential work" during the early phase of the Covid-19 crisis shone light on the fact which parts of the economy are of special importance for the vast majority of the population and that exactly those essential workers are usually underpaid and work under conditions that lead to sickness and bodily strain (Cook *et al.*, 2020). Both the problems faced by national health systems during the pandemic, and the fact that the climate crisis got out of hand demonstrate that another type of planning with different priorities is necessary in order to reduce emissions and protect the health of populations. Voluntary obligations of governments that were agreed

upon at the Paris climate summit in December 2015 to restrict global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius did not work until now, since emissions keep growing (IPCC, 2018).

The main challenge at this point is to break the ideological deadlock of a focus on so-called market solutions which are today the actual existing forms of planning, guided by international organisations, financial institutions and corporate headquarters (Hudson, 2021). A focus on alternative global economic planning as something that can be exercised by trade unions and social movements can have the effect of establishing a new reference point for social movements and progressive politics in a period of profound social crisis. Apart from the urgency to address poverty, ecological collapse and the general social crisis caused by the pandemic, such initiatives in favour of global economic planning would open a new page and present the labour movement as a force to be reckoned with.

In the following, I will outline why global economic planning is an urgent agenda for the labour movement today, in a post-Covid-19 and post-climate change conjuncture. In a first part, I will demonstrate why economic planning is key for a response to the current post Covid-19 wave of corporate restructuring that comes with millions of job losses around the globe. Second, I will outline why ecological responses to the climate crisis require global economic planning. In a third part, I will highlight challenges and unresolved problems regarding economic planning and which historical debates and experiences mark signposts for future avenues into economic planning.

Planning and post-Covid-19 corporate restructuring

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented wave of dismissals and job losses, exemplified by large companies shedding thousands of jobs. The airline industry was especially affected, with Boeing shedding 12.000, Airbus 15.000 and Lufthansa 39.000 jobs since March 2020. But also the automobile industry, in transition to the production of electric cars which need less labour power, was hit: Nissan cut 20.000 jobs, Renault 15.000 and tire company Continental 30.000 jobs since the outbreak of the pandemic. But also German Commerzbank announced a cut of 10.000 jobs in early 2021 (all numbers from the European Restructuring Monitor).

These numbers just give a first impression what labour markets around the world are facing, with enormous salary losses, which are much more pronounced in developing countries, and considerable inflation of food prices on various continents. In 2020, 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost, equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs, resulting in a labour income loss of 4.4 per cent relative to 2019, before income support (ILO, 2021). This income loss was strongest in the Americas with

10.3 per cent, and lowest in Asia and the Pacific with 6.6 per cent (ILO, 2021, p. 15). In the US, loss in income after benefits, was on average 9 per cent; in the UK, 3 per cent; in Brazil, 21 per cent, and in Peru, 56 per cent. Total global employment decline in 2020 has been estimated in January 2021 at 114 million relative to 2019, and about 60 million for 2021 (ILO, 2021, p. 12).

These developments will lead to an increase in class confrontation, and once the pandemic is over, we can expect a surge in labour protests around the world. Various scholars agree that there will be no post-Covid-19 normalisation after the pandemic due to the profound economic and social effects of the pandemic and the measures taken to contain it. For Canada and the US, early estimates show that a third of workers have lost half of their income, and in the UK 25 per cent and in China 45 per cent of workers report a similar loss of income (Bell & Blanchflower, 2020). In India alone, 170 million workers have lost their job due to the lockdowns imposed in March and June 2021 (Singhi & Tagat, 2020; Miyamura, 2021). These job losses affect primarily workers in the private service sector, and in some areas of production, while office workers are much less affected. Thus, there is much polarisation within the working class in terms of the effects of the pandemic-induced economic crisis.

But polarization between groups of companies is increasing, too. Michael Roberts hints at the fact that total corporate profits have dropped 30 % since the beginning of the pandemic (2021). Thus, while Big Tech made higher profits than before the pandemic, this is not the general picture. The concentration of wealth has increased enormously during the pandemic, which implies that some players are losing out. The phenomenon of zombie companies who are unable to pay their debt has become endemic:

[...] according to Bloomberg, in the US, almost 200 big corporations have joined the ranks of so-called “zombie” firms since the onset of the pandemic. They now account for 20% of the top 3000 largest publicly-traded companies, with debts of \$1.36 trillion. That means 527 of the 3000 companies didn’t earn enough to meet their interest payments! (Roberts, 2021).

If this corporate debt pile cannot be dealt with in some way, a new banking crisis is at the horizon. In other words, workers are facing a new world of more insecurity, rising prices, falling wages, and probably a wave of bankruptcies of some of those zombie companies. Many of the changes in corporate restructuring might have been in the drawers of managers already, ready to be launched during the next crisis, or might have been propelled by digitalisation anyway. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated those processes, increasing the reserve army of labour, but also affects other sectors like the airline industry, tourism, cinemas and the hospitality sector

in addition, as a direct consequence of the pandemic. Thus, for the world of labour the pandemic presents the perfect recipe for disaster.

The labour movement which has seen a timid revival in the past ten years or so, without yet gaining enough ground in order to consolidate the achievements made, is facing a struggle of life and death with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Such a challenge can also provide a chance to prove itself as an actor that is able to adapt and respond to unexpected circumstances.

The first measures of global planning to confront the adverse effect of the pandemic on labour would consist in massive government investment in the public health, care, transport and education sectors, creating jobs and incomes, future perspectives, and recreating a public infrastructure that has seen much cuts and retrenchment in the past years or has never existed in a comprehensive manner in many countries. A much greater amount of social labour will have to be devoted to care work in order to fulfil unmet needs and to socialise labour which is to a large extent provided as unpaid labour by women. At the same time, it would be necessary increase taxation of large corporations and rich individuals, fight tax evasion, and to nationalise private banks in order to finance the comprehensive public sector.

A comprehensive public sector can only be one element of such a strategy. A second element would be to implement sweeping changes in private workplaces. Existing workplaces will be divided between all workers via a shortening of the working time to 30 hours a week. Given that two thirds of all workplaces globally are informal ones, and a good number of them in home-based industries or as domestic workers in households, both difficult to access from the outside, any effective regulation of the length of the working week will be an enormous challenge and only be feasible if the urge of planners is accompanied by mass mobilisation which is effectively making sure that measures are implemented¹.

For sure, many of these demands and ideas have been launched before by various organisations and initiatives. The new thing would be for organisations of the global labour movement to launch these as a united program with intersecting elements, in order to provide a reference point for social movements around the globe. For this to take effect, the program has to be sufficiently polemic, aggressive and catchy in order to grab the attention required (nobody will be interested in a considered and balanced proposal that does justice to everyone). The important and crucial issue

1. A shorter working week has also been debated as a way to reduce emissions. If all other indicators remain like today, limiting warming of the planet to 2 degree Celcius would require a 12 hour work week in Sweden, and a 5 hour work week in Germany (Frey, 2019, p. 6). This demonstrates that time reduction alone will not be sufficient to reduce emissions, and thus shifts of jobs to different sectors and changes in resource use are necessary – we will address these issues in the next section.

is that common demands are raised across continents. These can build on demands already developed, and on the various debates about industrial policy on the one hand, and on global social rights on the other hand.

To sum up, a first common demand can consist in mandatory amounts of spending for health and care, education and public transport as part of national budgets². A second demand focuses on the nationalization of banks, while a third demand sports the 30 hour week as a norm to be accomplished in order to share workplaces and avoid unemployment. No other movements or organisations or sections of society has the authority to voice these demands than actors from the labour movement like global unions federations, and international associations of informal workers, domestic workers, street sellers and slum dwellers.

Planning and the climate crisis

The global environmental movement is the most important and relevant social movement today, due to the universal significance of ecological collapse, despite the very specific and different effects it has on different groups and populations. “There is no question of waiting for ‘the conditions to be ripe’. It is necessary to provoke convergence between social and ecological struggles and fight the most destructive initiatives by powers in the service of capital” (Löwy, 2020, p. 200). Given this enormous challenge, the labour movement has been at best an oscillating and ambivalent partner of the environmental movement. Especially public sector unions and unions from the transport sector are at the forefront of engagement for ecological politics, often under the label of a just transition, but the same cannot be said about many unions from industrial sectors such as the chemical industry and the metal industry, to a large extent with strongholds in automobile, petrochemical and defense companies. An engagement of the labour movement in favour of global planning in order to work against ecological collapse can establish the labour movement as a reliable partner of the environmental movement. The environmental movement needs a more organised form of mass support that only the labour movement can provide today.

Planning with the aim to contain the climate crisis would have to determine in which areas there would be a reduction in emissions and how this will be implemented, coming with a phasing out of brown industries and growth of green industries

2. Some countries, like Brazil, already have such regulation, stipulating fixed percentual amounts of the budgets of federal states and communal districts that go to health and education. In Brazil the underlying problem, apart from a spending cap introduced in 2017, is rather the tax base, since agrobusiness pays lower taxes and the tax system is extremely regressive.

(Guarini & Oreiro, 2021). For example, there would be more production of vehicles for public transport and equipment for renewable energy, and less production of automobiles and less coal mining and meat production. In general, a significant amount of conversion from manufacturing to care and personal services would be necessary, and therefore also a transfer of labour power from one sector to the other.

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that these are processes which would set limits to the interests of some sections of workers to stay in their existing job. Also in a socialist society such a process of conversion would lead to conflicts. This is because employees in sectors that will be reduced will want to keep their jobs – for example, because their workplace is close to home, because they established social networks and friendships at the workplace or due to qualifications that have been acquired over many years. Thus, there is a contradiction between the immediate interests of the workers of some sectors and the transition to an ecologically sustainable society. It would be up to the organisations of the labour movement to underline the priority of conversion over sectorally specific interests of the working class.

Apart from conversion of some industries and the disruption of existing pathways of production and consumption (Eder & Schneider, 2018), changes in the structure of cities, housing and settlement policies would be a further element of global economic planning: Shorter distances from home to work contribute to diminish CO₂ emissions and overall energy use. Especially in developed countries, commuting times and distances increased immensely in the past 20 years, a development which is partly fuelled by rising real estate prices in urban centres, and partly by corporate restructuring which often comes with moving workplaces to more distant locations. Those more far reaching changes will benefit workers since time spent commuting can be used in a different way, and less production and use of fuel will be necessary.

At present, investment in renewable energies would only be one sector in which the state has to intervene in order to contain climate change. Although solar energy has become much cheaper due to Chinese mass production of its installments (Stacey, 2018), there is a global increase in the investment into coal plants (and the bulk of those investments are in China, too), while investment in renewables stagnates since 2015 (Raval, 2020). In other words, there is a lack of state-led policies, means and incentives to invest massively into wind and solar power.

Apart from specific workplaces and the forms of energy provision, consumption would be affected by controversial decisions to combat climate change if planning would be introduced in a serious manner. For example, many emissions can be avoided if less products are transported from far away places. 60 per cent of the industrial production of East Asia goes to Europe and North America. A reduction of freight transport would not only include decisions which products should be imported to

a lesser extent to the centers of global consumption, i.e. imperialist core countries, in order to save on transport emissions. There are also products that only grow in certain climatic zones, like banana, mango, tobacco products, and chocolate and coffee. Apart from choices to reduce long distance transport of those items, it would also mean that demand for garments, consumer electronics or food produced for export in countries with low wages would drop drastically if imperialist core countries increase reshoring. In this case, reshoring to core countries would save on emissions for shipping and other forms of transport, but would increase unemployment and poverty in those countries that used to a significant extent produce for the Global North. It is therefore of paramount importance to increase regional economic networks that enable a self-sufficient economic development within world regions, a veritable mega challenge that cannot be tackled without any global coordination of economic planning. Any effort to reduce emissions for the transport of consumer products will face the question of imperialism, dependency and the unequal distribution of wealth. Any sudden move away from global trade networks would lead to an increase in poverty and inequality if no counter measures are taken.

Another aspect is that one third of global shipping volume is for oil and other fuels (UNCTAD, 2019, p. 7), thus changes to the fossil basis of heating, energy generations and transport would bring down transport emissions to a larger extent than changes in individual household consumption. This also confirms a look at the origin of CO₂ emissions, reinforcing the necessity of structural changes in energy generation and transport systems. The biggest amounts of CO₂ emissions originate with the generation of heat and energy (13600 million tons), in manufacturing and construction (6200 million tons) and in transport (8000 million tons, of which 6000 come from road transport, see IEA, 2019). The generation of energy and heat shows the biggest potential for emissions reduction with about a third of the total, and here coal has the biggest share, followed by oil. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions stemming from the generation of energy have been reduced about 30 per cent in the EU between 1990 and 2018, and remained stable in the US, while it saw a 50 per cent increase in Australia, Canada and Japan, a 400 per cent increase in China, and a 500 per cent increase in South Korea (OECD, 2018). GHG due to transport are the second highest amount, and they saw a 20 per cent increase in the US and the EU 28 between 1990 and 2018 and a 450 per cent increase in China. Transport is the only category that continues to see increases across all countries, with few exceptions like the UK and Germany which stabilised transport-related emissions across this period.

On an international scale, the energy related CO₂ emissions in the so-called “advanced economies”, the terminology used by the International Energy Agency (IEA), are around the same amount as they had been in 1990. But in the “rest” of

the world (again IEA terminology), emissions doubled since 1990. The wealthier economies have moved part of their production into this “rest”, and with it the emissions related to it. For this reason, it is hard to establish who is actually responsible for this increase in emissions.

It would certainly be desirable to establish an equal per capita use of CO₂ across countries, since it is still radically unequal between countries along the North-South axis, but also within societies. Unfortunately, such a radical redistribution of wealth and resources will not be realised in time in order to avoid a climate catastrophe. Therefore, the priority would be once again to avoid ecological collapse, at the cost of maintaining some of the existing stark inequalities between and within countries and continents. The specific role of the labour movement in sporting such an agenda would be to install the social dimension into every concrete measure taken to reduce CO₂ emissions, pollution and deforestation and to create alternative employment and alternative economic networks that replace unsustainable ones. Changes towards a post-fossil economy is coming anyway with large energy companies like BP, Shell, Equinor and Total investing massively in research on hydrogen and other alternative energy sources (Butler, 2020). Only a proactive intervention of actors from the labour movement together with its allies towards Ecological Structural Change (Guarini & Oreiro, 2021) can provide the opportunity to ensure that the post-fossil world will be ecologically sustainable and socially just. The current trend is going to a post-fossil world with less CO₂ emissions but tremendous pollution in other areas, especially for the mining of rare earths which are needed for some of the alternative technologies (Singh, 2020), e.g. for electric mobility, and with much less jobs and income available for the global working class - in other words, with poverty and famine. For example, the introduction of post-fossil technologies is sparking a new minerals boom, since lithium, cobalt and copper are needed for the new technologies. Mining for post-fossil technologies will continue to emit greenhouse gases, increase the expulsion of populations from their territories, and severely affect communities in mining areas – and the often dangerous and unhealthy work of mining should also be a concern for the labour movement (War on Want, 2021). Only a strong intervention by actors of the labour movement can introduce the necessary elements of global planning to address the interdependencies of a transition to a post-fossil world and its social and economic impact on the majority of the global population.

Problems and challenges for economic planning

We have already mentioned some of the contradictions between ecological planning and the workplace and consumption interests of workers in the second section.

Global planning in a socialist perspective comes with a whole bunch of extremely challenging contradictions, and it is better to address those right away than to suggest that global economic planning is just a simple plan that has to be followed once set up.

I will focus on three problems in this section:

- Other than current capitalist planning which has a main aim, to enable the continuation of profit making, socialist planning is aiming towards several aims which can stand in conflict with one another, for example ecological effects of economic actions, wellbeing of workers at the workplace, and expenditure of resources for human welfare in general. Thus, progressive planning has to establish a hierarchy of needs in society, and structure plans accordingly. These are decisions that might affect different parts of the population in a different way, which is prone to lead to conflicts about priorities.
- The second difficult issue is the question of who takes decisions in the end, if there are coordinations of trade unions and social movements on the one hand, and national governments on the other hand. Any centralised institution of planning will hold so much power that it will provide incentives for the abuse of that power. On the other hand, in the absence of market discipline there will be the need for another form of discipline that guarantees that both social and ecological targets of planning are in fact implemented.
- The third issue is the speed and effectivity of decisions which will stand in conflict with a participatory debate on the goals to be implemented by planning. Both poverty and social inequality are urgent needs to be addressed, and the ecological crisis comes with even more urgency. But democracy and popular participation require time.

I will address the three issues one after one, and will draw in part on the writings of German socialist Otto Neurath, who is at times credited to have been at the origin of the socialist calculation debate in the 1920s, and on the works of contemporary scholars who debate the ideas of Neurath in the light of ecological economics (Martinez-Alier, 1995; O' Neill, 2002; Uebel, 2005).

The first issue concerns the challenge to address multiple aims at the same time, and weigh them against each other. The fact that those aims are incommensurable was one of the central arguments of Neurath against the critique of his writings by Ludwig von Mises who claimed that economic decisions would have to be based on market prices in order to be rational (1935, p. 104). Neurath had analysed the war economies during World War I which allowed national states to organise production targets with a high efficiency. Another reference point for Neurath were public sec-

tor institutions like schools and hospitals which at this time were mostly organised according to some government estimation of needs for education and health, and not based on market imperatives and price signals.

For even in the past one has not started from units of teaching or sickness in order to decide whether new schools or hospitals should be built; rather one directly set over against one another, even if only at general outlines, the totality of changes caused by schools and those caused by hospitals (1919/1973, 145f).

Health and education are in this sense incommensurable concerns that can not be rationally weighed against each other, and in later writings Neurath introduces the limits of natural resources, and the health of coming generations as other such incommensurable issues.

The question may arise, should one protect coal mines or put greater strain on men? The answer depends for example on whether one thinks that hydraulic power may be sufficiently developed or that solar heat might come to be better used etc. If one believes the latter, one may “spend” coal more freely and will hardly waste human effort where coal can be used³ (Neurath, 1928/1973, 263).

Thus, Neurath asks why, if the public sector, which also includes the police, military, courts and prisons, and various administrations, is able to organise these institutions with differing, but in some way complementary targets, why should society at large not be able to organise production and services in the same way? Joan Martinez-Alier builds on Neurath’s ideas on incommensurability and develops them further: “Incommensurability means that there is no common unit of measurement, but it does not mean that we cannot compare alternative decisions on a rational basis, on different scales of value, as in multi-criteria evaluation” (1995, 74f).

It is a commonplace that budget debates on how much should be spent on health, social welfare, defence etc. are one of the centres of parliamentary strife, and the fact that budgets are debated in parliament is generally seen as one of the core characteristics of democracy. Similar debates and decisions can in fact be held and taken about the frameworks of national economies, as we can see with the current plans to phase out coal and fossil fuel based transportation. Thus, it is not impos-

3. It was with reference to this line of argument that Neurath rejected the widespread idea in socialist economics at the time to use the number of labour hours spent as a common unit of measurement: “How could a quantity of electricity which a river provides us with be entered as an increase in amounts of labour units? Or the increase in wind power used in the running wind mills?” (Neurath, 1925/2004b, 468).

sible to plan economies with various and potentially conflicting targets in mind. For progressive planning today, issues of ecological sustainability and of conditions of work and welfare will have to be balanced. In general, the ecological concerns will have to be prioritised, but minimal conditions in the dimension of welfare and work will have to be guaranteed. In this way, profit-making would be removed from the centre of economic targets set by governments, and replaced by various alternative targets, without removing profit-making from society overall.

The second issue of who takes decisions based on which inputs and how to guarantee discipline and the implementation of targets is much harder to resolve, and probably the most difficult one. The difficulty to replace market discipline with an alternative incentive was at the center of the failure of the Soviet model (Filtzer, 1986; Clegg & Lucas, 2020, p. 98; Bernes, 2020, p. 58). Workers had a right to work and acquired a significant amount of control of workplaces, and basic welfare was organised on a society wide level. But the lack of clear incentives in the centrally planned economy resulted in a lack of resources for production, leading factories to stockpile and to a low quality of goods produced. Traditional systems of socialist planning in the Soviet bloc estimated average values of consumption that led to production targets for companies, origin of the infamous “ideology of tons”, and often leading to production of goods that were not needed⁴. At the same time, the extremely centralised planning procedures and opaque party structures demotivated citizens and workers to participate in social and political decision-making.

A model of global economic planning guided by the environmental and the labour movement will have to address both the issues of power and participation on the one hand, and of discipline and effectivity of implementation of planning targets on the other hand: How to avoid an over-centralisation of planning, and guarantee popular participation in the planning process? While there have to be checks and balances in order to avoid a dictatorship of the planners, decentralisation and lack of a clear decision making-structure come with the risk that the targets of ecological sustainability and the welfare of populations, including decent conditions of work, will be flouted.

Market solutions are effective in imposing discipline, but until now lack effectivity in combating climate change. While many production processes have increased their resource use immensely, the total amount of CO₂ emissions keeps rising due to a multiplication of those production processes (OECD, 2018). The same holds for

4. I owe this insight to Bernd Gehrke who developed it in Gehrke, 2020. On October 1, 1928 the “First Five-Year Plan replaced guidelines with directives”, substituting “output targets for profits as the principal enterprise objective” (Allen, 2003, p. 91). See also Mandarini & Toscano, 2020, p. 16.

the use of automobiles, whose emissions per kilometre have been reduced drastically, but with more automobiles in use on longer distances, the total emissions due to road transport are increasing, too (OECD, 2018). It is exactly this mismatch between resource-saving optimisation of specific processes and the overall increase of emissions which requires global planning, with a focus on switching to technologies that enable a long term reduction of emissions and pollution, and an overall reduction in resource use. If the right incentives are set by governments, then a transition to post-fossil economies is possible within a system which is still largely dominated by capitalist enterprises. Without coordination beyond market mechanisms this transition will occur only in a half-hearted manner and not with the speed that is required in order to avoid major ecological disasters and the social and political consequences that will accompany them.

Schemes that penalise or subsidise the use of certain technologies and production goods in terms of their resource use and polluting effects already exist and can be used on a wider scale. For example, the replacement of the use of aluminium in as many processes as possible due to the enormous energy use of the aluminium industry would be one starting point. This industry would not be profitable at all if governments around the world would not provide subsidised energy to it, in other words those governments set the wrong incentives after all.

Neurath did not really work on the question of discipline and incentives. An effective control of the action of planners would surely require an elaborate system of checks that again can be held accountable. At this point it is sufficient to mention that Neurath's scheme of economic planning involved the cooperation between four different centres with different responsibilities which are a) to design different, alternative plans, b) to apply the chosen plan to economic sectors, c) to control efficient application of plans, and d) to control the results of the directives of the plan (Uebel, 2005, p. 333).

As to the methods of planning as such, it is not required that there is a central institution of global planning. Given the continuing relevance of national states, national governments would remain the addressees of the changes. But the crucial question is how a programme for global planning would be coordinated and decided upon, so that there is a common agenda across various countries. The methods of coordination could be similar to the ones used for Global Social Forums and other similar meetings which managed to agree on common agendas. On the national level, unions and social movement organisations can adapt the global agenda to specific circumstances. The important issue would consist in a global adherence to the same agenda, and a feedback on specific regional and national experiences made with the agenda itself and also with the difficulties met in implementing the demands.

This is the point where we come to the third issue: the contradiction between speed and democracy. The ecological crisis, but also poverty, unemployment and health are issues that can hardly wait, and in some cases there will not be much deliberation, but social, political and economic pressure that will speed up some decisions. Probably regarding issues redistribution of resources to the poor majority of the global population advances will only be made due the threat of ungovernability if demands are not met. The Covid-19 crisis accelerates all dimensions of inequality, and it is in this case that we have to bet on the existing and coming contradictions to generate the pressure for sweeping changes. The most likely scenario today is a transition to post fossil economies that leads to increasing inequality and poverty, and such a development can only be avoided with proactive planning by the labour and ecological movements.

Conclusions

For the labour movement, a post-Covid-19 and post climate change approach to global planning is a unique chance to renew its political stake. In this period of escalating and overlapping crises, there a few actors able to fill up the ideological vacuum left over by failing neoliberalism. The environmental movement alone is not strong enough to initiate a change in the relationship of social forces which will be necessary to confront both the social and environmental crisis. Only a strong alliance between environmental and labour causes can stem the gigantic challenge to move the ideological barriers away to rely on solutions which are not market-based. Obviously, such calls have been made in the past, but a serious debate about global planning and the most urgent and first necessary steps toward it can unite the efforts necessary for a socio-ecological transition. Such a debate will be a process and the important trigger of such a debate would be to provide a direction and demonstrate that progressive movements are taking the initiative and do not wait for the next catastrophe to occur which can then only be a confronted in a responsive hap-hazard manner. In contrast to this, it is necessary to establish a distinct and specific plan with a long-term perspective.

In this respect, it is important to underline that global economic planning is already something that is executed by various multinational companies. At the same time, one should make clear that economic planning is neither identical with capitalist planning, nor with Soviet planning, which it is most often associated, but also not with the mostly authoritarian experiences with planning in developmental states. Planning includes to set priorities, but those priorities can be set in a democratic process of decision making, and be informed by trade unions and social movements.

Of course, none of those actors is innocent, and there are plenty of diverging interests between those actors which would have to be resolved.

At this point in time, the ideological shift towards the idea that global economic planning from below is first of all of urgent necessity, and, second, a realistic possibility, is the crucial barrier to be taken. No other agents than the global environmental and labour movements do have the adherence, competence, authority and power to exercise such a program designed to manage a social-ecological transition. National governments and political parties can be partners in this project, but without pressure from social movements these actors to easily give in to the interests of the capitalist class on which they are highly dependent. Several factions of corporate elites can also be partners in this endeavour but there will be certain corporate groups, like agribusiness and mining companies, whose stiff resistance will have to be overcome which will not be an easy process.

This moment of a profound global crisis is a moment in which ideological changes can be the key to enact overall change. Debates about a green new deal, green industrial policy, just transition, ecosocialism, cosmivision, pluriverse and ecological macroeconomics, to name just a few, are quite advanced and present all the solutions needed. What is lacking today is a blunt proposal to put those in practice, and the unanimous support by the most powerful social movements, the labour and the environmental movement, which are in themselves very diversified and plural actors.

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Abstract

Global Economic Planning as a Challenge for the Labour Movement

The central line of argument in this contribution is that the urgency of the economic, social and environmental crises demands to go beyond the institutionalist efforts to install more Global Framework Agreements or Decent Work Campaigns that often only come with piecemeal changes, if at all. The social uprisings in various countries around the globe that erupted in 2019 and 2020 underline the emerging pressure towards a broader vision of systemic change. The shift of emphasis towards Global Economic Planning opens up the following perspectives: 1. It allows to study and adapt the methods used by transnational corporations in economic planning for alternative purposes. 2. It allows to retrieve experiences made both in capitalist planning, i.e. in the framework of industrial policy and developmental states, and in socialist planning and to apply enhanced versions of both. 3. It allows to intervene strategically in order to exploit the potentials of renewable energy for which investment is stagnating globally. 4. It offers an avenue for the labour movement to become a reliable partner of environmental initiatives and the global climate movement. 5. It can provide an avenue for mass participation in systemic change with concrete objectives like the conversion of the automobile industry, decentralised renewable energy grids, and public and community based health and care systems.

Keywords: Planning; Socialism; Climate change; Imperialism; Energy.

Resumo

Planejamento econômico global como um desafio para o movimento dos trabalhadores

A linha central do argumento nesta contribuição é que a urgência das crises econômica, social e ambiental exige ir além dos esforços institucionalistas para instalar mais Acordos Marco-Globais ou Campanhas de Trabalho Digno. As revoltas sociais em vários países do globo que eclodiram em 2019 e 2020 sublinham a pressão emergente no sentido de uma visão mais ampla da mudança sistêmica. A mudança de ênfase para o Planejamento Econômico Global abre as seguintes perspectivas: 1) Permite estudar e adaptar os métodos utilizados pelas empresas transnacionais no planejamento econômico para fins alternativos. 2) Possibilita recuperar experiências feitas tanto no planejamento capitalista, ou seja, no quadro da política industrial e dos estados de

desenvolvimento, como no planejamento socialista, e aplicar versões melhoradas de ambos. 3) Permite intervir estrategicamente a fim de explorar as potencialidades das energias renováveis para as quais o investimento está a estagnar globalmente desde 2015. 4) Oferece uma via para que o movimento laboral se torne um parceiro fiável das iniciativas ambientais e do movimento climático global. 5) Pode proporcionar uma via para a participação em massa na mudança sistêmica com objetivos concretos, como a conversão da indústria automóvel, redes descentralizadas de energias renováveis, um sistema de saúde público e comunitário, entre outros.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento; Socialismo; Mudança climática; Imperialismo; Energia.

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The globalization of Just Transition in the world of labour

The politics of scale and scope

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One of the most visible successes of global labour over its history has been the placement of just transition at the center of global climate politics through its inclusion in the Paris Agreement of 2015 (Rosemberg, 2020). This can be considered as both a turning point in the development of global labour environmentalism and a surprising one. It is a turning point because it mainstreamed one of the most proactive strategies developed by labour. During the last several years just transition language has been adopted by a variety of stakeholders while think tanks are producing a plethora of studies and proposals (Stevis, Morena & Krause, 2020). It is surprising because by the time just transition rose on the agenda of global labour (2006-2007) it had fallen into decline within its country of origin – the USA – and was, in fact, strongly opposed by most unions there. Ever since, a network of visionaries within global and select national unions managed to nurture just transition to its present centrality in global climate and labour politics with many hopes being placed on the upcoming Glasgow COP to turn it from a vision to an operational part of global climate governance.

There are many angles from which to examine just transition. For example, how far has it been adopted by governments, corporations or civil society? Or what kinds of just transition have various stakeholders adopted? How do various kinds of just transitions fuse the social and the ecological (Stevis & Fellli, 2015; Ciplet &

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Harrison, 2019). In this article I will focus on the diffusion of just transition within the world of labour. How broadly has just transition permeated the world of labour since it became a central strategy of the Ituc in 2006? First, what is the *scale* of just transition's adoption? Has it been adopted by many unions around the world? Are there some patterns in that diffusion and what are the likely explanations and implications of these patterns? Second, what is the *scope* of just transition within the world of labour? Has it moved beyond climate and energy into other environmental transitions? Has it moved beyond environmental transitions? What are the likely explanations and implications of any patterns and developments? Is broadening the breadth of just transitions desirable and how should it take place?

In the first part of the paper I clarify the scale and scope of just transitions -their breadth- and comment on their political implications, individually and combined. This will be followed by a mapping of the politics of scale and scope of just transitions, identifying patterns and elaborating on causes and dynamics. I will close by commenting on the expansion of the desirability and challenges of expanding the scope of just transitions.

The politics of scale and scope

Many years ago Raymond Williams warned against 'militant particularism', i.e., the examination of a campaign or event outside of its broader context (Harvey, 1995). This becomes all the more problematic if that event has negative impacts upon other places and people who are connected via global divisions of labour, whether manifested in commodity chains or production networks (Gough, 2010). A just transition for coal workers in Australia, for instance, may be purchased through the exportation of coal to India or other countries. Or, campaigns for labour rights may be limited to particular categories of workers, marginalizing weaker groups. For example, the USA National Labor Relations Act of 1935 – the cornerstone of US industrial relations- purposefully excluded farmworkers and domestic workers, largely African-American or Latinx, as well as subcontractors. In short, it is important to pay attention to the scale and the scope of a proposal or policy, in our case just transition.

Scale refers to the spatial and temporal reach of a proposal, practice or policy. Is it local, national or global? Is it short or long term? Scalar politics is particularly contested when there are multiple levels of governance and power at play with their own jurisdictional rights and historical dynamics. Why is there a just transition policy in the state of Colorado, USA, but not a national one? Why does the national just transition policy of Canada not include the main product of the Alberta Province –

oil from tar sands? And why does Scotland have a just transition initiative but not the UK? As various analysts have pointed out scales are the result of institutional paths as well as strategic choices (Bulkeley, 2005; Sassen, 2005; Holifield, Porter & Walker, 2009; Bridge *et al.*, 2013) and have constitutive implications for social relations.

By scope I refer to who or what is covered by the proposal, practice or policy. Is it only some of those affected or all of them? The scope or inclusiveness of policies is equally contested (Stevs & Felli, 2020). The USA National Labor Relations of 1935, mentioned above, did not ‘forget’ to include farmworkers and domestic workers, mostly African-American. Rather, it did so as the price for support by racist Southern states. Why is just transition mainly connected to climate change and energy? Why not toxins or occupational health and safety, as it was at its origins? The scope of a policy is also a significant political issue, particularly as jurisdictional scales and methodological nationalism sever people that work within the same commodity chains and production networks (Young, 2006; Wimmer & Schiller, 2002).

It is not only in themselves that these dimensions are important. Equally important are their intersections. A policy may be national, as is the case with Canada’s just transition, but limited to one fossil-fuel. And within that fossil-fuel it may privilege formal workers and marginalize subcontractors as well as those working further along the supply chain and communities (Mertins-Kirkwood & Deshpande, 2019). On the other hand a policy may be narrow in scale – let us say cover a city or a state- but affect a much wider swath of stakeholders (Hughes & Hoffman, 2020). The growing trend towards ‘smart cities’ is an example of particular places trying to improve their local conditions and place within the world economy through selective inclusion and gentrification that dispossesses the poor, in order to attract leading industries (Datta & Odendaal, 2019).

A warning is necessary here. A proposal or policy may be global in scale and comprehensive in scope. Does that tell us what its social purpose is likely to be? Social security and labour laws that are national in scale and comprehensive in scope have been adopted by authoritarians and fascists in order to contain and weaken the *voice* of radical socialists. Financialization is one of the most global and comprehensive dynamics but the *choices* it allows are neither egalitarian nor ecological. In this article I focus on scale and scope with the clear understanding that they are not technical issues and that they reflect particular voices and choices. A number of analysts, including this author, have pointed out the different political approaches towards labour environmentalism and just transitions (Räthzel & Uzzell, 2012; Felli, 2014; Stevis & Felli, 2015; Sweeney & Treat, 2018; Just Transition Research Collaborative 2018). While the variability in the social purpose of just transitions is in the background it is not developed further in this article.

The scale of Just Transitions

As used here the scale of just transition within the world of labour varies in two ways. First, in terms of the spatial or temporal scale of the just transition envisioned. Second, in terms of the scale of its adoption by unions, from the global to the local. Accordingly, we may find that all unions around the world have adopted just transition but the spatial and temporal scales of their visions may vary. Stated differently, they may all focus on spatial or temporal scales that are of immediate importance to them, such as dealing with particular coal plants or mines. Such fragmentation does not necessarily result in protecting the climate because local just transitions may be purchased by particularistic policies that allow the extraction and exportation of coal.

How did the scale of just transition become associated with global climate politics? The first explicit just transition strategy was developed by the Ocaw, a small USA union, in the late 1980s and focused on chemicals and toxins and related occupational health and safety (Ocaw, 1991; Leopold, 2007). Its erstwhile Canadian branch quickly adopted the strategy and Canadian and US unionists collaborated closely. So the original scale was binational. These same unions, in collaboration with unionists from a few other countries, also moved to place just transition on the global agenda and, as a result, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (Icem) adopted the first just transition resolution (1997)¹. Chemicals and toxins, of course, remain a global issue which is largely discussed within the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), a multistakeholder forum that does not address just transition as explicitly as climate negotiations.

During that same year the Kyoto Protocol propelled climate change to the forefront of global labour politics. How did that happen? Early on a number of farsighted unions, such as the Ocaw and Steelworkers in the USA, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) in Spain and continental European unions, realized the significance of climate change for workers and work. Belgian unions and environmentalists, for instance, formed *Arbeid en Milieu* as early as 1987 (for more cases of early labour environmentalism, see Barca, 2012). In the USA the first connection between climate change and just transition was developed from 1996 on in the course of deliberations between unions and environmentalists, an initiative of the AFL-CIO. In 1997 the representative of global unions made a statement at the COP that included just transition. After the AFL-CIO publicly rejected the Protocol, in 1997 as well, the global labour comments at the various COPs stopped referring to just transition,

1. Icem became part of IndustriALL in 2007.

focusing on the promise of green growth. In fact, much of the work of global unions focused on the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development (Gereluk & Royer, 2001; Silverman, 2006). However, while just transition went into a rapid decline in the USA it had already been picked up by Canadian unions who collaborated closely with the Ocaw, UK unionists, as well as the Comisiones Obreras and a few other unions in the industrial world (Trades Union Congress, 2008; Hampton, 2015; Rosemberg, 2017, 2020). The strategy was discussed at the January 2006 Trade Union on Labour and the Environment (Unep, 2006 and 2007) while the 2007 conference in Bali may be considered as a turning point because the US delegation was enlarged to include unionists interested in climate policy and not opposed to just transition (interviews). These unionists, in collaboration with the Ituc representative, were instrumental in starting the process that eventually led to including Just Transition in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

One can argue that the existential threat of climate change was the reason behind this choice but that is a partial explanation. In fact, then and now, some unions attend the climate COPs to prevent policy. Rather, this choice was a strategic one and reflected the work of labour environmentalists as well as a shift in the priorities of key manufacturing unions that were concerned about the impacts of climate changes on their membership, had developed environmental sensibilities and saw climate policy as an opportunity rather than a death knell (interviews). In short the emergence of climate and energy as the primary focus of global unions has to do both with the significance of climate change and the strategic shift of key unions.

As international relations scholars have argued venue-choices are strategic choices. And, in this and other cases, choosing a venue with great visibility enhances the ability of an otherwise weak network to exert influence back home (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Fifteen years later this 'boomerang effect' has certainly motivated many national unions to consider just transition. In fact, it has gone well beyond that in generating the broader adoption of just transition by social forces with distinctly different priorities and views.

Throughout these years, global union organizations and their national allies worked to spread labour environmentalism and just transition throughout the world. A critical actor in this effort was Sustainlabour, a labour NGO created by the Comisiones Obreras in 2004 and supported throughout its existence by Unep (Martin Murillo, 2013). The creation of Sustainlabour was consistent with the CCOO's earlier turn towards labour environmentalism (Gil, 2013). From the very beginning it sought to nurture a labour environmentalism that was not limited to the Global North. During 2005, for instance, it organized regional conferences in Latin America and Africa, while the first global trade union conference on the

environment took place in Nairobi in January of 2006 and addressed labour environmentalism and just transition along a number of central themes (Unep, 2006, pp. 7-8). The momentum from that meeting most likely contributed to the inclusion of the environment in the Ituc's constitution. Subsequently global unions focused their attention on climate COPs with just transition as a central goal (for more see Rosemberg, 2010; 2017; 2020; interviews). From then on the various COPs became a gathering ground for global unionists while Sustainlabour continued its work to globalize labour environmentalism and just transition, including the second Trade Union Conference in conjunction with Rio+20 (2012). From its inception through its closing in 2016, Sustainlabour, in collaboration with the Ituc, Unep and the ILO, played a critical role in promoting labour environmentalism and just (e.g., Renner *et al.*, 2008; Sustainlabour & Unep) joined by the ITF, IndustriAll and PSI amongst Global Union Federations. Since its inception in 2017 the Just Transition Centre has continued efforts to diffuse just transition, largely in the Global South but also the USA, through workshops, projects and reports, often in collaboration with labour NGOs and think tanks funded by national unions and parties. As a result of the work of all of these actors thousands of unionists in both the Global North and the Global South have been exposed to labour environmentalism and just transition. The adoption of just transition strategies by national unions, however, has been much slower and uneven.

As we look closer at the Global North it becomes apparent that very few national centres have adopted actionable just transition programs while in those countries in which some sectoral unions have adopted the strategy, others have not or are opposed to it. Amongst the leaders in adopting just actionable just transition programs are the CCOOs, the Canadian Labour Congress and Etuc. On the other hand major centres, such as the AFL-CIO and Rengo, have not adopted just transition platforms while others have done so tentatively. This may be explained by the fact that these are often weak confederations that have limited power over their affiliates. Even more so, very few sectoral unions, especially in the fossil-fuel economy, have adopted a just transition strategy and, frequently, it may be a local chapter that does so. One of the local unions of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (USA), for instance, negotiated a just transition agreement for the closure of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant but the national union is both in favor of continuing nuclear power and coal plants and opposed to just transition. The Canadian Labour Congress has not been able to persuade its affiliates, however, to support just transition from tar sands oil or nuclear power. In the case of Europe, the support of just transition by the ccoo, the Etuc and some other unions, as well as the coal transition in Germany also create the impression that there is a wave towards just transition in the continent.

That is not the case in Eastern Europe, however, not even universally supported within leading countries, such as Spain. Overall, then, while the strategy of just transition emerged in the Global North, and has been supported by unions in the Global North, it does not enjoy consensus. In fact, a lot of the opposition, as well as support for weak and slow just transitions, comes from unions in the Global North.

Even so, just transition agendas are still less common amongst unions in the Global South even, though, many unionists from the Global South became familiar with the strategy as early as the middle of the first decade through the work of Sustainlabour and the Ituc, including the labour gatherings at climate COPs. This continued during the second decade with the Just Transition Centre replacing Sustainlabour in 2017. The regional arms of the Ituc provide an active venue for the discussion of climate change, other environmental issues and just transition. For instance, Ituc-Africa has an active climate group and organized a Just Transition Consultative Meeting (22-24 May, 2018) to discuss just transition in the African context with the participation of unionists from 12 countries. The Trade Union Confederation of the Americas has been even more active and has made just transition a central part of its Platform for the Development of the Americas (Anigstein & Wyczykier, 2019; Tuca, 2020).

Some early engagements with the strategy took place in Argentina and South Africa and unions in both countries continue to support it, despite difficult developments in the South Africa (Union to Union, 2020, pp. 27-30). More recently unions in Colombia (Union to Union, pp. 38-40), Brazil (Ituc, 2019, p. 14) Nigeria (Just Transition Centre, 2019, pp. 9-10, and Union to Union, 2020, pp. 36-37), Philippines (Union to Union, 2020, pp. 30-32), Bangladesh (Union to Union, 2020, pp. 32-35) India (Just Transition Centre, 2017, pp. 13-14; Union to Union, pp. 40-42; Roy *et al.*, 2019) and a few other countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, have also engaged the strategy. There is also research about just transitions around the world that seems to identify the need for and opportunities for just transition (see Hirsch *et al.*, 2017; TUDCN, 2019 which also provides information for some of the cases above as well as additional ones).

In general, then, the strategy of just transition is fairly widely known within the world of those labour union leaders and activists that participate in or follow global labour politics. However, few unions in the Global South have developed and adopted just transition agendas. In some cases this may be due to lack of resources but that is not an explanation for unions in the industrial and industrializing world – as well as energy unions in the less industrial world. An equally plausible explanation here is opposition to the transition from fossil fuels, itself. Another important reason, as we will see below, may be that the focus on energy excludes workers and unions in other

sectors of importance to the Global South, such as agriculture, forestry or mining. The limited diffusion of just transition through the Global South, however, does not mean that it is popular and well developed in the Global North. So, it is true that the origins of just transition are to be found in the Global North and the centrality of social dialogue reflects the continental European social democratic industrial relations. Moreover, most of the projects promoting just transition, whether in labour or not, are from the Global North. In that sense it is a Global North strategy. On the other hand, the deep opposition to it by a significant number of Northern unions in the fossil fuels and the silence or opposition of similar unions in the industrializing world, suggest that political cleavages over green and just transitions are equally or even more profound.

The scope of Just Transitions

In the minds of many people, unionists or not, just transitions are associated with climate change. Even more people, including analysts, do not know that just transition was created by labour unions and that, from early on, it was intended for all workers affected by any environmental policy. In what follows I will trace the history of the scope of just transitions in order to accomplish three goals. First, to unsettle its exclusive connection in much research and media, to climate change and, even more so, fossil-fuels. Second, to affirm that its connection to climate policy and energy is privileged. Third, to explore whether and how the scope of just transition is stabilizing, narrowing or expanding.

The earliest version of a just transition policy that I am familiar with – even though it did not use the name- was adopted during the late 1970s and it had to do with workers in logging (Agee, 1980). The full development of just transition during the late 1980s and 1990s was associated with chemicals and toxics and occupational health and safety. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (Ocaw) and its erstwhile Canadian branch had been strongly affected by automation in the sector, as well as various environmental policies to minimize toxics, from the 1970s on (Ocaw, 1991). The platform of the Labor Party Advocates, created by Ocaw, called for a just transition in response to any environmental policies and as a part of a very comprehensive democratic socialist agenda (Labour Party, 1996). During the same decade just transition was also associated with the reorganization of military bases in the USA as a result of the end of the Cold War. As discussed earlier, by the late 1990s energy had surpassed chemicals as a major issue at the global policy level and, by extension, for the unions in the energy industry. While most fossil fuels unions were apprehensive and opposed, manufacturing and infrastructure unions

with environmental sensibilities so climate change as a both a challenge and an opportunity.

The impacts of climate policy on fossil fuel workers, whose numbers had already been affected by automation, is existential and attention to them is necessary. But for many analysts and unionists the connection between climate change and just transition is exhausted at the edge of fossil-fuel energy. The rationale is that a just transition policy will motivate the frontline² workers in that sector to accept the shutting down of their industries. Even if we accept this narrow scope there is good evidence that a just transition from coal cannot be limited to those workers directly extracting coal or running coal-fired plants – let us call them frontline workers (Mertins-Kirkwood & Deshpande, 2019; Just Transition Listening Project (JTLP, 2021). Its scope must be expanded to include all ancillary workers, including those along the supply chain, as well as whole communities depending on these activities. In short, the scope of a coal transition can be narrower or broader. A narrower scope will end up transitioning very well paid, mostly male workers in both the North and the South, leaving behind the most vulnerable amongst them. Those left behind can very well be turned against unions by capital and conservative politicians but there is very good reason to believe that such resentment will take place on its own, whether in coal or other fossil fuels (JTLP, 2021).

The broader focus on the uses of energy will bring into the mix workers and communities in fossil-fuel based industries, such as transportation and buildings (Galgoczi, 2019; Stevis, 2019). The frontline labour force in these industries has also tended to be male – I have not seen a woman public bus-driver in Greece over my life time and only a few women taxi-drivers. However, in many parts of the world this is changing and, in any event, many of the people keeping transportation moving and buildings working are already women. Just transitions that do not take a whole-industry approach in dealing with the uses of fossil-fuels will also breed despair and resentment.

From its inception, just transition was associated with a vigorous green industrial policy (O'caw, 1991; Barrett & Hoerner, 2002). It is not the point here to discuss what an appropriate green industrial policy would look like but there are various visions (Jacobs, 2012; Tienhaara, 2014). I should note that claims that workers in the fossil fuel industry will be, automatically, employed by the renewable energy industry are misleading. Some of those workers may need support until they retire;

2. The term “frontline” refers to workers that directly do the mining or run coal plants. The pandemic has shown us that for every doctor and nurse there many more health workers without whom hospitals could not operate.

others may find employment in renewable energy; some may find employment in other industries where their skills can be applied; and still others will have to be transitioned to another industry. In all cases a just transition policy must be generous and long term. With that in mind, the scope of a just energy transition must cover renewable energy, as well. A green renewable energy sector that only hires males for the better paying jobs is not very just (Zabin *et al.*, 2016; Pearl-Martinez *et al.*, 2016). Nor is it just if it is not unionized - compared to the high unionization rates of fossil-fuel utilities in many parts of the world. Expanding the scope of just transition within renewables must also address their environmental impacts. Renewables that depend on dirty and dangerous supply chains, and do not adopt a circular economy approach, are breeding long term social and environmental harm (Mulvaney, 2014; Takeda *et al.*, 2019). Unions in a number of European countries as well as the Just Transition Centre are aware of the problematic social and environmental practices of the renewable energy sector and hopefully the connections to just transition will receive more attention. In some cases, for instance, the Danish move towards wind energy is heralded as an example of social dialogue-driven just transition. However, one of the major players in this process – Vestas – has left very bitter workers behind in the UK and remains non-union in my home state of Colorado where it has all of its North American production facilities and employs over 4,000 workers. In South Africa, the privatization of the renewable energy sector is one of the reasons why unions supportive of just transition have turned against it.

Global unions are aware of the need to broaden the environmental scope. The first Trade Union Assembly discussed just transition in conjunction with each one of its themes - climate and energy, chemicals, access to resources and services, corporate responsibility and accountability, and occupational, environmental and public health (Unep, 2006, pp. 7-8). Later work by Sustainlabour highlighted the need to focus on biodiversity as does the ILO currently. In fact, the absence of just transition with respect to biodiversity speaks volumes despite efforts by some environmental organizations to link with labour. Unjust transitions in the agricultural and forestry sectors have long been the subject of deep contestation, including in parts of the Global North (Just Transition Listening Project, 2021). The Ituc is open to a broader view of the environment even though there is no sustained focus on other issues, such as food, biodiversity or water, as there is for climate (e.g., Ituc, 2018, 2017; Carrau, Forero & Wel, 2020). This is more evident in its 2021 guide to action (Ituc, 2021). Its *Equal Times* carries many stories and opinions that address a broader set of environmental issues and perspectives. The work of the Just Transition Centre is also touching upon non-energy transitions, albeit less centrally. A recent publication by one of the labour NGOs it collaborates with, for instance, refers to just

transitions in agriculture in Nigeria and waste picking, in India (Union to Union, 2020). Tuca's approach to just transition, in fact, reflects this broadening of just transition to include sectors that are important to the Global South – as well as to the Global North. Access to clean water, for instance, has become a major issue in the USA. The spread of Covid-19 has highlighted the need for a just transition in occupational and environmental health and safety towards a safer workplace.

Despite the fact that global union organizations are active in broadening the scope of labour environmentalism and just transition they do not have comprehensive environmental worldviews or these are not readily available on their websites, e.g., in the case of ITF. An examination of formal statements as well as the websites of the various global union organizations shows that, where they deal with the environment, they largely focus on climate change or energy or specific issues of significance to the organization. It is reasonable to argue that global union federations, and all unions, will address those aspects of the environment that are of significance to their members. However, there are no developed policies on biodiversity by the Building and Workers International, toxins by IndustriALL, or the oceans by ITF. The PSI's worldwide projects in the Global South are wide in their aspirations but include only two that deal with climate and none on the environmental quality of any other public services. This does not mean that the labour environmentalists within those organizations and collaborating unions are not aware of the gaps or not trying to expand the scope. The PSI, for instance, has a pilot project on just transition and public services in the Global South. Hopefully it will expand to cover water and other public services. The ITF is actively trying to connect just transition with public transportation, also in the Global South, much of which is precarious, but male, and will be affected by decarbonization.

More recently, IndustriALL as well as the Ituc, the Etuc and other unions in the Global North have connected Industry 4.0 and sustainable industrial policy to just transition as part of their Future of Work initiative (IndustriALL, 2021a and b). This broadening of the scope of just transition is an important development and requires a more comprehensive socio-ecological platform. The need for such a broader synthesis was evident in the Etui/Etuc's February 2021 conference entitled 'Towards a New Socio-Ecological Contract.' In line with the analysis, so far, one must ask whether this approach is more appropriate for industrial and newly industrial countries. A comparison with the ILO's (2015) and, even more so, Tuca's (2020) broader vision of just transition suggests that this is the case.

An examination of the work of global union organizations and their close allies in the Global South does show that unions in these countries are pushing for a broadening of the scope of just transition to include biodiversity, agriculture and

other activities. Such pressures are generally connected to strong and active unions in those sectors. But the focus on energy is not only a North-South issue. Frontline, formal energy workers in much of the Global South are unionized and amongst the best paid workers. Focusing on climate change and, even more so, on energy, also leaves the majority of workers in the Global North outside the scope of just transition. Like scale, therefore, the examination of the scope of just transition, as it currently stands, reaffirms that there is a North-South dynamic built into it but, also, highlights that the hegemonic scope cuts across the North-South divide to privilege and marginalize workers and communities in both the Global North and the Global South.

Closing comments

Scale and scope

Despite the gaps identified global and regional union organizations and supportive national unions have been successful in shaping the global debate, within the world of labour and the world of global governance, with respect to just transition and climate change. This is a formidable accomplishment. Why have they not been able to promote the adoption of Just Transition strategies by affiliates further? The self-evident explanation is that global union organizations remain weak confederal entities (Stavis, Morena & Krause, 2020). During the last two decades a number of people within and close to global union organizations have sought to make them 'more like unions' – as in the case of Global Framework Agreements- as well as promote global agendas that could have a boomerang effect at the national level -as in the case of labour environmentalism and just transition. The slow diffusion of just transition cannot be laid at their feet as if they had the authority and resources but made poor choices. Rather, their confederal -rather than federal- nature limits their effectiveness.

There is good reason to argue that global union organizations ought to be more federal, at least with respect to climate change. More so than any other global policy, climate policy has momentous domestic and international implications in terms of its impacts on domestic and transnational policy and in terms of resources. It can be considered as a prefigurative element of a global state in the sense that there is a complex but identifiable locus of decision-making and authority. That is not the case with respect to financialization, which is even more pervasive, because there is no central locus of regulation – other perhaps than the US Federal Reserve Board and Treasury. There is a good argument to be made that stronger global union organiza-

tions will be better situated to create a stronger common policy based on what they have already accomplished with very limited resources³.

In addition to the weakness of global union organizations it is tempting to explain the slow diffusion of just transition in terms of the limited resources of many Southern countries and unions. But this explanation is less compelling when dealing with the Brics as well as unions in countries members of the G-20 or the OECD. Unions in those countries have been prominent in other fora and campaigns, are well developed politically and organizationally and many of these countries have significant resources – enough to have space programs or build nuclear reactors or host large multinationals. A blanket explanation that unions in the Global South have not adopted JT strategies because of resources or poverty requires closer examination. This may be the case for the poorest and most export dependent amongst them but not for the ones mentioned above (Rosemberg, 2015). But even in those cases, manufacturing and energy unions are amongst the stronger and more influential, where capital and states allow them to organize, and they have similar concerns about the future of fossil fuels as similar unions around the world. In short, the positionality of workers -and communities- is a factor that also modifies the dominance of North-South dynamics (Cumbers *et al.*, 2008).

Towards a Just Transition for All?

Should the scope of just transition be broadened beyond climate energy or would this dilute its impacts? Evidently climate change affects everything on earth, a fairly compelling argument. Such an approach, however, also ends up narrowing the scope of the environment and environmental harm by rendering other existential concerns heteronomous or derivative values. In practical terms this marginalizes those workers and communities directly dispossessed by agribusiness, water enclosure, automation, relocation, toxins in products that they use to make a living, and the collapse of ecosystems. It also obscures the fact that many workers and communities in those sectors benefit a great deal and, like fossil fuel workers, will resist an ecological transition, particularly an unjust one.

Yet, the mechanistic addition of environmental problems next to each other will complicate things as every separate union, each from its own ‘position’, calls for recognition. A comprehensive socioecological synthesis, however, can actually

3. This does not mean that if they were federal organizations their policies would have been better in quality. Nor does it mean that confederal organizations do not have an impact. Confederal organizations have and are being used to promote particular approaches and priorities favored by the dominant affiliates.

help identify the common drivers underlying ecological harm and the key strategies to address it. It can arguably simplify things. Gender provides an example that can help us understand that such an ambitious shift is not impossible or new - and global unions have played a leading role here. Unions that are serious about gender do not simply allow some women to join their ranks nor reserve some skills for women. Rather, they adopt a more profound commitment to both a membership that is gender-free and a society that is so. The goal of gender equality is to change the values of societies and organizations to the point where equality is taken for granted rather than being applied episodically. The same applies with respect to ethnicity, color, sexual preferences and citizenship (on gender and just transition see Women's Environment and Development Organization – Wedo, 2016).

This approach is even more appropriate with respect to the expansion of just transition beyond environmental transitions, such as Industry 4.0, sustainable industry, health care or precarity. One of the two people to first use the term recently pointed out that universal health care in the USA will also require a massive just transition for workers in the sector.⁴ The other made the case in IndustriALL's connection of Just Transition and The Future of Work (IndustriALL, 2021a). Are there any grounds on the basis of which we can avoid this expansion? In my view just transitions are necessary for all transitions but their scale and scope must be inclusive across North and South and across categories of workers and communities. Simply adding non-environmental just transitions to environmental just transitions will in fact complicate things by creating a highly fragmented set of policies. As I noted with respect to environmental transitions we need a socio-ecological synthesis. There are a number of examples of this, including the Ocaw, the CCOO, the Etuc, the ILO, Tuca, Nums and others. These syntheses are neither easy nor the same. They reflect different world views and contestations. But they are steps in the necessary direction. The starting point will have to be the realization that every social practice is environmental and every environmental practice is social. As Rätzl and Uzzell (2012, 2013) have written we are long overdue to mend the breach between nature and labour. A just transition that does not do so actively reinforces the inequalities and power relations that this breach obscures and reinforces.

4. Les Leopold in webinar on history of just transition organized by Just Transition Listening Project (July 22, 2020). At <https://www.labor4sustainability.org/just-transition-listening-project/>.

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Abstract

The globalization of Just Transition in the world of labour: the politics of scale and scope

Just Transition has become the major expression of labour environmentalism at the global level and global union organizations have played a central role. My goal in this article is to provide an analytically informed account of this trajectory. The first part of this contribution, therefore, clarifies the analytical scheme. In the second and main part I will use this analytical scheme to trace the role of global unions in the globalization of just transition within global labour. In particular I will argue that the globalization of just transition within the world of labour remains a work in progress while it reflects both North-South and sectoral dynamics. I close by commenting on the causes behind these findings and the prospects and challenges of broadening just transition. Keywords: Just Transition; Global unions; Labour environmentalism.

Resumo

A globalização da Transição Justa no mundo do trabalho: políticas de escala e de escopo

O artigo trata da chamada “transição justa” enquanto principal expressão do ambientalismo trabalhista em nível global, e mostra como as organizações sindicais internacionais têm desempenhado um papel central nessa discussão. O objetivo da contribuição é fornecer um relato analiticamente informado dessa trajetória. Em sua primeira parte, esclarece o esquema analítico utilizado; na segunda e principal parte, emprega tal esquema para traçar o papel dos sindicatos globais na globalização da “transição justa”. Em particular, argumenta-se que a globalização da “transição justa” no mundo do trabalho continua sendo um processo em andamento, na medida em que reflete tanto as dinâmicas Norte-Sul quanto as setoriais. Conclui-se com um comentário sobre as causas por detrás desses achados, bem como sobre as perspectivas e desafios para ampliar a “transição justa”.

Palavras-chave: Transição Justa; Sindicatos globais; Ambientalismo trabalhista.

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Conditionality and trade union action in the promotion and defence of workers' rights

The Spanish case

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Introduction

It is well known that defining the concept of “conditionality” is a challenging task, given the plural nature of this phenomenon. In fact, the definition will depend on the origin of the person who studies it and the context in which it operates. Nowadays, it is possible to affirm that there is neither a consensus nor even an agreement among economists, sociologists, social science researchers in general, or legal scholars on how to define it (Kock, 2015, p. 98). However, and for the purpose of this work, the reflections presented in the following pages refer to how trade union action in Spain may have been influenced by the conditions established by the European Union (EU) for Spain to access EU financial aid, both during the Eurozone crisis (2010-2013) and during the current Covid-19 pandemic (2020).

In the case of Spain, conditionality is based on a series of parameters that differ from the ones used for other EU member states, such as Greece or Portugal¹. During the Eurozone crisis (2010-2013), the financial rescue of the above-mentioned countries was articulated through what can be described as “formal conditionality”,

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1. This differentiated treatment, depending on the States, is not strange to international practice. Thus, for example, the attitude of the International Monetary Fund when it establishes mechanisms of conditionality related to work is less intrusive in national politics when it comes to States that comply with the standards that are considered typical of a democratic country (see Caraway et al., 2012, pp. 27-61).

in the sense that the EU documents specified that the rescue was conditioned to the implementation of both social policy cuts and reforms to consolidate the liberalization of the labour market. In contrast, conditionality in Spain was initially informal – imposed through diplomatic action and political pressure – because of the political will to avoid announcing an open intervention and rescue, given the size and weight of Spain within the EU. It only acquired a more formal nature after the bank rescue operation in June 2012 (Gago, 2016, p. 47). In any case, this should not surprise us too much, since historically, and in general, the establishment of labour conditionality policies in the European Union has registered somewhat oscillating applications (Vogt, 2015, pp. 285-304).

On the other hand, the financial rescue designed by the EU to overcome the economic–health crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic had, from the beginning, a much more formal nature, as evidenced by the package of measures contained in the European Recovery Plan agreed on by the European Council on 21 July 2020. This instrument is at the origin of the Spanish law that provides the legal foundation for the Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia (Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan) of the Spanish Government, i.e., the Royal Decree-Law 36/2020, of 30 December, on urgent measures to modernize the public administration and implement the Government's Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan². This plan is the Spanish (formal) response to the formal requirements of the EU for Spain to have access to the up to EUR 140,000 allocated in the framework of the Next Generation EU recovery instrument to relaunch the economy. Those requirements include the implementation of specific legislative reforms aimed at bringing about effective changes in, above all, the country's economic functioning and labour market.

The main objective of this work is to reflect on how a situation that can be described as of political-financial conditionality has affected or modulated the way in which Spanish trade unions, particularly the most representative ones, have operated during both crises, and, ultimately, on the extent to which trade union action, in a broader sense, may have been influenced by it. The interest of this reflection lies in that, in general terms and independent of all considerations made in these pages, during the Eurozone crisis Spanish trade unions were excluded from the design of the adjustment measures, which led to theirs and other social organizations' confrontation with the Government, whereas during the Covid-19 crisis, they have, from the beginning, been acknowledged as active agents in the design of policies to overcome the crisis. This has led to their occupying a different position, at a mo-

2. *Boletín Oficial del Estado, BOE, Official State Gazette* (30 December 2020), 341: 126733-126793.

ment in which social protest movements in Spain have also changed their attitudes in the face of the crisis.

The eurozone crisis (2010-2013)

Conditionality derived from the articulation between EU and member state regulations

The EU is a supranational community with legal personality, which has its own sources of law, both material (centres with the capacity of adopting formal and compulsory mandates for all their mandataries) and formal (instruments which contain the mandates issued by the centres entitled to adopt them). The legal order, which comprises EU primary legislation (Founding, Amending and Accession Treaties) and secondary legislation (Regulations, Directives, Decisions and, with no binding power, Recommendations and Opinions), stipulates that member states can participate in the creation of norms with a direct effect on their national legal systems. In some cases (Regulations), it will not be necessary for these systems to make formal acts of reception, while in others (Directives) the transposition of those norms to national law will be required. In both cases, the purpose will be to coordinate internal norms or harmonize regulations, so that they can be applied in the geographical and functional space of the EU. At the same time, the EU legal order stipulates that the member states may encounter some obstacles to the passing or execution of their internal norms, because they have to conform to the EU coordinated or harmonized regulation. In this sense, several principles need to be taken into account, including the principle of primacy of European law, which supersedes national law in those aspects in which the two may collide, or the principle of direct effect of European law, when its transposition is not made within the period or in the terms established.

The constraints increase when conditionality is introduced, because the incorporation of EU law or action by the member states requires that specific reforms be implemented in national law, especially if it involves some kind of concession. Conditionality may, therefore, imply that the internal legislative technique used to implement the reforms departs from the usual practice, based to a greater or lesser extent on the development of social dialogue (the legal materialization of bipartite or tripartite – with the Government – agreements on labour and social protection issues), or is applied without the expected political or social consensus (i.e., the support of other political groups – possibly through their parliamentary votes –, trade unions, employers' organizations, professional associations, civil organizations, etc.). Naturally, the lack of consideration of other parliamentary representations – not necessarily constituted as opposition –, and/ or of citizen participation organizations and,

most especially, employers' organizations and trade unions in the passing of a norm may cause a reaction from these entities, whether through traditional forms of social and political response, or through new or less usual forms (emergence of new social movements, non-associative organizations, political parties, protests, etc.).

The financial crisis that broke out at the end of the third trimester of 2007 in the Eurozone, although with unequal repercussions for its member states, gave way to a situation that was favourable for the development of conditionality. This was particularly so in relation to those states where the crisis was more intense and which at some point needed, in one form or another, the financial assistance provided by the EU, graphically described with the term "rescue". Spain was hard hit by the crisis, which greatly impacted its financial and economic sphere, but also the employment and social one, and was therefore obliged to adapt its internal legal system, mostly in what respects social matters, to, on the one hand, the demands of the EU and, on the other, the irruption of new social movements and its effect on the political and social sphere.

In the period comprised between the end of 2007 and 2013, at the peak of the crisis, the unemployment rate increased by 17.86%, progressively rising from 8.23% in 2007 to 26.09% in 2013³. Total factor productivity (TFP) had been falling since the mid-1990s, a situation that continued with the introduction of the euro and throughout the crisis years, until it reached 12.5% in 2014. The per capita income differential between the Spanish and the Eurozone rates was 23.1 points in 2013⁴. In addition, inflation began to fall after 2008: 4.22% (2008), 1.43% (2009), 0.79% (2009), 2.99 (2010), 2.38% (2011), 2.87% (2012), 0.25 % (2013)⁵. In contrast, the risk premium increased from 5 and 6 points at the beginning of the crisis to 640 points in July 2012⁶.

Given the evolution of these data, the EU and its member states, especially Germany, deemed necessary to implement reforms not only to emerge from the situa-

3. The evolution during this period was as follows: 8.23% (2007), 11.25% (2008), 17.86% (2009), 19.86% (2010), 21.39% (2011), 24.79 (2012) and 26.09%. STATISTA, 2021. Retrieved from <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/500987/prevision-tasa-de-paro-en-espana/>. According to the Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA, Economically Active Population Survey) conducted by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE, National Statistics Institute (2021), the data of the fourth trimester in each of those years were: 8.7% (2007), 13.79% (2008), 18.66% (2009), 20.11% (2010), 22.56% (2011), 25.77% (2012) and 25.73% (2013). Retrieved from https://www.ine.es/prensa/epa_tabla.htm.
4. Fundación BBVA: "La productividad de la economía española cae un 10,5% desde 1995 frente al crecimiento del 4,5% que registra la EU", *Esenciales*, 33: "La productividad de la economía española en el contexto internacional", 21/02/2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.fbbva.es/noticias/productividad-economia-espanola-cae-desde-1995-frente-crecimiento-ue/>.
5. *Inflation.eu. Worldwide Inflation Data*. Retrieved from <https://www.inflation.eu/es/>.
6. *Idealista/News*. Retrieved from <https://www.idealista.com/news/finanzas/inversion/2017/07/26/747400-imagen-del-dia-asi-ha-cambiado-la-prima-de-riesgo-desde-que-estallo-la-crisis>.

tion in which the Spanish economy and labour market were already immersed, but also to prevent its intensification and impact on other members states. The Spanish Government, led by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), probably considered, despite its resistance to undertake measures that could be contrary to its ideological position, that their implementation could not be avoided and, consequently, inaction or delay were no longer options. The Government was inclined to implement those measures as soon as possible, even if it meant to depart from the formula that had been applied since the end of the 1990s, by which the agreements signed by the social partners to reform labour and social norms were transformed into laws with the corresponding legal qualifications. The Government was aware that this decision would strain its relations with the social partners, and possibly affect the governing party's electoral expectations as well. In effect, the immediate response of the trade unions to the absence of this legislative formula of compromise, based on social dialogue and also known as "weak corporatism" or "mixed market economy" (Gago, 2016, p. 49), was a call for a general strike.

This had happened already several years before, after the publication of the Royal Decree-Law 5/2002, of 24 May⁷, on urgent measures to reform the unemployment protection system and improve employability, which had been promulgated by the Spanish Government then led by the Partido Popular (PP, Popular Party). A general strike was called for June 20, 2002, one day before the Seville European Council meeting of June 21-22. The reform included a series of measures concerning unemployment benefits and dismissals that had been proposed by the Government and presented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues on April 17, 2002. In the words of the trade unions CC.OO. and UGT (organizers of the strike, to which other smaller trade unions also adhered), the Government's actions entailed, in both form and content, "the renunciation of dialogue and negotiation, which we, the trade unions, have always defended and practiced in the face of all changes and reforms affecting labour and social rights"⁸.

The first biennium of the financial crisis: 2010-2011

In the central period of the Eurozone financial crisis, the first action of the Spanish Government, led by the PSOE, when confronted with the economic consequences of the crisis, was encouraged by the EU, most particularly by some member states,

7. *BOE* (25 May 2002), 125: 18781-18795.

8. UGT-CC.OO. (16 May 2002), "Resumen de propuestas para la mejora del Empleo y la protección por desempleo", Madrid, PDF. Retrieved from http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/empleo/anexos/ccarl/35_2.pdf. All translations of quotes from Spanish into English hereinafter are by the authors.

and consisted in the introduction of a set of extraordinary measures to “accelerate, in 2010 and 2011, the deficit reduction initially envisaged”, as established by the Royal Decree-Law 8/2010, of 20 May, on extraordinary measures to reduce public deficit⁹. The measures included the reduction, in consonance with the principle of gradual implementation, by an annual 5% of the total payroll of the public sector body; the suspension of the revalorisation of pensions, except for the minimum and non-contributory ones during 2011; the elimination of retroactivity in the payment of dependency benefits computed from the application date, unless notice of the decision on the application is not issued within the six-month period established, in which case, retroactivity would be applied from that day onwards; the abolition after January 1, 2011 of the benefit of EUR 2500 for every birth or adoption; the revision of the price of medicines and the adjustment of the number of units per box to reduce the pharmaceutical expenditure, as well as other measures to guarantee the contribution of the local bodies to the social consolidation effort and to improve the supervision of their economic and financial management and of public expenditure in general. In the same spirit, before a month had passed from the publication of this norm, the Government promulgated Royal Decree-Law 10/2010, of 16 June, on urgent measures to reform the labour market¹⁰. The main objectives of this norm were “to contribute to the reduction of unemployment and to increase the productivity of Spanish economy” through reforms aimed at bridging the duality of the Spanish labour market, reinforcing labour flexibility instruments – reduced working hours rather than dismissal of the worker, for instance –, developing mechanisms for the adaptability of firms other than temporary recruitment, and increasing the employment rate, especially among the younger population, by reorganizing the benefits for permanent recruitment and improving labour mediation.

The reaction of the trade unions UGT, CC.OO. and CGT was immediate and basically translated into a call for a general strike on September 29, 2010, not so much because of the content of these reforms, but for having been excluded from the legislative process and for the abandonment of the previous dynamic of social consultation in favour of unilateralism in the creation of social norms¹¹. Nevertheless, the trade unions were probably aware that the regulation of social matters did not depend solely on national policies, but also on EU policies, and, consequently, the protest

9. *BOE* (24 May 2010), 126: 45070-45128.

10. *BOE* (17 June 2010), 147: 51662-51699.

11. This situation is not typical only of countries like Spain. Also in Portugal (May 2011), as in many other cases, the Troika imposed on this country a severe fiscal consolidation program that implied the direct intervention of the socio-economic governance mechanisms by European Commission technicians, with the consequent impact on the social dialogue in this country (Costa, 2012, pp. 397-410).

focused on the expenditure cuts and austerity measures that were being imposed as an antidote against the crisis within the EU, especially in the member states that were more sensitive to conditionality. Thus, the Spanish Government did not identify itself as the direct target of the trade unions' pressure, but as an indirect one for having assumed the policies that the EU considered appropriate to stop the financial crisis and start the path towards recovery (Gago, 2016, p. 57). For this reason, it was not surprising that, soon afterwards, on February 2 the following year, the Government and the social partners (CC.OO., UGT, CEOE and Cepyme) signed the *Acuerdo Social y Económico para el Crecimiento, el Empleo y la Garantía de las Pensiones* (Social and Economic Agreement for Growth, Employment and Guaranteed Pensions), which underlined the importance of social dialogue and the need to resume it and reinforce it for the purpose of configuring labour and social regulations. Thus, the foundations for the reform of the Social Security system were laid, particularly with respect to pensions, active employment policies and other labour-related issues, as was the agreement between, on the one hand, the Government and the trade unions on matters concerning the civil service, and, on the other, the employers' organizations and the trade unions on the reform of collective bargaining.

Nevertheless, seven days before, on January 25, 2011, the plenary session of the Congress of Deputies, had approved a "report for the evaluation and reform of the Toledo Pact", which had been drafted by the non-permanent parliamentary commission for the monitoring and evaluation of the agreements of the Toledo Pact, and which expressly pointed out that "once the recommendations are approved, their implementation is not only a task for the legislative power, but rather one in which, together with the Government, trade unions and employers' organizations are – given the labour and social security-related nature of the recommendations – relevant actors"¹². The lines of reform of the Social Security system contained in the recommendations of this report triggered the call for a general strike on January 27, 2011 made by the regional trade unions (ELA, LAB, CIG and others) in their respective territories (Galicia, Navarra, the Basque Country and Catalonia), and by the nation-wide organizations CGT and CNT¹³, but not by the larger trade unions UGT and CC.OO., which at that very moment were negotiating the above-mentioned agreement of February 2. As a result, the strike was not widely supported¹⁴. On the basis of this agreement and of the above-mentioned report, the Government finally enacted Law 27/2011, of 1 August, on the updating,

12. *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales, BOCG, Official Gazette of the Spanish Parliament*. (31 January 2011), Congress of Deputies, Series D: General, 523: 32.

13. Collaborators of *Wikipedia*. (2020), "General strikes in Spain [online]". *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia*.

14. *El País*, published on 27/01/2011.

adaptation and modernization of the Social Security system¹⁵, which, in addition to other parametric reforms, progressively increased, for the first time in the history of Spanish social protection, the ordinary retirement age from 65 to 67 years.

The second biennium of the financial crisis: 2012-2013

The resumption of the social dialogue with the Government, materialized in the agreement of February 2 and its subsequent legal translation into the above-mentioned norm, did not prevent the electoral defeat of the political party (PSOE) that had supported it in the general election of November 20, 2011, in which its main opponent, the PP, obtained an absolute majority and its best election result, in contrast with the worst for the socialist party since the beginning of the democratic period. From that moment onwards, due to the economic data and, building on them, the insistence of the EU, which, mostly through diplomatic actions, claimed the need to undertake the reform of certain labour aspects, the new Government passed the Royal Decree-Law 3/2012, of February 10, on urgent measures to reform the labour market¹⁶. This law was the result of the unilateral action of the recently constituted Government and, therefore, not the outcome of any social dialogue process, despite the fact that, only a few days earlier, on January 25, 2012, the II Acuerdo para el Empleo y la Negociación Colectiva 2012, 2013 y 2014 (Second Agreement on Employment and Collective Bargaining for 2012, 2013 and 2014) had been signed by the employers' organizations CEOE and Cepyme, and the major trade unions CC.OO. and UGT¹⁷. This reform, as expressed in the norm itself, aimed at providing "economic and labour operators with a horizon of legal security and confidence in which to develop their activities with certainty to contribute to the creation of jobs". This should allow achieving "a balance between internal and external flexibility; between permanent and temporary recruitment regulations; between the internal mobility of an enterprise and its dismissal mechanisms; between the tutelage to which labour contracts are subjected and the ones operating in the labour market etc.", for the purpose of reaching "the objective of flexisecurity". In this sense, the document introduced a series of measures to "promote the workers' employability", "permanent recruitment and other forms of work" in order "to encourage recruitment by small and medium-sized enterprises and of young people", "to stimulate internal flexibility within the enterprise as an alternative measure to the destruction

15. *BOE* (2 August 2011), 184: 87495-87544.

16. *BOE* (11 February 2012), 36: 12483-12546.

17. Published by decision of the Directorate General of Employment of 30 January 2012 (*BOE* of 6 February).

of jobs”, and, finally, “to improve the efficiency of the labour market as an element linked to the reduction of labour market dualism, as measures that mainly affect the termination of labour contracts”. After the parliamentary procedure, this Royal Decree-Law became Law 3/2012, of 6 July, on urgent measures to reform the labour market¹⁸, which, including its later modifications, is still in force.

The trade union reaction was identical to that of previous occasions in which the social consultation was ignored before the passing of a norm or regulation, and consisted in the first general strike that the new Government had to face. It was called for March 29, 2012, by national organizations (USO, CGT and CNT), including the most representative ones (CC.OO. and UGT), and regional trade unions (ELA, LAB, CIG), among other organizations. The impact of this protest was, in the Government’s opinion, moderate, with 800,000 demonstrators and greater support from the industry than from the trade and services sectors, which did not fully stop their activity. In contrast, the trade unions concluded that the protest had received major support and had been followed by 77% of the workers. In the words of the leader of UGT, Cándido Méndez, the Government had only two options: “to change or to change the labour reform”, because, according to Ignacio Fernández Toxo, the leader of CC.OO., it was “losing most of its credit”¹⁹.

However, given the do-nothing response of the Government to the trade union and social demands, some months later, the most representative trade unions, UGT and CC.OO., together with other of national (USO, CGT, CNT) and regional scope (CIG, COS), called for another general strike on November 14, 2012, coinciding with similar initiatives organized in Portugal, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta. This simultaneous protest action in several countries was perceived as “the first international strike of the 21st century and the first European general strike”²⁰.

However, the Spanish Government did not modify its position, which was actually reinforced – or we could say even imposed – by the Spanish request and the EU’s acceptance to provide financial support in exchange for compliance with the commitments and obligations related to the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) and with the recommendations to correct macroeconomic imbalances under EU supervision. Moreover, it unwaveringly implemented the set of measures deemed necessary to fulfil those obligations²¹. Among those measures, it passed Royal

18. *BOE* (7 July 2012), 162: 49113-49191.

19. RTVE. Retrieved from <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/elecciones/generales/2011/>.

20. Collaborators of *Wikipedia*, 2020.

21. Memorandum of Understanding of Financial-Sector Policy Conditionality, signed in Brussels and Madrid on July 23, 2012, and Financial Assistance Facility Agreement, signed in Madrid and Luxembourg on July 24, 2012 *BOE* of 10 December 2012).

Decree-Law 28/2012, of 30 November, on measures to consolidate and guarantee the Social Security system²². This norm “established a new limit for the disposal of assets of the Social Security Reserve Fund and authorized the disposal of the Social Security Reserve Fund during the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 to the extent that it is needed, up to a maximum amount equivalent to the budgetary deficit of the managing bodies and common services of the Social Security system”. In addition, it revoked “the indexation of pensions during year 2012 and suspended the revaluation of pensions for year 2013 in the terms established” through the corresponding norm. Pensions were finally updated by 1% during 2013, with “an additional 1% for those pensions that do not exceed the monthly amount of EUR 1000 or the yearly amount of 14,000”.

Subsequently, the Government passed Royal Decree-Law 5/2013, of 15 March, on measures to favour the continuity of the working lives of older workers and to promote active ageing²³, which underlined that the “increase in the retirement age”, legally stipulated in 2011, “the extension of active life and the increase in the participation of older workers in the labour market are basic elements for the adaptation and sustainability of pensions” that require the implementation of “measures to facilitate early retirement, partial retirement, the combination of active life and retirement, the fight against fraud, and employment policies”. All of which would, at the same time, “allow complying with the Recommendations of the European Council of 10 July 2012 concerning the sustainability of the pension system and the promotion of active ageing”.

Finally, at the end of the central period of the financial crisis, the Government promulgated Law 23/2013, of 23 December, regulating the Sustainability Factor and the Index for Revaluation of the Social Security Pension Scheme²⁴. As explained in its preamble, the norm fell within the scope of the “European Strategy 2020, which is the reference for the coordination of the economic policies of the EU member states and the sphere from which the policy to guide and coordinate efforts to face the challenge of ageing and its impact on social protection systems is promoted”. According to the dispositions of the above-mentioned Law 27/2011, of 1 August, the new law incorporated the “sustainability factor”, an instrument to be applied to retirement pensions coming into effect on January 1, 2019 and after, “for the purpose of maintaining the proportionality between the contributions to the system and the benefits expected from it, and guaranteeing its sustainability”. Starting from January

22. *BOE* (1 December 2012), 289: 83175-83179.

23. *BOE* (16 December 2013), 65: 21441-21474.

24. *BOE* (26 December 2013), 309: 105137-105144.

1, 2014, the reference module, which had been used since 1997 for the periodic revaluation of pensions, was modified to replace the consumption price index with another index, determined by the mathematical expression reflected in the law. Through this reform, the Government sought to reduce the macroeconomic cost of the Social Security system in an attempt to maintain its financial balance in the medium to long term. However, Law 6/2018, of 3 July, on the General State Budget for 2018²⁵, suspended its entry into force until a date no later than January 1, 2023, as deemed appropriate by the commission for the monitoring and evaluation of the agreements of the Toledo Pact. The law also established the revaluation of pensions for 2018 in the terms established by the law on the General State Budget of that year.

The lack of response by the trade unions in the face of these legislative actions – especially of the most drastic one, i.e., the general strike, which they had often used before – may probably be explained by the concurrence of several motives. On the one hand, the complex economic, labour and social situation, as shown by the above-mentioned unemployment, productivity, risk premium and inflation data. This situation demanded the urgent implementation of reforms that could not, or so it was thought, be delayed by social consultation, which usually requires a slower procedure than the unilateral adoption of measures by the Government through the instrument of the royal decree-law. In addition, the solid absolute parliamentary majority of the ruling political party (PP) conferred the necessary legitimacy or, at least that was the Government's perception, to the implementation of the legal measures deemed pertinent, even without the support of the social dialogue. This was especially so after the signing, in the summer of 2012, of the Memorandum of Understanding between Spain and the EU, popularly known as the “bank rescue”, which comprised a series of commitments and obligations that the former needed to meet under the supervision of the latter. On the other hand, trade unions probably thought as well that the above-mentioned election results provided the Government enough social support to develop reforms without their participation, especially when this participation had been somehow questioned by one part of society from the beginning of the financial crisis, due to the appearance of excessive institutionalization or accommodation to political power on the part of these organizations. This perception may have been reinforced by the emergence of social movements outside or not linked to the trade unions, given that the latter were likened by one part of society to the political organizations and accused of being responsible for the financial crisis, its consequences and the lack of action to remedy them.

25. *BOE* (4 July 2018), 161: 66621-67354.

Certainly, those social movements, new in their configuration, proposals and forms of protest, displaced to some extent trade union action – which has traditionally focused on the problems of the working population, and not on those of the general public –, as well as the initiatives of political parties with parliamentary representation. However, it seems that those movements, which had spontaneously emerged from certain sectors of civil society that felt particularly harmed by the deterioration of the economy and employment, rather than preserving their original features, have tended to transform themselves into political organizations that are quite similar to their predecessors. Subsequently, they have actively participated in politics, so much so that one of these organizations, having won a strong electoral support, has become an integral part of the current coalition Government, together with one of the most relevant political parties, which has been in office for much of the time since the democratic transition.

The economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (2020)

From an institutional perspective, it is possible to affirm that the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has developed into a severe economic and employment crisis, became official in Spain through the enactment of Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14 March, declaring the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by Covid-19²⁶. However, almost since the beginning of the crisis, the attitude of the institutions, both national and European, was perceived to be different from the one adopted during the Eurozone crisis, and so was the idea that the implementation of measures to overcome the crisis could not be unilateral, as it was with the austerity measures in the previous crisis.

In Spain, the present Covid-19 crisis has, among other effects, reactivated social dialogue and social consultation between the Government – a coalition of PSOE – Unidas Podemos, therefore a left-wing government –, and the most representative trade unions – basically UGT and CC.OO. –, and employers' organizations – CEOE and Cephyne –, even before the formal response of the EU to the crisis through the European recovery instrument was operative. In fact, less than two months after the declaration of the state of alarm, with the corresponding adoption of exceptional measures, the social partners and the Government reached their first agreement. The *1 Acuerdo Social en Defensa del Empleo* (First Social Agreement for the Protection of Employment), signed on May 8, 2020, proved the willingness of the left-wing Government to grant the social partners a relevant role in the management of the

26. *BOE* (14 March 2020), 67: 25390 ff.

crisis²⁷. The agreement, the content of which was later integrated into Royal Decree-Law 18/2020, of 12 May, on social measures for the protection of employment²⁸, was the first evidence of a process of social dialogue that, while legitimizing the political action of the Government during the pandemic – which was crucial, considering the complex negotiation to obtain the necessary parliamentary support to the successive emergency decree-laws, due to lack of an absolute majority –, made the social partners co-responsible for the country's economic and employment protection policy.

Social dialogue, abandoned in previous years, was thus resumed in one of its most intense forms: that of the agreements leading to the enactment of legislation negotiated by the Government and the social partners. In fact, it was within the framework of this agreement where the so-called Comisión de Seguimiento Tripartita Laboral (Tripartite Labour Monitoring Commission) was created. Integrated by the Government and the above-mentioned social partners, its purpose was not only to carry out a monthly monitoring of the labour-related measures successively adopted, but to become a space in which the measures proposed by the Ministry of Labour or the social partners to overcome the present crisis could be discussed. In this sense, the commitment with social dialogue was proved by the fact that the signing parties agreed – an agreement translated into a legal norm through the second additional disposition of Royal Decree-Law 18/2020 – on that “the commission must, in all cases, be consulted sufficiently in advance prior to the adoption of measures specified in the first additional disposition”, which form the core of the labour-related measures to preserve employment and safeguard the economic activity.

As a result of this social dialogue, in the following months and up to today, three more agreements have been reached that, in all three cases, have continued along the path opened by the first one, pursuing the main objective of implementing measures to protect employment as a guarantee for the future viability of Spanish enterprises. Thus, on June 25, 2020, the Second Agreement for the Protection of Employment was signed, and its content was translated into law through the passing

27. Previously, the Government had issued a first norm for the intervention in the labour sphere, Royal Decree-Law 8/2020, of 17 March, on extraordinary urgent measures to address the economic and social impact of Covid-19 (*BOE* 18 March 2020, 73: 25853 ff.). This norm included some of the proposals made by the social partners in the “Documento de propuestas conjuntas de las organizaciones sindicales CC.OO. y UGT y empresariales CEOE y Cepyme para abordar, mediante medidas extraordinarias, al problemática laboral generada por el incidencia del nuevo tipo de coronavirus” [“Document of joint proposals of the trade unions CC.OO. and UGT and the employers' organizations CEOE and Cepyme to address, through extraordinary measures, the labour problems generated by the incidence of the new type of coronavirus”], which can be consulted in: https://www.ugt.es/sites/default/files/propuestas_conjuntas_coronavirus_parrafo1.pdf.

28. *BOE* (13 May 2020), 134: 32257 ff.

of Royal Decree-Law 24/2020, of 26 June, on social measures for the reactivation of employment and the protection of self-employment and competitiveness in the industrial sector²⁹. Later on, in September 2020, the Third Social Agreement for the Protection of Employment was reached and subsequently transformed into law by virtue of Royal Decree-Law 30/2020, of 29 September, on social measures to protect employment³⁰. Finally, on January 19, 2021, the Fourth Social Agreement for the Protection of Employment has been subscribed, and, while this article is being written, awaits its translation into law, just like its predecessors.

The Second Social Agreement – replicated in the above-mentioned Royal Decree-Law 24/2020 – incorporated three additional commitments that enlarged the sphere of social dialogue as defined in the initial agreement. Thus, the fourth additional disposition of the Royal Decree-Law 24/2020 established that, in the shortest time possible, the Ministry of Labour and the social partners were required to meet and discuss several issues related to the granting of unemployment benefits to workers with several part-time contracts within the framework of the temporary labour force adjustment plans implemented as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were also requested to seek a solution for the expiration, during the state of alarm, of the unemployment benefits and subsidies granted to workers who were not affected by a temporary labour force adjustment plan.

Independent of the measures to alleviate the situation of self-employed workers once they resume their activity after the state of alarm is lifted, the sixth additional disposition of Royal Decree-Law 24/2020 established the creation of a “commission to monitor the support measures for the recovery of the activity of self-employed workers in the sphere of the Social Security system”. This commission was to be composed of the representatives of the Ministry of Social Security and the most significant self-employed workers’ associations: the Asociación de Trabajadores Autónomos (ATA, Self-employed Workers’ Association), the Unión de Profesionales y Trabajadores Autónomos (UPTA, Union of Professionals and Self-employed Workers), and the Unión de Asociaciones de Trabajadores Autónomos y Emprendedores (Uatae, Union of Self-employed Workers’ and Entrepreneurs’ Associations). According to that disposition, the main role of the commission was to monitor and assess the measures for self-employed workers established by the above-mentioned royal decree-law³¹. However, it is also important to point out that, through the constitution

29. *BOE* (27 June 2020), 178: 45244 ff. This agreement basically modulated the extraordinary measures initially implemented by the Government through Royal Decree-Law 8/2020, as well as some of the obligations contracted during the first agreement.

30. *BOE* (30 September 2020), 259: 82169 ff.

31. In addition, the fifth additional disposition of Royal Decree-Law 30/2020 (Third Social Agreement)

of this commission, the signatories of the Second Social Agreement acknowledged the importance of a social dialogue focused also on the problems that are specifically affecting self-employed workers during the pandemic, as reflected on the participation of associations representing these workers. In fact, the work of the commission has yielded some results beyond the mere monitoring and evaluation of the measures established by the law. Thus, for instance, on January 19, 2021, an agreement was reached to extend until May 31, 2021, with some modifications demanded by the self-employed workers' associations that were subject to the corresponding negotiation, the package of aid approved for this group of workers. A new space of social dialogue emerges, which was, in fact, being created even before the Second Social Agreement was signed through the more or less formal conversations maintained by the Ministries of Labour and Social Security with these organizations.

Finally, the fifth additional disposition of the royal decree-law, under the heading "Employment pact", defined the commitment of the Government and the social partners to incorporate, through the dialogue round-tables constituted for this purpose, measures aimed at creating employment. As a result of this commitment, on July 3, 2020, the Government, the employers' organizations and the trade unions reached a new agreement: the Agreement for Economic Reactivation and Employment, which, in line with the previous commitment, had the objective of defining the measures for economic reactivation and employment creation that should enable the recovery of the economy and the labour market in Spain once the pandemic begins to recede. It also intended to send the EU a message of unity and consensus on the willingness to get Spain off the ground, at a moment in which the final decision on the distribution of EU funds for the reconstruction of the badly damaged EU economies was pending.

As pointed out in the introduction to this work, we are already acquainted with the EU plans for Spain, and with the initial legal response of the Spanish Government to the European Recovery Instrument: Royal Decree-Law 36/2020. But, how is social dialogue evolving?

It is important to underline that we have entered a standby period, waiting for the Spanish Government to send to Brussels the details of the structural reform plan that it needs to implement in order to receive the EU funds. As far as we know, the most controversial aspect of the Government's plan is the future reform of the Social Security pension scheme. Meanwhile, at the end of 2020, the trade unions had a clash with the Government over their disagreement on a further rise of the minimum

entrusted the above-mentioned commission with the monitoring and assessment of the new measures for self-employed workers established by the royal decree-law.

wage in Spain, and a general strike has been called for February 11, 2021. After this announcement was made, the Government offered to start the dialogue around the labour reform that it had promised to undertake at the beginning of its term.

It is possible to affirm that the action of the most representative trade unions during this period has been characterized by a return to formal social dialogue, in contrast with what happened during the 2010-2013 period. In this sense, and despite the recent clash with the Government, the truth is that the social dialogue dynamic that has allowed adopting measures for the protection of employment and the improvement of the workers and employers' situation during the pandemic is expected to enable further agreements on the measures to overcome the extremely severe social and economic crisis in which the country is immersed today. By resuming the social dialogue initiated at the beginning of this term in office – which began with the constitution of the Psoe-Unidas Podemos coalition Government on January 13, 2020 –, the Government and the social partners would be tackling together the required structural reforms to continue the work that during the turbulent 2020 has yielded some relevant results, including the rise of the minimum wage by 5.5%³², or the enactment of the first law regulating remote working³³.

Conclusion

Does the political-financial conditionality of the EU have an influence on the action of Spanish trade unions? The answer is no, or, more specifically, not directly or not decisively³⁴.

In effect, as shown in this article, only when the Government considered that the macroeconomic and labour market data made the EU's action unavoidable and that the implementation of legal reforms was so urgent that it could not be delayed by engaging in a social dialogue process, did it disregard this option, and this happened mostly when it could rely on the legitimacy granted by a large electoral victory. At the same time, it seems that the trade unions have only dismissed more drastic actions, namely the general strike, when they felt that the strength of the Government's electoral legitimacy and the severity of the economic and employment data could

32. Approved through Royal Decree 231/2020, of 4 February, establishing the minimum wage for 2020 (*BOE* 5 February 2020, 31: 10184 ff.).

33. It became a law through Royal Decree-Law 28/2020, of 22 September, on remote working (*BOE* 23 September 2020, 253: 79929 ff.).

34. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that, as a result of the intensity of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, ordinary collective bargaining has in fact been suspended in most sectors (Cruz Villalón, 2020, pp. 242-243). In any case, it is reasonable to expect that the negotiation processes will be resumed once the gravest period of the crisis is over.

prevent one part of society from understanding those actions, or that they would not be widely or significantly supported.

It is true – as it has been conveniently pointed out in some cases – that during the period known as the Eurozone crisis, the “vigilance of national decision-making by supra-national institutions represented by the Troika has led to the substitution of the national social contract with the European imperative as the legitimizing element in public policy” (González Begega *et al.*, 2015, p. 116). But it is also true that, as soon as the EU modified the unilateral way in which it implemented and supervised the financial rescue plans and adopted a more participatory and dialogic dynamic, the trade unions decided to critically participate in this type of reconstruction processes the way it is more natural for them to do it: through the social dialogue with the Government and the employers’ organizations. Consequently, the expectation created during the Eurozone crisis around the interaction between civil society organizations (civic platforms, NGOs, etc.) and trade unions as the new formula for the construction of an alternative to extreme capitalism, has vanished, at least for now. In this sense, we understand that, in the medium term, changes will come from the content and scope of the reforms that may be agreed upon and initiated rather than from the way in which the agreement is reached³⁵, because, as pointed out before, as soon as it proves possible, trade unions – and also the Government and the employers’ organizations – feel more comfortable operating in a space that they have historically, at least since the Second World War, considered as their own: that of formal social dialogue.

In summary, there has been a return to this peculiar “form of integration between the two great powers operating within the labour relations system, the normative power of the State and the social-legal power of collective autonomy” (social dialogue), as a particular sort of “political exchange” (Moreno Vida, 2019, p. 268)³⁶. This way, at least in Spain, a response is being given to the request made by the European social partners – CES, Businesseurope, Ceep and SME United – in their joint statement on the emergency caused by the Covid-19, in the sense that the EU member states should involve their national social interlocutors in the design and implementation of national measures to overcome the crisis³⁷. It seems, at least for

35. Although the existence of critical voices that demand, in this case from liberal positions, a more open and less ideological social dialogue that breaks with the existing conception must not be ignored either (Rodríguez Morones, 2016, pp. 217-218).

36. For a better understanding of the keys that characterize this renewed social dialogue, it may be useful to consult: Pérez Rey & Morán, 2020, pp. 233-244.

37. The statement may be consulted on: <https://www.etuc.org/en/document/statement-european-social-partners-etuc-businesseurope-ceep-smeunited-covid-19-emergency> (Etuc, 2020).

now, that the approach set out by the European Economic and Social Committee in its recent Opinion of October 2020: “social dialogue is a key instrument for sound governance of any period of change” has been integrated, and it is therefore “crucial that the EU recovery plan is built on and with the involvement of the social partners at all levels”³⁸.

38. It can be consulted on: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/social-dialogue-important-pillar-economic-sustainability-and-resilience-economies-taking-account-influence-lively-public>. This approach is consistent with the call made by the IWO during its centenary year to value social dialogue as a necessary tool for the design and implementation of the “social contract” between governments and employers’ and workers’ organizations (IWO. 2019, *Work for a brighter future. Report for the Global Commission on the future of work*. Geneva, pp. 42 ff.).

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Abstract

Conditionality and trade union action in the promotion and defence of workers’ rights: the Spanish case

Conditionality, among other aspects, determines that the regulatory development of the countries that make up the European Union can be carried out, as is usual in the social sphere, without the intervention, or at least minimally, of the workers’ representatives and entrepreneurs, and also from other political formations in the legislative field. Logically, this absence of social or political participation can promote response actions against them, either traditional (strikes, demonstrations, withdrawal of parliamentary support in adoption of legislative measures etc.), or new types (spontaneous concentrations in public places, general assemblies of citizens without a defined convener, appearance of social and political formations of less visible typology, or other similar ones). The financial crisis unleashed at the end of 2007 and the one derived from the health emergency situation due to the global spread of Covid-19, at the beginning of 2020, have precisely encouraged the use of conditionality in the European Union space. However, the way in which conditionality has been developed in one and another crisis in the Spanish State can be said that it has not been identical. Neither have been the reactions of social and political subjects, because if in the first crisis these subjects have experienced a reduction in their functions of participation or intervention in legislative action and in the proposal of political actions, in the second the possibilities of action have been much more significant, and also their contribution to efforts to overcome the crisis situation.

Keywords: Conditionality; Social dialogue; Labour relations; Economic crisis.

Resumo

Condicionalidade e ação sindical na promoção e defesa dos direitos dos trabalhadores: o caso espanhol

A condicionalidade, entre outros aspectos, determina que o desenvolvimento regulatório dos países que integram a União Europeia possa ser realizado, como é habitual na esfera social, sem a intervenção, ainda que mínima, dos representantes dos trabalhadores e empresários, assim como de outras formações políticas no campo legislativo. Essa ausência de participação social ou política pode promover ações de resposta, sejam tradicionais (greves, manifestações, retirada de apoio

parlamentar na adoção de medidas legislativas etc.), ou novos tipos (concentrações espontâneas em locais públicos, assembleias gerais de cidadãos sem convocador definido, surgimento de formações sociais e políticas de tipologia menos visível ou outras semelhantes). A crise financeira desencadeada no final de 2007 e a provocada pela situação de emergência sanitária decorrente da disseminação global da Covid-19, no início de 2020, têm incentivado precisamente o uso da condicionalidade no espaço da União Europeia. No entanto, as formas como a condicionalidade se desenvolveu em uma e outra crise no Estado espanhol não foram idênticas. Também não foram idênticas as reações dos atores sociais e políticos, pois se na primeira crise esses atores experimentaram uma redução nas suas funções de participação ou intervenção na ação legislativa e na proposição de ações políticas, na segunda as possibilidades de ação foram muito mais significativas, assim como a sua contribuição para os esforços a fim de superar a situação de crise. Palavras-chave: Condicionalidade; Diálogo social; Relações de trabalho; Crise econômica.

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The International Labor Movement as an agent of change: Temporary Foreign Workers and Union Renewal in Asia

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Introduction

Over several decades, there have been numerous studies of the drivers, strategies, actions and outcomes associated with union renewal and revitalization. One strain of this literature has focused on the importance of reaching out to “non-traditional” constituencies including women, people of color, and precarious workers (see, for example, Lucio & Perrett, 2009a; Mrozowicki & Trawińska, 2012; Murray, 2017). It is widely recognized that temporary labor migrants are among the most challenging groups to organize (see, for example, Fitzgerald & Hardy, 2007; Holgate, 2005), and that many national unions are reluctant to allocate scarce resources to organizing this extremely precarious constituency (Mustchin, 2012). This is especially so in Asia, where unions are relatively weak. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that while some migrant organizing initiatives have emerged organically in the region, most have been driven or supported by the international labor movement.

This article analyses the role that the international labor movement actors have played in Asian unions’ attempts to reach out to temporary foreign workers. It draws on 10 years of qualitative fieldwork with the Global Union Federations (GUFs) at headquarters and regional level and with their affiliates in the seven Asian countries

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that rely most heavily on temporary labor migration¹. As it demonstrates, while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations remain the dominant proponents of migrant worker rights in Asia, the involvement of the international labor movement has been the single-most important factor in convincing local unions that they should engage with temporary labor migrants. This finding is important in its own right, but also because it sheds light on the question of union renewal, and the contribution that reaching out to diverse constituencies can make. As this article argues, this has indeed been the case where Asia's unions have provided temporary labor migrants with services or supported migrant-only organizing, and especially when they have worked to integrate them into their own structures.

Temporary labor migrants and union renewal

The pursuit of diversity is now a familiar theme in union circles, and among the academics who study them. According to the proponents of this strategy, the benefits of engaging with non-traditional constituencies include shoring up membership, preserving bargaining power and policy influence, and bringing new ideas and perspectives into the movement (Briskin, 2008; Lucio & Perrett, 2009a, 2009b; Mrozowicki & Trawińska, 2012). Although Asia's unions come from very different starting points than those of North American or European unions, it is evident that there, too, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore non-traditional constituencies.

Temporary labor migrants are not the only non-traditional constituency that Asia's unions could target, but they are an obvious choice in sectors where they comprise a large proportion, or even a majority, of the workforce. This is a challenging decision for unions to make in the face of often-hostile governments and employers, and with limited resources at their disposal. Temporary labor migrants differ from permanent migrants and other non-traditional constituencies because of the time-bound nature of their presence in the country. As such, unions can devote a great deal of energy in organizing work knowing that the individuals they organize will necessarily move on. An added dimension – and the analytical focus of this article – is the impact of attempts to organize temporary labor migrants on the unions themselves. As many scholars have noted (see, for example, Briskin, 2008; Lucio & Perrett, 2009b; Mrozowicki & Trawińska, 2012), engaging with

1. The empirical sections of this article draw heavily on Ford (2019), where each of the cases is discussed in far more detail.

non-traditional constituencies often pushes unions to adopt new strategies, which can in some circumstances influence broader union practices.

In the debates among scholars of union revitalization, one key focus has been an emphasis on diversity, as unions have attempted to draw in women and youth, people of color and other minorities, and precarious workers (Heery, 2015; Murray, 2017). Union revitalization efforts have seen the spread of the organizing model, pioneered in the United States and Australia, into Europe and other parts of the world (Arnholtz, Ibsen & Ibsen, 2016, Heery, 2015; McCallum, 2013; Mrozowski & Trawińska, 2012; Parker & Douglas, 2010; Peetz & Pocock, 2009; Simms & Holgate, 2010)². As Heery *et al.* (1999, p. 38) explain, the “organizing model” defines union purpose “in terms of organizing workers so that they are ‘empowered’ to define and pursue their own interests through the medium of collective organization”. This purpose is pursued through “a ‘union-building’ approach to membership growth in which the union fosters activism, leadership and organisation amongst workers which can provide a nucleus around which recruitment can occur”. This model of unionism is contrasted with a “servicing model” in which unions’ purpose is “to deliver collective and individual services to members who are dependent on the formal organisation and its hierarchy of officers to provide what they require”.

This debate has filtered into studies of union engagement with temporary labor migrants and the potential of migrant worker organizing as a strategy for union renewal in the United Kingdom and Europe (see, for example, Alho, 2013; Alberti, Holgate & Turner, 2014; Bengtsson, 2013; Connolly, Marino & Lucio, 2014). This literature is overwhelmingly cast within the very particular context of the European Union. There is also a striking absence of discussion of the role of the international labor movement, beyond European-level cooperation (see, for example Marino, Rinus & Roosblad, 2017b). This omission is not surprising, given the narrow geographical focus of the literature, but it leaves unexplored many of the dynamics affecting destination countries in other parts of the world. It nevertheless provides some important, and transferrable, insights into the reasons why unions do (or do not) reach out to temporary labor migrants. The extent to which mainstream unions open their doors to temporary labor migrants is influenced by many factors, including whether the labor market is tight or loose, the attitudes and behavior of government and other institutional actors, and the strength of the local labor movement (Penninx & Roosblad, 2000). Along with unions’ internal characteristics and strategic decision-making processes, these factors influence not only their willingness to accommodate migrant workers but also the extent to which they attempt

2. For early critiques of the organizing model, see Fairbrother (2000) and de Tuberville (2004).

to meet their specific needs (Marino, Rinus & Roosblad 2017a). In short, union decision-making is heavily influenced by the political, economic and institutional contexts in which they are located.

Having decided – however tentatively – to embrace temporary labor migrants, unions are then faced with another key strategic decision, namely what modes of engagement will they prioritize? A range of strategies are noted in the literature on unions and temporary labor migrants in Europe; however, a significant proportion emphasize the importance of organizing as a strategy for engaging with this constituency (see, for example, Berntsen & Lillie, 2012; Connolly, Marino & Lucio, 2012; Holgate, 2005). Drawing inspiration from the United States-based Justice for Janitors campaign, for example, the Netherlands' FNV-Bondgenoten started organizing in the migrant-dense cleaning industry. The campaign was successful, but “raised tensions within Dutch trade unions” because its “confrontational strategies threatened traditionally cooperative relations between unions and employers” (Connolly, Marino & Lucio, 2014, p. 11).

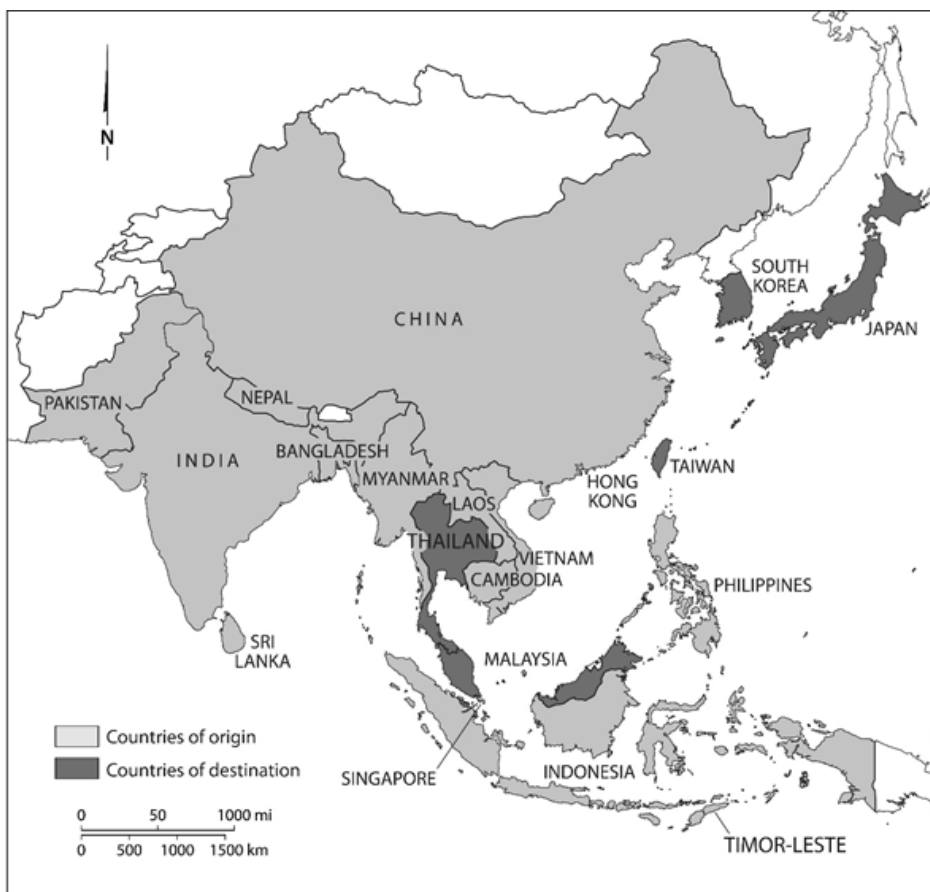
In Asia, too, various strategies have been used when engaging with temporary labor migrants, two of which are servicing and organizing³. Services, which are often delivered to non-union members, includes different kinds of assistance, for example, information, emergency shelter or legal aid. In many cases, such activities are undertaken as a form of outreach rather than as part of an attempt to recruit migrant workers to the union. It is also significant that servicing is a way of providing support for temporary labor migrants that does not require fundamental adjustments to the union's structure and operation. Organizing, meanwhile, can involve the recruitment of migrant workers into the existing union or establishing a separate, purpose-specific migrant-only union. Either version of organizing is far more challenging than service provision, especially since many Asian unions have difficulty even recruiting local workers, and thus both provide an opportunity to develop new skills. As a strategy, it is also complicated by restrictions imposed on migrant workers' freedom of association, either through labor or immigration law, or through *ad hoc* practices in the workplace. However, it is the successful integration of temporary labor migrants into existing unions – and meeting their needs once they are recruited – that offers the greatest potential for union renewal.

3. The other two main strategies are advocacy, for example making representations to the government or joining NGOs in a public campaign, and networking and collaboration, for example, among unions in the same country or between unions in a country origin and a destination country.

Temporary labor migrants in Asia

Migrants from the poorer countries of South and Southeast Asia have for decades made their way to the Middle East or further afield in order to find work. Many others have made their way to wealthier countries within Asia, most notably to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, and to a lesser extent Japan (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Asia's Main Countries of Origin and Destination.



Asian countries rely to a different extent on low- and semi-skilled temporary labor migration, but it plays a significant role in most. Remittances provide an important source of employment and foreign earnings for many Asian countries of origin. The region's destination countries benefit economically from a cheap, flexible workforce willing to do the jobs that locals do not want to do (Table 1).

TABLE 1
Temporary Labor Migrants in Asian Destination Countries (Millions), 2019.

INDICATOR (MILLIONS)	Hong Kong	Japan	Malaysia*	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand
Population	7.5	126.3	31.9	5.7	51.7	23.6	69.6
Labour Force	4.0	68.1	15.7	5.7	28.4	11.9	39.0
Temporary Labor Migrants	0.4	0.2	1.7	1.2	0.1	0.7	2.8

Notes: Malaysian migration data is for 2018. Japanese and South Korean migration data is from 2017. Singapore migrant worker figure includes S passes (passes for mid-skilled workers, e.g. technicians) but excludes employment passes (available to professionals). Migration figures are for regular temporary labor migrants. Malaysia and Thailand also host large numbers of irregular labor migrants.

Source: Data compiled from Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong (2019), ILO (2019, 2020), Manpower Research and Statistics Department Singapore (2020), OECD (2019), Taiwan Ministry of Labor (2020a, b) and World Bank (2020).

As Table 1 shows, Asian destination countries rely to varying degrees on temporary labor migrants, which account for a tiny percentage of the labor force in Japan through to over 20 percent of the labor force in Singapore. As we shall see below, however, a common characteristic of these destination countries is the complex ways in which these destination countries regulate temporary labor migration.

Regulating labor migration

The formation of the European Union’s Single Market in January 2013 brought a commitment to cross-border labor mobility. There is no such arrangement in Asia, where temporary labor migration is managed primarily through bilateral agreements, the terms of which are largely dictated by destination-country governments. In all cases, destination countries impose limits not only on the number of foreign workers who enter the country, but also the time they can spend there and whether they can renew their permit in-country, as well as their occupation, country of origin, and even gender.

In some cases, destination country governments also determine – sometimes explicitly, sometimes through other policies or through practice – how freely temporary labor migrants can move beyond their place of employment, who they can associate with, and whether they are in a position to seek redress for contract violations or protection from exploitative situations. For instance, some countries tie work permits to specific employers, which discourages foreign workers from complaining about

their treatment for fear of premature repatriation. In another example, jurisdictional contests between ministries of labor and immigration can make it difficult for foreign workers seek redress. In many cases, for example, migrant workers who have been forced to leave their jobs because of irregularities in the employment relationship are compelled to return home before their court cases can be heard.

Regulatory regimes can also affect foreign workers' ability to form or join a union. Regular labor migrants have the formal right to join a mainstream union in all seven Asian destination countries. There is more variation when it comes to forming a migrant-only union. Of the seven countries, regular migrant workers only have that right to form their own unions in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. And it is only in South Korea that the right to join or form a union is available to irregular labor migrants. However, even there, the capacity to exercise these rights depends on what barriers are imposed by immigration authorities or brokers – and, in the case of their ability to join an existing union, on the presence of a mainstream union willing to accept them as members.

The role of local unions

As elsewhere, most unions in Asia have been traditionally hostile towards foreign migrants. In 1989, when Japan's Immigration Act was being revised, its union confederation, Rengō, campaigned against the entry of unskilled migrant workers. Decades later, Rengō continues to campaign against both unskilled migrant workers and those admitted under economic partnership agreements. In 1998, the Taiwan Labor Front staged a demonstration demanding that migrant workers be repatriated. The Chinese Federation of Labor and the Taiwanese Confederation of Trade Unions continue to oppose labor migration. In the mid-1990s, South Korean unions also actively campaigned against migrant workers, as did their counterparts in Thailand and Malaysia. Even the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) – the region's most proactive national center on the issue of temporary labor migration – has struggled. In the mid-1990s, its offices were fire-balled and covered with graffiti by members unhappy that their union was helping foreigners. In later years, the central leadership continued to work to convince members to embrace migrant workers.

National and local unions' capacity to support foreign workers may be dictated by the immediate availability (or absence) of resources. Structural constraints also help explain unions' reluctance to invest what resources they can dedicate to supporting temporary labor migrants. Key among these constraints are those imposed by unions' position within a broader industrial relations regime, including whether

it permits foreign workers to unionize as well as unions' influence in migrant-dense sectors and their strength and militancy. Japan's unions are in a relatively strong position in terms of industrial bargaining power, although their membership has declined sharply since the mid-twentieth century. In Singapore, membership density is relatively high, but unions play little role in collective bargaining, instead providing other kinds of benefits, like discount groceries and insurance. Hong Kong's unions are more militant, but they have low membership density and no right to engage in collective bargaining. South Korea's unions are more militant still, but they too have a relatively low union density and relatively little institutional power in terms of the formal industrial relations system – not least because of the existence of large numbers of small and medium enterprises, a problem also evident in Taiwan. In Malaysia and Thailand, meanwhile, unions have the right to engage in workplace bargaining, but this means little because unions are so weak.

However, unions' attitude towards temporary labor migrants is affected by many factors other than their institutional power. Perhaps most important among these are their ideological position, resource base and strategic priorities, but also their interlocutors, both domestic and international. And, while migrant workers do not necessarily need the support of an existing union to organize, the attitudes and behaviors of mainstream unions have an enormous impact on such efforts. Unions' institutional privilege within their country's industrial relations system – even if their institutional power is quite low – means that their voice carries some weight on labor issues. As a result, mainstream union hostility can greatly undermine efforts by NGOs and others to improve conditions for foreign workers. Conversely, their sympathy, even if unaccompanied by action, can make it more difficult for governments to ignore such efforts. Of course, this impact is magnified if the mainstream union concerned works to recruit, or provide services to, foreign workers.

Interventions by international labor movement actors

International labor movement actors are not the only organizations to attempt to convince Asian unions that they should change their attitudes and behavior towards temporary labor migrants. Migrant labor NGOs and faith-based groups have long tried to enlist local unions to the cause. At first, these NGOs focused on advocacy, coalition-building and servicing, but over time several turned to organizing. It was in this context that they reached out to unions. However, ultimately, it has been the international labor movement – and the GUFs and SSOs in particular – that have managed to convince a number of key unions in the region to change their stance.

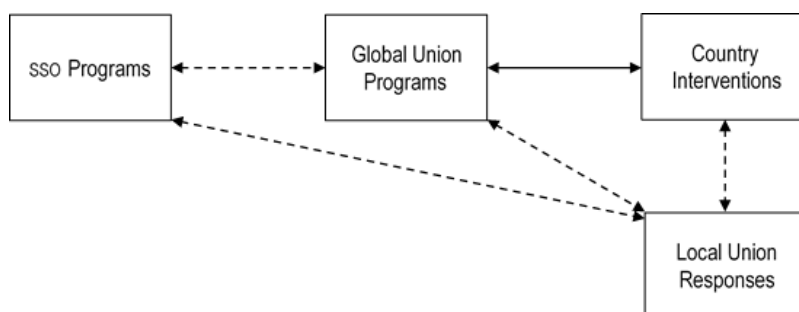
The global unions' migration programs

International labor movement actors are unanimous in its agreement that unions should embrace, rather than demonize migrant workers. They also agree – at least in principle – that it is important to organize them, although with differing levels of conviction, depending on their history, ideology and focus. At any one time, a GUF is involved in a wide range of projects, only a small proportion of which are concerned with migration. A particular GUF's level of emphasis on migration also depends on both their sector's exposure to foreign workers and internal priorities. Least engaged in Asia is Education International (EI) – which is not surprising since the education sector is not a major site for temporary labor migration. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and IndustriALL have not prioritized migration in the Asian region, but they have engaged in some targeted interventions. Although migrants were not an explicit focus, the sector is migrant-dense. By contrast, Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), Public Services International (PSI) and UNI Global Union have not only engaged quite intensively on servicing and organizing in their own sectors, but also collaborated in joint advocacy campaigns on labor migration in Asia, through a strategy of “hybrid cooperation” involving cross-sectoral work in collaboration with their affiliates and some national centers (Interview with BWI gender, migration and campaigns director, September 2015).

The role of the SSOs

The key donors to the GUFs' labor migration projects are the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, FES), FNV Mondiaal (the Netherlands), the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Solidaarisuuskeskus, SASK), Union to Union (Sweden), and Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO-Norway).

FIGURE 2
The Role of the SSOs



Adapted from Ford (2019, p. 7).

Different SSOs have different preferred modes of engagement. The Solidarity Center (formerly known as the American Center for International Solidarity) has focused mostly on initiatives with local unions and NGOs, whereas Northern European SSOs of Northern Europe generally favor a combination of direct projects and GUF-mediated engagement or, in some cases, working almost exclusively with the GUFs. SSOs often work with several different partners, sometimes on the same project. Sometimes, different donors support different participants in a joint initiative. For example, in a collaboration between BWI, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (Gefont), and the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), the three organizations were funded by FNV Mondiaal, LO-Norway and the Solidarity Center respectively (Interview with BWI regional representative, June 2014).

The resources supplied by these SSOs have been a vital component of GUFs' engagement with the migration agenda (Figure 2). However, they have also necessarily imposed some limitations on their focus, as many of them rely heavily on government money, and governments have become much more restrictive over time. As a result, several GUFs migration projects focus primarily on countries of origin, even though targeting destination country unions is clearly a much more effective strategy. The SSOs have also helped set the agenda. The Solidarity Center was one of the first SSOs to support migration-related work in Asia, with programs dating back to the mid-1990s. FNV Mondiaal, which has been another particularly prominent proponent of the migration agenda, has driven the demand for migration-related projects in several cases. LO-Norway and Sask have also had a strong focus on migration and thus necessarily influenced the form of various interventions.

Impact at the country level

Programs initiated by the SSOs and the Global Unions have had varied levels of impact in Asia's destination countries. Each case is influenced by the restrictions on what countries can be funded by SSOs under national development program guidelines, and by the many specificities relating to local context, the presence of affiliates (in the case of the GUFs) and the internal characteristics of the unions concerned. It is also clear, however, that a key factor in all cases is the extent to which those unions depend on the international labor movement for financial resources and other forms of support. At one end of the spectrum, where there is relatively little engagement, very little change has occurred. At the other end of the spectrum, where the international labor movement is much more influential, it is possible to observe substantive change in both union rhetoric and union behavior.

Japan and Taiwan

Japan and Taiwan are the Asian destination countries in which the international labor movement is least engaged, and where mainstream unions have shown the least interest in reaching out to temporary labor migrants. In both countries, mainstream unions have provided some services to foreign workers while remaining firmly opposed to pro-migrant policies. As a result, migrant labor organizing is concentrated in small community-based unions with links to NGOs. Although these small unions can be quite effective in providing services, their lack of integration with the mainstream union movement makes it difficult for them to exert more influence in the workplace or advocate for larger-picture changes to immigration policy.

South Korea and Singapore

South Korea and Singapore are also wealthy countries where the international labor movement has little direct influence, but unions in both these countries have been more open to temporary labor migrants than in Taiwan or Japan. Over the course of a decade and a half, South Korea's key confederations have moved from a position of uniform opposition to foreign workers to one where they both claimed to support migrant workers. Of the two, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) – which is more internationally connected – has been the more proactive. For several years, it has led advocacy campaigns, provided services and encouraged its affiliates to recruit foreign workers. It has also provided an institutional home for the Migrants Trade Union (MTU), a migrant-only union, since 2006.

The most engaged of the KCTU affiliates included those in construction and electronics, both of which had links to the relevant GUF. As part of its Asian migration project, BWI provided the KCTU and its construction affiliate, the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Unions (KFCITU) with funding to support migrant worker organizing. However, grassroots members, many of whom were day laborers, were concerned that migrant workers were taking their jobs (Statement by KFCITU director of policy and planning at the BWI/FNV Forum on Migration, October 2008). The union nevertheless resolved to continue to target migrant workers as part of its regular organizing work. As is often the case, however, support at the leadership level does not translate smoothly to action. The other sector in which KCTU affiliates were particularly active on migration issues was manufacturing. But the Korean Metalworkers Union had little success, largely because migrants are concentrated in small and medium manufacturing enterprises, where rates of unionization are low (Interview with KMWU director for unorganized and precarious workers, December 2011).

The second country in this category is Singapore, the Asian destination country where the greatest proportion of temporary labor migrants are union members. However, this outcome is not a direct result of engagement with the international labor movement but rather of government policy. Singapore's National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) is closely aligned with the government and has followed its lead on temporary labor migration. The NTUC's highest-profile servicing initiative is its Migrant Workers Centre, which is open to migrant workers from all sectors except domestic work. MWC runs a shelter and a 24-hour hotline for migrant workers in distress, as well as education courses and assistance with issues like unpaid salary or exploitation by agents (Interview with MWC manager, July 2014). NTUC affiliates also recruit proportionally more temporary migrant workers than any other mainstream union in Asia.

Despite the fact that the NTUC does not depend on the international labor movement, has also been proactive in reaching out to the Ituc and the GUFs on their migration initiatives, hosting events associated with a number of international programs and participating in meetings around the region, where it highlights its policies and programs (Field observations, 2005-2009). Indeed, as a state-sponsored union body, temporary labor migration is one of the few issues on which its interests align with those of the international labor movement. Its political limitations notwithstanding, the NTUC's migrant labor initiatives are genuine examples of what can be achieved when a union prioritizes the recruitment of migrant workers, although government restrictions on freedom of association mean that migrant workers – like their local counterparts – have no choice in terms of the union what they can join.

Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand

Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand all benefited from more intensive GUF and SSO engagement on migration. All three have sizeable foreign worker populations, but unions in all three are particularly weak – and therefore the likelihood of their engaging with foreign workers without support is, in theory at least, particularly low. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions – itself a product of engagement with the international labor movement (Gallin, 2000) – has long been relatively open to foreign workers, but unions' low levels of industrial power in that territory have meant that its affiliates have little capacity to defend migrant worker rights. Unions in Malaysia and Thailand face a different challenge, namely tight government control on regular labor migrants and the presence of large numbers of irregular labor migrants, who have no legal right to join a union. Nevertheless, in all three countries, substantive change has occurred in terms of union attitude, but also union behavior.

Even in these countries, local unions' engagement has been limited to a small number of sectors and initiatives. These interventions are, however, highly significant when the conditions under which unions operate in each of these countries are considered.

Having stared down significant opposition from its membership, the HKCTU began engaging on labor migration in the mid-1990s. These efforts intensified from the mid-2000s, with support from BWI and the Solidarity Center for migrant worker organizing projects (Interview with BWI Asian migration project officer, October 2008; Interview with Solidarity Center Asia director, August 2015). The primary focus of its efforts in the early years was on foreign domestic workers, who comprise by far the largest group of temporary labor migrants in the territory (Interview with HKCTU research officer, November 2005). During this period, it avoided direct organizing work, instead providing an institutional home for NGO-sponsored migrant-only unions, participating in migrant worker protests and mounting a campaign to improve wages in the sector.

Attempts to recruit migrants to the HKCTU's mainstream affiliates were much less successful. The most active sector in this regard was construction, which was part of BWI's Asian Migrant Worker program, but even here BWI resorted to supporting the establishment of an independent union for Nepalese construction workers after efforts to embed migrant worker organizing in a mainstream union failed. The BWI project began by supporting the Construction Site General Workers Union (CSGWU), which mounted a campaign against the systemic discrepancies in pay between local and immigrant workers. This support was vital: as a CSGWU official observed, "If there had been no project like this, there would have been some attempt to organize, but it wouldn't have had the same level of effect" (Interview, December 2010). Ultimately, however, the campaign's impact was limited by the fact that Hong Kong unions cannot bargain collectively, and by the lack of an organizing culture among the occupational unions that are affiliated to the CSGWU. BWI continued its efforts to encourage mainstream unions to organize, and Hong Kong Construction Industry Bar-Bending Workers' Union did recruit some Nepalese workers. However, in 2007, it shifted focus to migrant-only organizing. With the support of the local union and the help of a trainer from Nepal, a migrant-only union was established. By 2010, the Nepalese Construction Workers Union (NCWU) had the largest dues-paying membership of any of Hong Kong's construction unions (Interview with NCWU official, December 2010). Ironically, like the CSGWU, the NCWU – which accommodates permanent residents, rather than temporary labor migrants – opposes temporary labor migration, which it sees as a threat to its members' jobs (Interviews, December 2010).

Until the mid-2000s, Malaysian unions were extremely hostile to foreign workers, and had actively campaigned for their expulsion (Crisis, 2005). It was in this context

that the Solidarity Center first approached the Malaysian Trades Union Congress in the late 1990s in an attempt to shift its stance on labor migration (Interview with Solidarity Center Asia director, August 2014). It was not until 2005 that this position shifted, primarily in response to pressure from the ILO and the international labor movement (Interview with MTUC general secretary, August 2009). Much of the MTUC's early work focused on foreign domestic workers, in large part because the ILO had funded a fulltime program officer to deal with that constituency. Over the same period, a second position, funded by the Solidarity Center, was established to focus on migrant workers in other sectors. Legal support was provided to temporary labor migrants through the MTUC's industrial relations department. For example, it ran a successful lawsuit against a company that had refused to provide migrant workers with the same wages and conditions as local workers, which set a precedent that unions could use to put pressure on other companies (Interview with MTUC general secretary, August 2009).

Some of the MTUC's affiliates had their own migrant labor initiatives. In the service sector, they staffed the UNI-funded help desk initiative (Interview with UNI regional secretary, July 2014), which secured RM 840,000 (USD 233,333) in wage claims for 436 migrant workers from Indonesia, Nepal, and Myanmar in its first two years of operation alone (UNI-MLC, 2008). MTUC affiliates in construction and manufacturing were also drawn into migrant worker organizing, primarily through GUF programs. A second example was BWI's collaboration with the Timber Employees Union Peninsular Malaysia, which began in 2006. This project has been the most successful example of a GUF organizing initiative in the Malaysian context. As in South Korea and Hong Kong, a key element was the provision of funding for the employment of an organizer from the country of origin of a key migrant group. Within two years, the union had recruited 1,000 migrant worker members, who paid the same dues as Malaysian members. By 2013, the number of migrant worker members exceeded 1,500 (BWI 2013) in a union whose membership had numbered only 9,000 a few years earlier. The Electrical Industry Workers Union (Eiwu) has also been quite proactive. The Eiwu began recruiting migrant workers as part of a general union renewal project funded by the International Metalworkers Federation, one of the GUFs that later merged to form IndustriALL (Interview with Eiwu official, May 2010). In some workplaces, the Eiwu was forced to try to recruit foreign members in order to meet the 50 percent threshold necessary to establish a legal presence.

In Thailand, too, unions have traditionally been overtly hostile towards foreign workers, especially the hundreds of thousands of Burmese who sought refuge from the Junta (Interviews, 2007). From the mid-2000s, however, some unions have made a concerted effort to support labor migrants. These efforts began when Thai

unionists participated in an ILO-run workshop, alongside colleagues from Cambodia and Laos, on the protection of migrant workers, at which the Labor Congress of Thailand, the National Congress of Thai Labor, the Thai Trade Union Congress, and State Enterprise Unions Confederation (Serc) signed the Phuket Declaration, which recognizes that “migrant workers have a right to join existing unions and that unions should be committed to organizing and recruiting migrant workers” (LCT *et al.* 2005). Although the declaration marked an important shift in these unions’ public stance, there was initially little follow-through following its adoption (Interview with ILO Bangkok official, February 2007). Rather, most of the change in the ensuing years was driven by the Thai Labor Solidarity Committee (TLSC), an umbrella group that brings together unions and labor NGOs. In more recent years, Serc and the TLSC have supported a migrant labor association called Migrant Workers Right Network (MWRN), a membership-based organization which claimed to have more than 3,700 individual migrant worker members as of 2015 (MWRN 2015). Although MWRN cannot register as a union under Thai labor law, it was set up “to imitate a trade union”, and registered in November 2014 as the Serc Foundation, under the leadership of a former Serc general secretary (MWRN 2015). And while it initially concentrated on service provision, it has also engaged in union-like activities, for example, supporting workers at one of the largest shrimp factories in Samut Sakhorn to negotiate a settlement with their employer over forced leave (Mills, 2014).

Agents of change

It is quite difficult to even document the full range of international interventions, given the nature of internal record-keeping and challenges in maintaining institutional memory, particularly in the SSOs, where staff tend to come and go (field observations, various years). It is even more difficult to accurately quantify success. In the absence of definitive measures, their success or failure can be assessed against four measures: the *presence* of a migration-related program; whether or not those programs have influenced unions’ *stated position* on temporary labor migration; whether, and to what extent, changes in attitude have translated into *behavioral change*; and whether behavioral change results in *concrete changes for migrants*.

As the preceding discussion has shown, international labor movement actors have had some – albeit uneven – success in terms of the first three of these measures. Attempts were made to establish one or more migration initiatives in six of the seven Asian destination countries, the seventh being Singapore, where the national center and its affiliates were already serving and recruiting migrant workers. Unions initially agreed to participate in all six, and one or more programs were established in

four. In these four, participants' stated position on foreign workers changed. Unions became advocates, sometimes alone and sometimes in collaboration with the NGOs and faith-based groups that had long made the case for migrant worker rights. This shift is highly significant, requiring these unions to shift their narrative to one most often characterized by outright rejection to one of acceptance, often in the face of ongoing member hostility towards migrants. Changes of behavior following this shift in stated position did not always extend beyond advocacy. But, as described above, in several cases unions established migrant-focused services, supported the formation of migrant-only unions, or recruited migrants to their own ranks.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these interventions have been most successful where they adjusted their strategies and tactics to respond to local conditions: Hong Kong, South Korea and Malaysia are cases in point. It is more difficult, however, to point to substantive changes in the structural conditions that constrain temporary labor migrants' access to their labor rights. There are certainly examples where mainstream unions have successfully fought for migrants' right to freedom of association or represented them in court to secure unpaid wages or some form of compensation and in the workplace to secure coverage under a collective bargain. On the one hand, these examples demonstrate that unions can successfully represent temporary labor migrants even in challenging industrial relations environments where unions have relatively little institutional power. On the other, an enormous amount of work is required if such examples are to become standard practice, and there is a long way to go before the majority of unions are convinced to target temporary labor migrants as potential members. What is clear, though, is that the greatest shift has occurred in countries where the activities of international movement actors are most concentrated.

Conclusion: a contribution to union renewal?

The significance of the achievements the international labor movement in regard to Asian unions' responses to temporary labor migration should not be underestimated. Nor should the impact of its interventions on the approaches and practices of the unions with which they worked most closely on migration. In the three countries where they were most active – Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand – advancements as a result of these programs are particularly remarkable, given unions' low levels of institutional power in those contexts.

In Hong Kong, the HKCTU's decision to provide an institutional umbrella for migrant-only domestic worker unions not only benefited those unions, but the HKCTU itself, as these separate but affiliated structures strengthened the local labor

movement by increasing its ability to mobilize in the streets. Indeed, while small, Hong Kong's foreign domestic worker unions, are the most successful examples of migrant-only unionism anywhere in Asia. This success is due in large part because their connections with mainstream unions and migrant labor NGOs have allowed exert pressure on the Hong Kong government to make the legislative and policy frameworks more migrant-friendly. In Thailand, where the union movement is even weaker, a focus on migrant workers has allowed Serc to broaden its focus beyond state-owned enterprises and simultaneously strengthen its relationships with the international labor movement.

However, it is in Malaysia, where local unions succeeded in direct recruitment of migrant workers to their ranks, that the impact has been greatest for unions. There unions' decisions to organize migrant workers in the timber and electronics sectors (along with some other sectors, for example, dockworkers) improved their broader organizing practices by forcing them to become more member focused. Recruitment of migrant workers also greatly bolstered the membership of particular unions, in some cases making it possible for them to reach a workplace bargaining threshold for the first time. Given the reputation Malaysian unions have as being very bureaucratic, and offering little more than legal services, these experiments with organizing – even if piecemeal and only partially successful – demonstrate the impact that a focus on diversity can have on even the weakest of unions. It also demonstrates that international labor movement actors have indeed functioned as agents of change.

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Abstract

The International Labor Movement as an agent of change: temporary foreign workers and union renewal in Asia

This paper analyses the role of the Global Union Federations (GUFs) and Solidarity Support Organizations (SSOs) have played in Asian unions' attempts to reach out to temporary foreign workers, drawing on ten years of qualitative fieldwork with the GUFs at headquarters and regional level and with their affiliates in the seven Asian countries that rely most heavily on temporary labor migration. Union renewal and revitalization are seen as side-effects of that focus, as new constituencies are able to shore up membership and bring new ideas and perspectives into the movement.

Keywords: Temporary workers; Global Union Federations; Unionism in Southeast Asia; Union revitalization.

Resumo

O Movimento Sindical Internacional como um agente da mudança: trabalhadores estrangeiros temporários e renovação sindical na Ásia

Este artigo analisa o papel das Federações Sindicais Globais (GUFs) e Organizações de Apoio e Solidariedade (SSOs) nas tentativas dos sindicatos sudeste-asiáticos de alcançarem trabalhadores estrangeiros temporários em sete países da região. Baseia-se em dez anos de trabalho de campo qualitativo com as GUFs, seja em suas sedes, seja em nível regional – fortemente dependente da migração laboral temporária –, e com seus afiliados nos respectivos países. A renovação e a revitalização do sindicalismo são vistas como efeitos colaterais desse enfoque, na medida em que novos membros são capazes de fortalecer a adesão e trazer novas ideias e perspectivas para o movimento. Palavras-chave: Trabalhadores temporários; Federações sindicais globais; Sindicalismo no Sudeste Asiático; Revitalização do sindicalismo.

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Warring Brothers

Constructing Komatsu's and Caterpillar's Globalization

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Introduction

Globalization is remaking spatial connections between different parts of the world and creating new geo-imaginaries of how it is organized. As such, it challenges the idea, dominant since Keynes's 1936 *The general theory of employment, interest and money*, that economies are nationally organized. This material re-articulation of the world economy and discursive shift from seeing it as a set of interlinked, nationally organized economies to an increasingly holistic, singular entity, is impacting firms, governments, and labor organizations, which must reconfigure their political praxis to address changes in how the world is organized and reimagine their places within it. In this context, much globalization talk has focused upon the power of transnational corporations (TNCs) to transform the planet. Many see TNCs as the decisive global actors shaping economic development as they move investments around the world. Through implementing in the economic landscape what Harvey (1982) has called a "spatial fix", a geographical configuration of investments allowing them to confront challenges they face at specific times, TNCs connect some workers and disconnect others via practices of "strategic coupling and decoupling" (Coe *et al.*, 2004).

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In an effort to explore how TNCs implement spatial fixes and what practices of strategic coupling and decoupling mean for labor, here we compare and contrast how Komatsu and Caterpillar, the world's two largest engineering machinery firms which are crucial suppliers to highly globalized economic sectors (mining and construction), structured their Global Production Networks (GPNs) in particular geographical ways as they grew from small, local firms to become TNCs with truly global reach. Their becoming global – that is to say, their remaking of their own spatial scales of organization – has been a central element in their accumulation strategies, one that not all firms feel is necessary for success (many firms are quite happy to remain locally or nationally focused). In exploring this spatial history, we show how addressing geographical concerns has been crucial to how the two have actively constructed their own global presence. Significantly, though, whilst tremendous rivals, in some cases they have also been strategic allies. This competitive and collaborative relationship has shaped their geographical organization.

We build our argument around three principal points. First, we suggest that firm evolution must be seen as a deeply geographical process. Both Komatsu and Caterpillar have had to be highly spatially aware and nimble. Contra arguments asserting that we live in a world in which geography and the specificities of place are becoming less important because firms can now locate almost anywhere on the planet – Ohmae (2005, pp. 13, 94), for instance, has suggested that “in the age of the global economy [it] no longer matters where a company is based” – we argue that if firms can indeed locate their operations almost anywhere, then the particularities of where they do choose to locate them – that is, local geography – become more, not less, important. Firms' ability to reorganize their own spatial configurations, then, is a central element in the accumulation process. Further, we question what it actually means to “go global”. Whereas “going global” has often been talked of as if it were an unproblematic, inexorable process, we demonstrate that it is neither predestined nor free of challenges. Instead, it involves making a series of spatially informed decisions. In particular, we show how the two firms consciously constructed new global scales of existence to address challenges they faced at various times. Such an approach sees their globalization not as some kind of inevitable end-game of capitalism, the only possible outcome of capitalist accumulation dynamics, but instead as something subject to political contestation. Firms' global organization, therefore is a social product, not an inevitability. Recognizing this is important for contemplating the politics of globalization and developing alternatives to its neoliberal version.

Second, we engage with Coe and Yeung (2015, p. 191), who argue that GPNs “are as much systems of labour as they are systems of value creation and circulation”. As they note, “the uneven availability of an ‘appropriate’ workforce – notably in terms

of the intersecting attributes of skills, productivity, cost, and controllability – across different regional economies is an important factor underpinning strategic coupling and... uncoupling and recoupling”. However, as they also note, “until recently[,] labour was a chronically neglected dimension of these systems”. The case study below, then, seeks to counter this neglect by showing how both firms’ efforts to develop geographical strategies were deeply shaped by labor concerns, both *labor as object* (how each sought to manage its workers) and *labor as subject* (how workers forced each firm to reconfigure its structures, often in ways it did not wish). Managing interactions with labor and the state are aspects of firm transnationalization and GPN administration that are often skipped over in analyses, with transnationalization frequently conceptualized simply in terms of how TNCs seek to take advantage of variations between what are perceived to be largely passive states and workforces in different places. In contrast, our spatial history highlights the critical role labor and the state played in shaping where and how these two firms transnationalized. We situate our work, then, in critiques of GPN theorizing which have argued that we must place TNCs’ historical evolution into wider contexts, including how states and labor actively shape their spatial development (Herod *et al.*, 2007; Ekberg & Lange, 2014). By showing how Komatsu and Caterpillar have acted in response to both internal and external forces, we suggest that the state and labor are much more important in shaping how TNCs develop than many neoliberally-inspired accounts allow.

Third, in examining how Komatsu and Caterpillar became global, we show that they have co-constituted each other across time and space. Whereas early theories treated firms as largely self-contained entities and argued that their efforts to transnationalize were primarily driven by a desire to create internal markets so as to bypass imperfections in external markets for intermediate products, thereby minimizing transaction costs (Buckley & Casson 1976), we show that how firms develop geographically cannot be understood simply by analyzing their internal dynamics but must be seen relationally, in terms of how they respond to the actions of competing firms and numerous other actors, including their own and others’ workers. Again, this provides a conceptual *entrée* to considering how labor as active agent can shape the evolution of global capitalism.

The paper is organized as follows. We first lay out a basis for understanding how firms are geographically situated and how this shapes their development, especially their desire and capacity to become global. The remainder of the paper details both TNCs’ spatial development, showing how they became global – that is, we view globalization as a historical-geographical process rather than a teleological inevitability. To conclude, we draw out implications for thinking about global firms and national economies in the geographical ways which underpin the paper.

The geography of business and the business of geography

Both Komatsu and Caterpillar sit at the heart of extensive GPNs. Their major customers include all the principal global mining and construction corporations (Rio Tinto, Vale, BHP-Billiton, Glencore, Anglo-American, the Shenhua Group, Vinci, Grupo ACS, and Bechtel). In 2019 Komatsu operated across 146 countries, had 85 manufacturing plants, a workforce of 62,000, and sales revenue of ¥2.725 trillion (US\$26.1b) (Komatsu, 2019). In that same year, Caterpillar had a workforce of 102,300, 101 manufacturing plants, 165 dealers selling equipment in 190 countries, and sales revenue of over US\$55b (Caterpillar Inc., 2019).

Coe and Yeung (2015, p. 2) define a GPN “as an organizational arrangement, comprising interconnected economic and non-economic actors, coordinated by a global lead firm, and producing goods or services across multiple geographical locations for worldwide markets”. In addition to a lead firm’s internal dynamics, they argue that five “extra-firm actors” play key roles in shaping GPN evolution: states; labor; consumers; civil society organizations; and international regulatory organizations. In exploring how Komatsu and Caterpillar became lead firms for their respective GPNs, we focus upon how both reconstituted themselves geographically for, along with managing value (how it is created, enhanced, and captured) and power (how it is deployed and maintained within GPNs), such lead firms must manage space (how agents and structures are embedded in particular territories and the challenges and opportunities this can provide). In so doing, we follow scholars who suggest that two of these five actors – the state (Smith, 2015) and labor (Rainnie *et al.*, 2011; Todd *et al.*, 2020) – should be accorded more weight than the term “extra-firm actor” perhaps suggests. Consequently, below we focus upon how Komatsu’s and Caterpillar’s workforces, together with the US and Japanese governments, crucially shaped how they became global firms. Finally, Coe and Yeung argue that different GPNs or segments thereof often intersect as common strategic partners or specialized suppliers come together. This means that whilst we can think of Komatsu and Caterpillar as central architects of their respective GPNs, each firm has been shaped by its interactions with the other. They have thus co-constituted one another.

An important aspect of these TNCs’ evolutions has involved them addressing various geographical challenges and opportunities. One way they have done so is by changing the spatial scale at which they operate. TNCs are frequently envisioned to ascend from local to national and then global scales of organization as if climbing a pre-existing ladder of social being, with each scale seen as a rung – Smith (1995) has called this “scale jumping”. However, this depiction largely ignores *how* these different rungs/scales are created and connected – that is, it ignores the political

struggles involved in firms' scalar reinventions of themselves and how this is shaped by their interactions with other actors. What we show, then, is how Komatsu and Caterpillar had to actively and consciously remake themselves as global firms – that is, they willfully had to *become* global. At first glance this distinction – viewing firms' *becoming* global as a case of them actively remaking themselves at different spatial scales versus simply colonizing pre-made scales – may seem unremarkable. However, we highlight the concept of *scale making* for two reasons.

First, it provides a way to think about how firms often spend considerable financial and other resources to remake their own scales of organization to overcome various challenges, linking what is happening at one scale with that happening at others. For example, do they choose to stay local or do they reconstitute themselves as national or global operators and what are the processes and tensions involved in this rescaling? Furthermore, it forces us to question not just how firms become global but, also, how they actively become local – that is, rather than accepting the local scale of organization as a natural foundation or starting point for all economic life, we must examine how firms localize themselves through developing relationships with particular communities near and far. Hence, Komatsu and Caterpillar have both represented themselves as local firms when doing business in their competitors' home turf through, for instance, engaging in local charitable efforts – in 2020 Caterpillar partnered with “Second Harvest Japan” to provide meals for people affected by Covid, whilst Komatsu has supported “Feeding America”, with both TNCs portraying themselves as good local corporate citizens. These activities, then, are about these global firms *becoming* local actors.

Second, in considering how firms are scaled it is imperative to recognize that how their scalar configuration is described discursively is important for how we understand their spatial structure and how they exercise power. For example, “global” firms are often imagined to sit atop the scalar hierarchy of social life with “national” ones sitting below them and “local” ones still further down the scalar hierarchy. In such a verticalist visualization, a firm's moving from the local to the national and then the global scale involves theorizing it as climbing upwards, as if ascending a ladder. This is noteworthy, as Western culture often sees things that are above others as more powerful than what lies below them. However, conceptualizing the relationship between scales in such verticalist terms is only one way to do so. If we conceptualize scales instead in terms of, say, sets of concentric rings, in which the national scale encloses the local but is itself enclosed by the global, then firms moving from local to national to global scale are viewed as extending their organization outwards from their points of origin, rather than upwards. Such a simple move from a language of verticalism to horizontalism transforms how we understand the politics of trans-

nationalization – being seen as “above” others may allow a firm to deploy one set of rhetorics about its power and positionality vis-à-vis locally embedded workers whereas being seen as “encompassing” others may facilitate different rhetorics, with all of the implications for projecting political power this brings (see Herod, 2010 for more on scalar rhetorics).

A final concern is how Komatsu’s reworking of its spatial and scalar organization has challenged Caterpillar to reconfigure its organization, and vice versa. Exploring how both firms became global and how the global (re)organization of each shaped the other is a core element of our paper. However, to suggest that the two simply “shaped” each other’s development is to greatly understate the case. Rather, we argue that the two should be seen as what Marx ([1894] 1959, p. 173) called *feindlichen Brüder* (“warring/hostile brothers”). Hence, when it benefitted them, they worked together but they also engaged in intense rivalry. As we show, these choices of cooperation and competition have had important consequences for their respective geographical organization, although significantly they have led to both firms coming to mirror each other’s spatial strategies, as both see producing in China as a solution to crises of profitability.

Komatsu’s and Caterpillar’s *pas de deux*

Early days

Until the 1960s, Komatsu and Caterpillar largely operated in isolation. Komatsu’s origins are in central Japan, where it was founded in 1917. Its early growth was built upon government largesse, producing tractors, bulldozers, tanks, and howitzers for the military. Much of its initial post-WWII growth was also abetted by the state, though in this case by the US government in the form of contracts to rebuild Japan. Having grown domestically thanks to Japanese and US government munificence, Komatsu began looking for global expansion opportunities. Its first overseas exports were made in 1955, when it sent graders to Argentina. In 1958 it inked a technical assistance agreement with the Indian Ministry of Defense that laid the groundwork for subsequently manufacturing tractors in the sub-continent.

Created through a 1925 merger between the Holt Manufacturing Company and the C. L. Best Tractor Company, Caterpillar began in East Peoria, Illinois. In contrast to Komatsu, for Caterpillar global markets were important early on. In 1922 it licensed an Australian dealer and by the 1930s had outlets in Africa and Europe. In 1936 Sydney firm Waugh & Josephson began manufacturing graders in Australia, the first known assembly of Caterpillar equipment outside the US. Demand occasioned

by Soviet agricultural collectivization helped Caterpillar weather the Depression. In the early post-WWII period, it began shifting into other overseas spaces, creating a new global scale of operations. By the 1950s, it had manufacturing subsidiaries in Brazil, the UK, Belgium, France, Mexico, and Canada.

Although each initially operated with little concern for the other's activities, the firms' isolation from each other changed when Caterpillar turned its attention to the growing Japanese market in the 1960s. Initially, Caterpillar attempted to develop a joint venture with Komatsu to manufacture in Japan. However, this failed because Komatsu was only interested in a licensing agreement. Consequently, in 1963 Caterpillar signed a 50-50 joint venture with Mitsubishi. This was extremely unusual, as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) rarely approved joint ventures not controlled by Japanese firms. MITI's acceptance of the deal likely relates to it being keen for a Japanese firm to gain access to Caterpillar's technology and US networks (Bartlett & Rangan, 1988, p. 4).

Caterpillar's entrance into the Japanese market was a turning point in Komatsu's spatial development. Until the mid-1950s Komatsu was generally Japan-focused, renowned for poor quality and simply modeling its products on Caterpillar's, "so much so that Komatsu castings sometimes carried Caterpillar part numbers" (Haycraft, 2002, p. 183). Although it was the dominant player in Japan, issues of quality, a small overseas dealership network, and restrictive licensing agreements limited Komatsu's ability to export into key foreign markets, essentially boxing it in geographically. This made Caterpillar's entry into Japan all the more threatening, as it was now seeking to compete on Komatsu's home turf, from which Komatsu did not seem to have much of a geographical escape route. Fearing this challenge, Komatsu urged MITI to delay the Mitsubishi-Caterpillar joint venture for two years. This allowed it to transform its products, becoming one of Japan's first to introduce Total Quality Control (TQC). The result was that quality improved quickly and Komatsu secured several export orders from the Global South, orders tied to Japanese government loans. Komatsu's organizational rescaling, in other words, was a highly geographically-informed process of market-making, one largely dependent upon state policy.

By the 1970s, Caterpillar had cemented itself as the industry's global leader, with an extensive global production and dealership network – close to 50% of its sales were outside the US (Haycraft, 2002, p. 167). For its part, Komatsu was beginning to find more solid footing for its global rescaling. In 1970, after a failed partnership with LeTourneau-Westinghouse to distribute its products in North America, management established Komatsu America Corp. to sell directly to the US market. By 1975, Komatsu had sales of almost US\$1b, making it second only to Caterpillar

globally. Moreover, whereas Komatsu was previously known for poor product quality, by now its TQC program “was years ahead of anything Western manufacturers were doing” (Haycraft, 2002, p. 232). At the same time, it benefitted from Japanese government efforts to keep the Yen undervalued to aid exports. This did not go unnoticed and Caterpillar pressured the US government to do something to end what it saw as Komatsu’s unfair competitive advantage.

The above, then, shows how the state, in various forms in numerous countries, was central to both firms’ geographical expansions and rescaling activities. It also shows that their geographical structures were increasingly being shaped by one another’s actions. Finally, it demonstrates that there was no “one best route” to rescaling their activities, as both formatted their GPNs in distinctive ways. If the state as an “extra-firm actor” was important for both firms’ initial rescaling efforts, though, by the 1970s it would be questions of labor control that would increasingly drive their spatial activities.

‘Encircle Caterpillar’

Between 1975 and 1985 the two firms’ fortunes could not have been more different. Through its aggressive transnationalization strategy, Komatsu aimed to overtake Caterpillar and become the dominant force in the industry, an approach reinforced by its geographically expressive motto “Maru-C” (“Encircle Caterpillar”). Just as the state had been critical in shaping both firms’ rescaling, so, too, would labor. However, labor relations at the two firms were very different. As Haycraft (2002, p. 260) notes:

Komatsu workers took management exhortations toward the goal [of beating Caterpillar] seriously, and slogans to that effect were regularly worn on headbands in the shop. While North American workers were periodically on strike for more paid time off[,] Japanese workers took their “vacations” working... and strikes in the North American sense were unheard of.

Although Komatsu’s labor relations appeared to many in Caterpillar as “typically Japanese” (business unionism combined with paternalism), this is a somewhat simplistic picture of both Japanese employment relations – Japan experienced an annual average of 5,350 disputes and 1.66 million lost work days between 1975 and 1985 (Kuwahara, 1989, p. 7) – and of Komatsu’s employment relations, as management had to deal with the *shunto*, an annual spring offensive in which unions bargain for a nationwide wage settlement. Still, whilst Komatsu’s labor relations were not as idyllic as some suggested, the environment at Caterpillar’s North American plants was unquestionably more confrontational. In 1982 concerns that Komatsu’s labor

costs were 45% below its own, along with low global demand for earth-moving equipment, led Caterpillar to push for concessions from the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, a push met by strike action. Caterpillar's globally-scaled capacity to fill inventories, however, led the 205-day strike to fail and the firm secured give-backs (Haycraft, 2002, p. 410). In something of a conciliatory gesture, though, senior managers depicted the strike's end as the union and firm coming to an understanding that their enemy was not each other but Komatsu and its encroaching GPN.

The strike's failure can perhaps best be explained by putting it into the broader context of Caterpillar's business position, especially its relationships with Komatsu. In the early 1980s Caterpillar recorded its first losses since the 1930s. Higher labor costs and the Japanese state's pursuit of a weak Yen meant that Komatsu products were 20% to 30% cheaper than Caterpillar's US-manufactured ones (Miller & O'Leary, 2002). Additionally, consumers now demanded that it match Komatsu's warranty and product assurances. In response, Caterpillar reconfigured spatially its GPN, decoupling itself from six plants in Ohio, Milwaukee, and Wisconsin, together with Britain's Birtley factory. Equally, fear of losing market share forced Caterpillar to reverse its resistance to leasing products and providing financing to customers, services that Komatsu had offered for some time (Haycraft, 2002). Caterpillar lowered prices in Europe and Asia but sought to maintain a "price island" in North America – that is, to carve out a space in the global economy where prices would be stable – based upon the belief that US customers were willing to pay a premium for high performance equipment and assurances that any problems would be fixed quickly, so avoiding costly project delays (Greenhouse, 1984). However, competition from Komatsu forced Caterpillar to reduce US prices too. Taking advantage of its global scale of organization to avoid problems the strong Dollar caused when exporting from the US, Caterpillar showed geographical sensitivity by largely using its European operations and joint venture with Mitsubishi to produce equipment for the Global South and other overseas markets and primarily using its US plants to supply North America (Risen, 1985) – that is to say, it segregated its markets spatially to address problems caused by the overvalued Dollar. Although aided by US government loans made to foreign purchasers of its products through the US Export-Import Bank (Franklin, 2001), Caterpillar's problems vis-à-vis Komatsu were exacerbated by government policy, specifically the Reagan Administration's embargo on sales to the USSR due to its invasion of Afghanistan. This provided Komatsu with an opportunity to sign a contract with Moscow to develop a scraper using a Soviet design and Japanese parts.

At the same time, Komatsu grew more globalized, with new manufacturing facilities and a more sophisticated dealership network. Whereas in 1967 10% of

its sales were overseas, by 1975 nearly 50% were (Komatsu, 2016, p. 29). In 1976, in conjunction with the Mexican government, Komatsu began assembling large bulldozers in Mexico. In 1979 Komatsu Australia Pty., Ltd. was created. In 1981 Komatsu established a marketing subsidiary in Germany and in 1983 started a manufacturing joint venture in Indonesia. Symbolic of changing fortunes and spatial organizations was Komatsu's purchase of Caterpillar's old Birtley factory to establish a UK manufacturing base (Gray & Rapoport, 1985). Most critically, in 1985 Komatsu built a factory in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to compete directly with Caterpillar in the US. Much as Caterpillar had taken the fight for dominance to Komatsu's home turf in the 1960s, Komatsu's global reach had now come to Caterpillar's backdoor. However, whilst Komatsu's strategy to catch up with Caterpillar was proving highly successful, Shoji Nogawa, Komatsu's new president, saw the industry as too weak to sustain conflict. Consequently, he announced that "we have no intention of taking on Caterpillar and fighting them like an enemy... [W]hat is important is to have enough of a share so that we can exist and co-operate in this market" (quoted in Rodger, 1985b) – a clear indication of how he saw the two firms as "warring brothers".

By the mid-1980s, then, Komatsu and Caterpillar had rescaled and stood as the two dominant forces in the global industry. However, Komatsu's corporate strategy was still largely Japan-centric, whilst Caterpillar had aggressively internationalized its production network. At least for now, the warring brothers would concentrate on driving smaller firms out of the market rather than directly confronting one other.

Ebb and flow: competition based upon acquisitions and joint ventures

By the mid-1980s Komatsu's spectacular rise had begun to falter and Caterpillar faced declining profitability. Faced with such difficulties, how did the two respond? As before, they had their differences but both increasingly engaged in careful appraisals of the other's actions, with the state and labor critical to each firm's continued geographical reorganizations. A key element in these reorganizations was the European Commission's 1985 placing of a 27% anti-dumping duty on Komatsu excavators imported into Europe and Caterpillar's return to profitability after management and production overhauls (Rodger, 1985a). Caterpillar's strategy for returning to profitability involved hostility towards organized labor and a Japanization (or, perhaps, Komatsuzation) of the labor process, combined with the outsourcing of some production to other manufacturers or destinations with lower labor costs (Haycraft 2002, p. 318). In a geographically insightful statement, one Caterpillar manager illuminated his understanding of the interplay between corporate restructuring and geography when he stated that "[a]nyone who is going to be a low-cost producer in

the future is going to have to shop the world for low-cost components and maintain assembly in various places” (Rodger, 1985b).

Managers presented problems with Caterpillar’s competitiveness and declining profitability as a three-pronged issue involving a worldwide drop in demand, Dollar overvaluation, and disputes with the UAW. Their initial response was to lay off workers, reduce capacity, and demand that the US government deal with the Yen-Dollar issue. However, Caterpillar’s profitability continued to decline whilst Komatsu gained market share. This resulted in a major shift in the firm’s view of itself, from seeing its problems as external to viewing them as internal. Consequently, managers considered to what extent Caterpillar had structural cost disadvantages relative to its key competitors, especially Komatsu, and undertook a US\$2.2b factory modernization program at 88 plants, an initiative that amply demonstrates one firm’s influence upon the other (Miller & O’Leary, 2002).

Much of Caterpillar’s growing profitability issues resulted from how it was structured geographically and how this had shaped agreements it had made with the UAW. In particular, since the 1960s Caterpillar had operated under a so-called pattern labor agreement, with the UAW negotiating virtually identical agreements with firms across the industry. Although this worked relatively well when Caterpillar faced little foreign competition and when most of the US industry was unionized, by the 1990s it had become a significant problem, as the bulk of Caterpillar’s manufacturing facilities were in the US but much of its market and principal competitor – Komatsu – were overseas. Furthermore, Komatsu’s Chattanooga plant was not unionized and so was not party to the pattern agreement. Indeed, Komatsu had chosen to locate its plant in Tennessee precisely because the southern US is a less-unionized environment – i.e., it structured its US spatial fix to avoid heavily unionized areas. Without exiting such a pattern agreement, Caterpillar officials argued, their US facilities could not compete domestically against Komatsu or globally (Walsh, 1994). Consequently, Caterpillar wanted to impose a new labor relations regime, a strategy that led to conflictual labor relations. Whereas in 1991 the UAW sought a national contract based upon the union’s agreement with John Deere, Caterpillar argued that the practice of pattern bargaining had grown obsolete because it only leveled the playing field among competitors in a closed, domestic market (the US) and Caterpillar’s principal competition was not from US firms like John Deere but from foreign and/or non-union ones, especially Komatsu, which paid much lower wages (Franklin *et al.*, 1992). The result was an ongoing struggle between the UAW and Caterpillar from 1991 to 1998 over managers’ efforts to break up the pattern agreement. This mirrored growing tensions elsewhere – in 1987 workers occupied Caterpillar’s factory in Uddingston, Scotland, for instance.

Meanwhile, Komatsu also faced problems. Although it was developing an international assembly, distribution, and sales network, much of its manufacturing capacity remained within Japan. However, as the Yen appreciated, from ¥305/ US\$1 in 1975 to ¥121/US\$1 in 1987, Komatsu was forced to increase prices overseas and 1987 profits decreased 36% (Garnett, 1988). In response, Komatsu refocused itself geographically by ramping up production in its wholly-owned manufacturing plants in the US, Britain, and Brazil, together with joint ventures in Indonesia and Mexico – in 1987 these operations produced about US\$100 million worth of goods; in 1988 that figure more than tripled (Haycraft, 2002, p. 319). Ambitions for global growth and strong demands from local governments to invest in manufacturing facilities outside Japan led Komatsu to open additional overseas plants (Bartlett & Rangan, 1988). The result was that Komatsu reshaped its global organization, emulating Caterpillar's strategy by shifting a sizable portion of its production to low-cost locations. This allowed it to engage in an explicitly geographical labor-control strategy, that of whipsawing plants against one another. For instance, managers noted their disappointment at the UK's Birtley plant's output and product quality, warning they would look to other European locations for future expansion if there were not significant improvements (De Jonquieres, 1987). They also noted that their overseas workers viewed Japanese management techniques with skepticism. However, managers believed that Komatsu's administrative system, though more time-consuming to develop and implement, was superior to Caterpillar's, whose managers were seen as distant from the shopfloor (Tighe, 1991). Despite this, Komatsu's overseas plants experienced significant labor turnover, with employees less inclined to accept its corporate values than in Japan. Although Komatsu made a concerted effort to reduce discontent via establishment of a "Komatsu Way Promotion Unit" (Yoshino, 2010, pp. 12-16), these labor issues highlight the locally embedded challenges of firm globalization – local cultural norms often hinder firms' efforts to globalize production.

The mid- to late 1980s also saw Komatsu set up other joint ventures or licensing agreements, particularly in the Pacific Rim. It opened facilities in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and signed license agreements with several firms in China and Samsung in South Korea (Haycraft, 2002, p. 322). It also established a 50-50 joint venture (of which it eventually took full control) with German firm Demag to produce large excavators. In 1988 Komatsu initiated a 50-50 joint venture with US producer Dresser Industries to combine manufacturing resources in the Western Hemisphere. Six years later, it took complete control of Dresser, thereby securing 2.3 million square feet of North American manufacturing space. For its part, Caterpillar's global restructuring strategy – the Komatsuization of production and its plant

closures of the early and mid-1980s – eventually produced the results it was seeking. In 1987 it announced a profit of US\$350m, its largest since 1981 (Garnett, 1988). By the early 1990s, then, Caterpillar had re-asserted itself as the industry's global leader, leading Komatsu to abandon its aggressive 'Encircle Caterpillar' strategy as it worked to consolidate its global position as the sector's second global giant.

In sum, combined with a global consolidation of the industry, during this period the warring brothers had begun to shift attention away from traditional markets in Europe, North America, and Japan and, instead, increasingly focused upon emerging economies like the former-USSR, Southeast Asia's tiger economies, and, especially, China. Concurrent with this shift in geographical focus were efforts by both firms to maintain economic advantages and control over their workforces within their existing spatial organization.

China and the warring brothers

China's rapid urbanization has offered both Komatsu and Caterpillar opportunities. In the 1990s Komatsu began a geographic reorganization to avoid problems caused by Yen appreciation and expanded into new product markets (electronics, plastics, and robotics). It announced a five-fold rise in the volume of components its European plants were purchasing from low-cost suppliers in Eastern Europe (Marsh, 1997) and expanded activities in North America, selling there, for the first time, its own version of backhoe loaders, a market dominated by Caterpillar. Komatsu also cut subsidiaries' workforces by as much as one-third and, in 2002, its own domestic workforce by 5% (Yoshino, 2010, p. 5). For its part, Caterpillar had sought to establish itself as China's dominant construction machinery supplier. To do so, it signed an agreement with a local wheel-loader manufacturer and joint ventures with state-owned Chinese manufacturers, over which it would later seek to take control (Grant *et al.*, 2004), and sought state approval to create its own finance firm to fund its equipment manufacturing and to help build an innovation center in which to develop new products (Lau, 2003, p. 12). Caterpillar also hoped to capitalize on the early to mid-2000s global mining boom, especially in the Global South. This involved remaking its own geography. As Chairman Jim Owens explained (quoted in Grant & Marsh, 2004):

Mining is increasingly... being done in the developing countries... [W]e are the major equipment provider for the global mining, oil and gas industries, so we're going to go where that growth is.

Thus, whilst Komatsu was developing new products and pushing deeper into North America and Europe, Caterpillar engaged in a more significant thrust into the Global South. In 1997 it announced a US\$100m investment in small-scale machinery to “tak[e] the fight into its competitor’s territory”, particularly China, forming joint-ventures with Shanghai Diesel and the Xuzhou Construction Machinery Group (Marsh & Wagstyl, 1997). Indeed, it expected large returns from China, where annual sales were projected to climb five-fold by 2000. However, despite increased investment, Caterpillar remained far behind Komatsu in China, which has sold there since the 1950s (Palepu *et al.*, 2014).

By 2011, Caterpillar claimed 27 provincial dealerships and over 300 dealer outlets across China, of which 82 were established in that year alone (Caterpillar Inc., 2014). Indeed, this expansion led Caterpillar vice president Mike DeWalt to make a profoundly geographical claim: “we are in some ways more Chinese than [our] Chinese competitors” (*The Australian*, 2014). Caterpillar also announced plans to switch “as much as possible” its sourcing of complex parts for its Chinese factories from Japan to China (Weitzman, 2010), localizing that part of its GPN. In similar fashion, Komatsu also sought to use the global commodities boom and China’s insatiable demand for industrial machinery as a growth catalyst. Masahiro Sakane, Komatsu president, suggested that “from now on we need more manufacturing bases in China” (Sanchanta, 2004). Much like Caterpillar, Komatsu’s future growth was tightly linked to China and it hoped that China would soon account for a third of world demand (Marsh, 2010).

As Komatsu and Caterpillar become ever more embedded in China, the knock-on effects of working with the country’s state-controlled unions could be significant, especially in an era where unions are trying to develop global strategies to confront capital – in 2010, for instance, unions representing Caterpillar workers across the planet agreed to form a network under the aegis of the International Metalworkers’ Federation (now IndustriALL) to coordinate activities and share information. This has involved them quite literally mapping Caterpillar’s investments to understand its geographical organization as a starting point for challenging it (Goods, 2017). Nevertheless, relocation of a significant proportion of their global production to China is very much part of a new geography of union avoidance by the two firms. Quiescence by official Chinese unions also means that unions in other parts of the world will likely be undercut – at the 2016 Global Caterpillar Network Meeting held in Detroit, for instance, union officials learned that the Chinese and Brazilian Governments had signed a trade deal allowing China to sell heavy machinery into Brazil for half the price of Brazilian-made ones (Goods, 2016). Although there were several strikes in Brazil to try to protect workers’ interests, these were largely unsuc-

cessful. At the same time, however, growing labor unrest across China (Brown & Kai, 2017) and tentative efforts to create independent unions – efforts the regime fervently opposes – perhaps open opportunities for unionists outside China to make some headway.

Conclusion

In showing how Komatsu and Caterpillar remade themselves into global firms, we have highlighted several issues for understanding firm transnationalization.

First, managing their spatial fixes has been crucial to these firms' competitive positions. Through processes of strategic coupling and decoupling they have added some locations to their GPNs and excised others. This has linked certain workers and delinked others, with critical implications for labor – as some communities are brought into conversation with one another, others are removed. This is especially so because of where both firms have ended up: China. Given that China's dominant labor organization – the All-China Federation of Trade Unions – is state-controlled, it frequently pursues government economic policies rather than seeks to empower workers. This represents a significant challenge to organized labor elsewhere. At the same time, though, there are still opportunities for workers at the two firms (and others) to develop solidarity links – in June 2018, for instance, delegates from Caterpillar plants in Japan, the US, and Europe invited guests from Komatsu's union to attend their annual network meeting to exchange experiences. Furthermore, the spatial fixes these firms have adopted to manage their workforces (labor as object) have also shaped union tactics in response (labor as subject). Hence, Caterpillar's policy of producing parts that are interchangeable globally and ensuring that it does not rely upon a single plant for products gives it the ability to easily shift production should it be disrupted in one place. However, whilst this insulates the firm from strikes in one country, it encourages workers to organize transnationally and to share knowledge about company policies to gain purchase against it (Kozłowski, 2011, pp. 77-78). This has largely been done via the Agricultural Implement Industry Council of the International Metalworkers' Federation, which since 1971 has provided a forum for workers from Caterpillar, Komatsu, International Harvester, Terex, Massey-Ferguson, and other manufacturers to meet to develop plans to confront producers, thereby shaping these firms' global investment strategies.

Second, the history recounted above shows how firms must engage in a complex negotiation of global-local tensions as they become global actors. Both have stretched their operations beyond their origin regions. This has required they be intimately aware of differences between places – becoming locally embedded in dif-

ferent communities across the planet has been just as important as has creating a new global scale of organization. Taking seriously how firms address local geographical challenges is, then, important for understanding their spatial evolution and rescaling. Contra arguments that geography and the particulars of place are becoming less significant with globalization, we suggest that managing their geographical organization – and responding to that of their competitors – was key to both firms' development. By illustrating how each actively created global scales of operation, we present their globalization not as an inevitable end point to their development but instead as something that is subject to political contestation and which they had to actively bring about. Furthermore, as we have seen with the demands that Covid has placed upon managing spatially extensive supply chains, it is also possible that firms can “deglobalize”, if they see this as beneficial. Becoming global is not, then, a unidirectional process but a strategy pursued at specific times to secure specific goals. Managing the spatial scales at which they operate, in other words, is a central element in firms' economic behavior.

Finally, though their evolution was certainly shaped by internal logics, both firms' development paths were closely interwoven with the actions of the state, their workers, their own and other GPNS, and each other. This means that we must view these other entities as active players in firm transnationalization and not just as passive bystanders or victims thereof. The unevenly made economic geography of global capitalism is not simply the result of the activities of TNCs – the lauded global actors of the neoliberal imagination – but is deeply contested. This has implications for theorizing capitalism's geography and the flow of investment, value, and commodities from one part of the globe to others. Both firms had to manage labor but did so in different ways, which has shaped how their GPNS operate – Caterpillar has had a much more adversarial relationship with its workers than has Komatsu. At the same time, these firms' workers have played active roles in shaping how their GPNS have been structured. For instance, when Caterpillar announced it would close its Sagami-hara plant in Japan in 2018, the plant's union managed to keep redundancies to a minimum and helped many workers transfer to other firms or to Caterpillar's Akashi plant (IndustriALL, 2018). At the same time, though, the rise of the so-called i4.0 economy, with its labor-saving robotization and automation, may mean that the types of labor both firms need will change, from low-cost semi-skilled production line workers to high-skilled engineers and computer operators. As the i4.0 economy develops, then, China may well not be the last stop on the globalization train for either firm, such is the restless geography of the global economy.

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Abstract

Warring Brothers: Constructing Komatsu's and Caterpillar's Globalization

We detail how the world's two largest engineering machinery firms, Japan's Komatsu and the US's Caterpillar, actively managed geographical concerns to become global actors. We argue that their globalization was not a teleological given but had to be proactively made. Both the state and organized labor played significant roles in shaping their geographical evolutions, as did their efforts to outmaneuver each other spatially. Their globalization, then, was part of a broader spatial politics under capitalism.

Keywords: Geography; Global production networks; Global scale; Komatsu; Caterpillar.

Resumo

Irmãos em guerra: construindo as redes globais de produção da Komatsu e da Caterpillar

O artigo compara os caminhos percorridos pelas duas maiores empresas de máquinas de engenharia do mundo, a japonesa Komatsu e a americana Caterpillar para se tornarem “atores globais”. É investigada a forma como ambas as empresas gerenciavam ativamente as questões geográficas à medida que cresciam. Como “irmãos em guerra”, elas não apenas competiam entre si, mas, ao longo do processo, acabaram por moldar a forma organizacional uma da outra enquanto construía ativamente a escala global de sua própria existência – sua globalização, em outras palavras, não era um dado, mas teve de ser construída proativamente. Tanto o Estado quanto o trabalho organizado desempenharam papéis significativos no desenho das evoluções geográficas de ambas as empresas.

Palavras-chave: Globalização; Geografia; Redes globais de produção; Escala global; Komatsu; Caterpillar.

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Two forms of transnational organizing

Mapping the strategies of global union federations

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It has become a commonplace belief among academics and trade union officials that globalization has weakened trade unions. From this point of view, the globalization of trade, investment flows and finance has contributed to a “race to the bottom” (Tonelson, 2002) in labor standards. In this race to the bottom, countries are competing for the lowest production costs by pushing for low wages, long working hours and precarious forms of work. Moreover, the rise of transnational corporations (TNCs) is said to have altered the balance of power between capital and labor. Today, TNCs operate through global networks of extraction and production and control high shares of global trade and investment. Outsourcing, offshoring, plant relocations and global competition have redefined the world of labor and weakened organized labor in their traditional strongholds within the industrial sector. Taken together, these trends have taken their toll on trade unions. This is particularly true in many of the high-income countries where union membership is decreasing (Van der Linden, 2015).

However, the expansion of global capital has also led to new forms of labor internationalism and transnational labor organizing. Over the last few decades, new actors,

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coalitions and strategies have emerged which have helped organized labor to challenge TNCs. These approaches are manifold. They reach from transnational coalitions with social movements and the transnational collaboration of national unions to new forms of transnational organizing. They thereby have a focus on global value chains and worldwide campaigning. These new activities have spurred debates about a new labor internationalism “to distinguish trade unions’ contemporary efforts at cross-national cooperation from practices that prevailed before and during the Cold War” (Brookes, 2019, pp. 5f.). The new labor internationalism has been less state-oriented and bureaucratic but has rather been directly aimed at engaging with companies and employers. There has been a number of scientific publications on successful cases of transnational organizing, but also voices that criticize a “false optimism of global labor studies” (Burawoy, 2010) as many trade unions remain on the defensive.

In this changing environment, Global Union Federations (GUFs) have become a key actor in transnational organizing. Already established in the late 19th or early 20th century, several GUFs have gained new members and built their capacities since the Cold War and have become increasingly active in global campaigning, thus, organizing against TNCs, supporting national unions, and negotiating international framework agreements with employers (Croucher & Cotton, 2009; Fichter & McCallum, 2015; Brookes, 2019; Ford/Gillan, 2021). In this paper, we analyze various GUF strategies created to tackle the challenges of globalization. We argue that the GUFs are using multi-scalar strategies to exert power by transnational action. Our guiding hypothesis is that the GUFs are using specific pathways to connect local struggles with global trade union action. These pathways are strongly based on local trade union action and cannot simply be replicated without high local associational power. By drawing on the cases of the Woodworkers International (BWI) and the International Transport Workers Union (ITF), we identify a network based-form of transnational organizing focusing mainly on collective action within company or industry-wide networks, and an event-based form of organizing that uses a window of opportunity to wage struggles with a lasting impact on labor relations in a specific country or region. In order to make this argument, we will firstly refer to the power resources approach and the debate on labor geography. We will then briefly introduce the history of the GUFs, thereby focusing on the development of the BWI and the ITF. After some methodological considerations, we will study two cases, the Fifa World Cup campaign of 2014 (event-based organizing) and the ITF Latam Union network (network-based organizing), which were both analyzed in the framework of the project “Trade Unions in Transformation” financed by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (2015-2020). We conclude that both strategies are difficult to replicate without building associational power of local trade union organizations.

Globalization and workers' power: The Global Union Federations

Since the 1990s, globalization has changed the power relations between capital and labor on a global scale. Pushed by TNCs challenging national and local actors, the neoliberal “landslide” (Hobsbawm, 2000, p. 403) has undermined national labor law and put existing unions under pressure. To analyze these changes, we will draw on a specific instantiation of the Power Resource Approach (PRA). This approach draws on Erik Olin Wright and Beverly Silver’s notion of structural and associational power and the subsequent discussions referring to these terms (Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003, pp. 13-16; Lévesque & Murray, 2010; Brookes, 2013; Schmalz *et al.*, 2018). The main assumption of this approach is that workers are able to mobilize power resources as a way of enforcing their interests. The PRA differentiates between four sources of workers’ power: structural, associational, institutional and societal power (Schmalz *et al.*, 2018, pp. 115ff.). Structural power results from the position of workers within the economy. It arises in two ways. First, the ability to disrupt production (*workplace bargaining power*) by strike actions, or, more general, labor unrest; and second, the possession of “rare qualifications which are demanded by employers” (Silver, 2003, p. 13) and ability to withdraw from the labor market (*marketplace bargaining power*). *Associational power* or organizational power results from collective labor organizations, which are capable of strategic action. Historically, trade unions have played a crucial role in advocating for workers’ interests. The strength of workers’ organizations can be influenced by several factors such as membership numbers, participation and infrastructural resources (Lévesque & Murray, 2010). *Institutional power* refers to labor law and the institutional rights that organized labor can draw on. It is usually the result of struggles and negotiation processes based on structural and associational power. A specific feature of institutional power is its stability over time (Dörre *et al.*, 2009). However, it is often contradictory as many institutional rules also imply restrictions to action. *Societal power* results from collaboration with other organizations and movements as well as public support for organized labor. It either arises from networks with other social actors such as social movements (*coalitional power*) or from the ability to successfully intervene in public debates (*discursive power*). All four power resources are not purely additive entities but connected and embedded in power relations between capital and labor. They are thus influenced by factors such as state action, technological change, and the development of capitalism.

Regarding the GUFs, it is important to note that while the GUFs themselves do not exert structural power their national member unions do. The GUFs are rather a form of comparatively weak supranational workers’ power that bring together dif-

ferent national unions from across the world and are able to coordinate campaigns and organizing drives. As there is no legally binding global labor law, the GUFs only have limited institutional power such as those granted by ILO conventions or private regulations such as international framework agreements. The GUFs therefore primarily engage in struggles to set up arrangements with employers, coordinating and mobilizing the power resources of their members. Additionally, the GUFs are capable of using societal power. In their struggles against TNCs, they work together with Labor NGOs, social movements and civil rights organizations (coalitional power) to mobilize public support for their campaigns and actions against the exploitation of workers (discursive power).

A specific form of building workers power is identified by Ford/Gillan (2021) and lies in the very nature of the GUFs as a transnational actor, which therefore connects different spatial levels of union action. Their power is multi-scalar “both in the sense that conflict can play out on multiple scales simultaneously and in the sense that actors can act strategically to shift their engagement with other actors to different scales” (ibid., p. 4, see also Brookes, 2013). More specifically, in their global campaigns the GUFs “combine different kinds of power resources simultaneously at different scales” (Ford/Gillan, 2021, p. 4), for instance through supranational institutional engagement (supranational institutional power), international campaigns (societal power), local institutional engagement (institutional power) and local worker mobilization (structural and associational power).

The role of the GUFs as intermediaries and their ability to connect different scales has a lot to do with the spatial impact of neoliberal globalization since the 1990s. As many scholars have argued, capital has rearranged the spatial order of global capitalism (Sassen, 1991; Harvey, 2002) by weakening the national scale and thereby undermining national class compromises. As a result, there has not only been a stark rise in spatial inequalities, but also an increasing importance of subnational entities and supranational frameworks in the governance of labor (Hassel, 2008; Kühn, 2015). This changing hierarchy of space since the 1990s has been produced by government and company actions and has put organized labor on the defensive. An important example of these changes is what Stephen Gill (1998) has called a “new constitutionalism”: The implementation of free trade and investment agreements such as the establishment of new supranational rules by the WTO, which have led to marketization and have undermined national labor standards. TNCs have played an important role in these processes as they have historically pushed for such supranational agreements and are today using the rules of treaties such as investor to state-dispute settlement mechanisms to put pressure on organized labor.

However, the narrative of labor's decline and lack of agency in global political economy has been challenged by a number of scholars (Silver, 2003; Huke *et al.*, 2015). In particular, labor geographers have argued that organized labor is also a spatial agent and thus argued that one must recognize that workers are not only making their "own histories, though not under the conditions of their own choosing", but that workers also make "their own geographies, though likewise not under the conditions of their own choosing" (Herod, 2003, p. 113). In other words, workers and organized labor tend to operate in an environment largely created by capital, but are at the same time contesting, re-regulating and changing the global political economy. When challenging TNCs, organized labor often finds itself in a David versus Goliath situation, as workers are up against powerful opponents.

Prominent examples of trade union action are attempts to organize transnational value chains or to set up labor standards for TNCs or trade agreements. For such transnational actions, organized labor is forced to bring together the local and global in different ways. In the case of the GUFs, there are different "pathways of transnational activism" (Zajak, 2017), which are based on specific global local-linkages, and which diverge in context and strategy. Regarding the context, economic sectors like transport and logistics, industrial production, or construction imply different "configurations of power resources" (Lehndorff *et al.*, 2017, p. 15) through which organized labor can mobilize for collective action. For example, tight deadlines in the construction industry can temporally lead to the high structural power of workers, as work stoppages are costly and, in many cases, companies cannot quickly replace the large numbers of protesting workers. Strategically, global unions are setting up their own transnational structures of how to engage with the local. There are divergent transnational coordination mechanisms such as single-issue campaigns that bring together different stakeholders or long-term company networks with their own staff and institutional structures. In the following section, we will sketch out two specific pathways of transnational activism, which we are calling "event-based organizing" (Fifa World Cup campaign 2014) and "network-based organizing" (ITF Latam Union network). These are both linked to diverging configurations of power resources. Before addressing these two types, we will briefly analyze the development and field of actions of the GUFs and focus on Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) and the International Transport Workers Union (ITF).

Global Union Federations: development and fields of action

The Global Trade Union Federations emerged as a new transnational actor in the 1990s. Although GUFs are not a new phenomenon, with some founded in the late

19th (ITF, 1896) or early 20th century (PSI, 1907), it was only in the 1990s that a “paradigm shift [occurred] in GUF activities from ‘cautious lobbying’ [...] in international organizations and institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO) to engaging transnational corporations directly” (Fichter & McCallum, 2015, p. 69). This shift took place for several reasons: First, with the end of the Cold War, the GUFs, which for a long time had been Western organizations with headquarters based in the EU, became increasingly globalized. They attracted many new members around the globe and thereby became more global in their organization (Croucher & Cotton, 2009, pp. 39ff.). They were particularly able to gain new members in world regions where there were formerly no independent unions (post-Soviet republics) or where workers and unions were facing repression (Middle East). Secondly, the rise of TNCs led to a general recognition among trade unions that there was a need to challenge TNCs in the globalized economy. Driven by the need to confront the increased globalization of capital, the GUFs started to claim their right to negotiate with TNCs about labor standards and wages (Fichter & McCallum 2015, p. 6). This was made possible by a third far-reaching strategic change. In the 1990s, the ICFTU and later the Ituc and the GUFs started to clearly separate their responsibilities and fields of work. Since then, the ICFTU/Ituc has operated as an organization that represents national umbrella organizations of trade unions and has mainly focused on lobbying activities for social causes and labor standards in international organizations and treaties. The GUFs have operated as organizations that bring together individual unions with a focus on actively engaging with TNCs through international campaigning and negotiations (Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005, p. 414).

Today, the GUFs have several fields of action. First, the GUFs try to negotiate international framework agreements with TNCs. These agreements establish standardized rules for a company’s application of labor standards no matter where in the world they are operating. These particularly focus on strengthening social rights in low wage countries with weak labor standards. They are an embryonic form of global labor relations, which are private (between TNCs and GUFs) and refer to the ILO core labor standards. While the first IFA was signed in 1988 between the International Union of Foodworkers and Danone, the number of IFAs significantly increased in the 2000s and totals more than 300 agreements today. The IFAs are a weak form of supranational institutional power, as the implementation of framework agreements is in many cases symbolic and depends on trade union action at the local scale (Sydow *et al.*, 2014).

The second field of action is transnational organizing and engagement in local struggles together with the GUF affiliates. In many instances, the GUFs support local struggles with resources, staff and campaigning activities. These struggles usually

take place against company misbehavior and are, more generally, directed against weak labor standards and low payments. In the “Trade Unions and Transformation”-project, several successful struggles supported by the GUFs have been analyzed such as the ITF supported struggle of the Turkish trade union of road transport workers (TÜMTİS) against the delivery transnationals DHL and UP (Birelma, 2018; see also Fichter *et al.*, 2018).

The third field of action follows a “logic of influence” (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999, p. 30) and involves trying to change national labor law together with Ituc. This form of involvement is particularly important when there are violations of ILO core labor standards and is often campaign-based. The GUFs are thus focused on trying to ascribe moral blame to employers and state behavior in their push for change. There are many recent cases of such actions such as the international activities against the coup d'état in Myanmar, which saw several GUFs such as UNI involved, or the campaign against labor rights violations at the Fifa world cup construction sites in Qatar where the BWI have played a role in pushing for changes in labor laws. In sum, the GUFs have reasserted themselves by developing a new repertoire of action in a changing global environment and through the reform of their structure, the building of new capacities and the application of new strategies.

These changes have followed different trajectories and led to divergent strategies. The GUF's strategies have a lot to do with the configurations of power resources that they draw upon. For instance, both the BWI and the ITF have developed particular strategies that are related to the industries in which they are organizing. The BWI has more than 356 members in 127 nation states (2017). It emerged out of a merger of the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW) and the World Federation of Building and Wood Workers (WFBW) in 2005. The global construction business of today is dominated by TNCs such as Skanska or Vinci and is heavily reliant on labor migration from low-wage countries. In the 2010s, the BWI developed a new strategy for the globalizing construction business. One of its main activities is organizing at major international sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the Fifa World Cup. Huge amounts of construction work is necessary for these events that involves tens of thousands of workers. Furthermore, mega sporting events draw public attention at a global scale. In the period leading up to such events, local power resources are characterized by a temporal boost of structural power because of tight deadlines for construction works, as well as high discursive power as international civil society tends to be aware of labor rights violations.

The ITF, in turn, was already founded in 1896 and has repeatedly created transnational solidarity networks of transport workers throughout its history. For instance, ITF was quite engaged in supporting workers' resistance against fascism in Germany.

Today, the ITF has more than 700 affiliated unions in over 150 countries (2018). The transport and logistics business is essential for today's flexible global production networks and just-in-time production, as well as international passenger transport, which has skyrocketed over the last few decades. The ITF is therefore not only focused on the local struggles of transport workers, but has also been successful in organizing transnational union networks in the transport sector since the 1990s (on maritime shipping: Lillie, 2005). In the case of the aviation industry, for instance, the ITF challenges TNCs by creating company networks (Latam, Ryan Air etc.). This is made possible due to the high structural (or logistical) power of transport workers, as the flight business is vulnerable to work stoppages, and the fact that the highly mobile workforce (e.g. flight attendants, pilots) facilitates transnational organizing (associational power). Taken together, these diverging contexts lead to different types of organizing with an event-based mode being implemented by the BWI and a network-based type being advanced by ITF. Both of these are only possible due to local trade union action.

Methods: qualitative research and public sociology

The paper draws on results of the first funding period of the "Trade Unions in Transformation" project initiated by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, which consisted of 26 case studies on union renewal worldwide. The cases in the project were selected as success stories of workers building power in different economic sectors and world regions. In most of these case studies, a deep crisis of the organization and/or a profound change of context triggered union renewal, as actors within the unions reflected upon this situation and began to test new strategies and methods such as organizing and campaigning or creating new organizational forms (Fichter et al., 2018). Among the case studies on transnational organizing of the project, 11 case studies engaged with GUFs ranging from ITF, BWI, UNI to IndustriALL¹. All of the studies used the power resources approach (PRA) as their analytical framework to theorize and reflect upon the strategies of the unions (Schmalz *et al.*, 2018). The project also adopted a "public sociology" (Burawoy, 2005) approach by bringing together the authors of the studies with the unions they were analyzing.

The two cases presented in this article (ITF Latam Union network and BWI's 2014 World Cup Campaign) were selected for conceptual reasons. They are both success

1. The project was facilitated by the vast international network of FES with offices in more than 100 countries. A call for papers was distributed through these offices which helped to identify case studies. A steering committee with international scientists and FES staff selected, guided and reviewed the studies.

stories of transnational organizing and GUF engagement and show the crucial role of local associational power. However, the cases are taken from different industries (air transport and construction) and had different GUFs (ITF and BWI) engaging within them. Consequently, the organizing strategies have built on divergent sectoral configurations of power resources. Similar strategies have been applied in other cases in the respective sectors such as in the Ryan Air organizing drive of 2017/18 in Europe and the Olympics in Brazil 2016. We therefore describe these two forms of transnational organizing (event-based organizing and network-based organizing) as ideal types in a Weberian sense (Weber, 1978), as there are also hybrid forms of these types of union engagement.

The first case study on the BWI's 2014 World Cup Campaign was conducted by one of the authors through the use of semi-structured interviews with BWI-affiliated union leaders from ten host cities of the 2014 World Cup, and through the collection and examination of campaign documents, agendas for negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, and media reports. For the second case study on the ITF Latam Union Network, the two authors conducted eight interviews with union leaders from LAN Peru and lan Argentina between July and August 2016. Additional semi-structured interviews with five ITF representatives who work with the network were added in January and February of 2017. Besides these interviews, secondary data such as campaign documents and company data were included. The study was facilitated by the work of two authors within the ITF Latam Union Network who had privileged access to the internal workings of the network, its member unions, and Latam Airlines itself.

Fifa World Cup 2014: BWI's decent work campaign towards and beyond 2014

Since the 2000s, the BWI and other GUFs have recognized that mega sporting events such as the Fifa World Cup have become a trigger for opening national economies to TNCs and investors. The host countries are obliged to invest heavily in infrastructure and to grant legal guarantees to investors such as tax exemptions without any need of mentioning workers' rights. In the run-up to the Olympics in Athens 2004, the "Play Fair campaign" was coordinated by NGOs and GUFs to push through international labor standards for the production of sporting goods and the work being done at the construction sites and in the stadiums (Timms, 2012). During the 2012 London Olympics, a similar campaign achieved positive results such as an agreement between British trade unions and the Olympics organizing committee that demonstrated the ability of trade unions to influence the employment conditions of subcontracting companies. Prior to the World Cup 2010 in South Africa,

the BWI organized, for the first time, a campaign for the improvement of working conditions during the preparations for the World Cup. As a result of the Decent Work Towards and Beyond 2010 Campaign, Fifa agreed to invite trade unions to participate in inspections at various construction sites. The campaign contributed to an increasing awareness of the working conditions at these sites. Moreover, there was an increase of 39 per cent in union membership in the industry between 2006 and 2009 and a 12 per cent wage hike in the construction sector after a nationwide strike in July 2009.

The Fifa World Cup 2014 campaign in Brazil took place in a positive environment for trade union action (Rombaldi, 2017; 2019). Firstly, the huge infrastructure projects worth 8.3 billion Reais included work on 12 airports, 6 ports, 44 urban transport projects and 12 stadiums. According to the Ministry of Sports (2010), the World Cup was expected to create around 330,000 permanent jobs between 2009 and 2014, in addition to 380,000 temporary jobs in 2014 due to the Olympics 2016. However, there were significant construction delays. By May 2012, local media estimated that only 25 per cent of the tenders for urban transport projects had been completed and that 41 per cent of all construction projects for the World Cup had not yet been started, which thus put huge pressure on the World Cup organizing committee. In the years prior, the PAC (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento) had already set up a number of projects, which had led to a tight labor market in the Brazilian construction sector and precipitated a wave of wildcat strikes in 2011 (Nowak 2019, pp. 193ff.). Also, the Rousseff Government (2011-2016) led by the Workers Party (PT) was closely connected to unions and therefore sensitive to the campaigning activities. In sum, the Brazilian construction workers had a particularly high level of structural power before the World Cup due to time constraints and political concerns.

Building on the experiences in South Africa, the BWI launched the Campaign for Decent Work Towards and Beyond 2014. The campaign was highly successful in bringing together construction unions of different political orientations and they used the struggle for labor rights at the Fifa World Cup as a common cause for joint political action (Rombaldi, 2019, pp. 59ff.). While in 2010 there were only 5 Brazilian unions affiliated with BWI, the number increased to 25 by December 2012. The BWI was active as a coordination platform for exchanging information about strikes and local agreements, the creation of campaign materials; and the promotion of meetings between unions, World Cup organizers, government representatives and ILO officials, as well as negotiations with Fifa officials. This pragmatic approach not only helped to overcome the political divides of the highly fragmented Brazilian trade union system, but also created structures to organize the campaign together

with NGOs such as Streetnet² while discussing a common agenda. A steering committee, which included all affiliated unions, created a strategic consensus and a unified national agenda. This was unprecedented as it combined the demands of all Brazilian construction unions including a national minimum wage for construction workers, an improvement in health and safety standards, and an increase in pay for overtime and night work. The main strength of the BWI engagement was its multi-scalar approach: The unions could refer to the transnational union BWI as a neutral global arena where, according to a Brazilian union leader, “only the issues prone to consensus were discussed [...] Nonnegotiable differences were set aside” (interview, union leader). Also, the national campaign and agenda was an important point of reference for local unions and their struggles. BWI’s event-based organizing approach was successful in connecting the local, national and global scale and thereby bypassing some flaws of the fragmented Brazilian trade union system.

The results of the campaign were contradictory. The BWI and its affiliates did not reach a collective agreement with the National Industry Confederation (CNI) or with Fifa to be invited to participate in the inspections at construction sites, as was the case for the 2010 Fifa World Cup in South Africa. However, the common national agenda was helpful for unions looking to push their claims forward on a local scale. Many of the interviewed union leaders argued that local demands found more support in the negotiations when they converged with the claims brought up in national negotiations. As a result, the BWI affiliates were able to negotiate successfully in the 12 World Cup host cities. All of the wage agreements reached between 2009 and 2013 achieved minimum wage and regular wage increases that were larger than both the inflation rate and the readjustment of the national minimum wage (Dieese, 2014). Although there was a variation in wage increases between construction sites, there have been further achievements such as increases in meal subsidies, overtime pay and transportation subsidies. The positive results of the local negotiations were possible due to a strike wave between 2011 and 2014. Over this time period, 28 strikes took place at construction sites, with many of them being spontaneous conflicts over working conditions such as in the Maracanã (which was about rotten food and a work accident). There was a lack of coordination between the strikes, although local unions were successful in pushing the claims brought up by striking workers, as well as rumors of a national general strike in the construction sector. In sum, the Brazilian unions were successful for several reasons. The tight labor market and deadlines of the construction sector led to workers temporally hav-

2. Streetnet is the International Alliance of Street Vendors and promotes information campaigns about the situation of street vendors and practical organizing and advocacy strategies.

ing high structural power. Moreover, the BWI's campaign successfully increased the discursive power of the affiliated unions due to their common goals and increasing public awareness about the working conditions at the construction sites. The local unions seized this window of opportunity to push their claims.

After the Brazilian world cup 2014, BWI continued to follow the event-based organizing approach for their campaigns. However, it turned out to be difficult to replicate the experiences of the 2014 Fifa World Cup 2014. In the case of the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the organizing campaign was more difficult because construction workers in Rio are represented by two unions (SITRAICP and Sintraconst), which do not work together (Rombaldi, 2017, pp. 10f.). Although the overall setting was similar to 2014, Sintraconst did not join the coordinated action. Likewise, there have been limits to adopting a similar approach for the World Cup events in Russia (2018) and Qatar (2022). In both cases, local associational power has been fairly limited, as Russian state unions avoided challenging the Russian state, while in Qatar migrant workers are not allowed to join a union. In the case of Qatar, BWI changed its strategy together with Ituc to push for reforms of the labor law. They have almost exclusively been using their discursive power for this purpose (Ford & Gillan, 2021). Although this strategy has seen some successes, with reforms such as the implementation of a minimum wage, international media has continued to report far-reaching labor rights violations with the Guardian reporting that 6.500 construction workers have died over the last decade while building Qatar's infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. With the Covid pandemic, BWI's organizing strategy for mega sporting events has taken a new direction. It now focuses on defending collective agreements, preventing lay-offs and on implementing workplace health and safety standards. In the case of Qatar, for instance, BWI has pushed to improve health standards for migrant workers and has jointly conducted occupational health and safety inspections in workers' accommodation facilities and stadium project sites alongside Qatar's Supreme Committee on Delivery and Legacy.

The ITF Latam Union Network

In the last few decades, the ITF supported the creation of union networks to challenge poor working conditions in transnational aviation and transport companies. One of the most successful cases in Latin America is the ITF Latam Union Network (Red Sindical Latam ITF), an international network of workers which has been strong enough to force Latam, the largest transnational aviation company in South America, to make far-reaching improvements in working conditions for its thousands of aviation workers (Feller/Conrow, 2017). In 2018, Latam Airlines provided pas-

senger services to 24 countries and cargo services to 29 countries. Latam's revenue was about US\$ 9.6 billion, and it employed approximately 47,000 workers. Latam, which is headquartered in Santiago, Chile, has a notorious reputation as being an extremely anti-union company that tries to disrupt any attempts by workers to form a union or collectively negotiate for higher wages and improved working conditions.

The Latam Union Network began in 2006, with a first meeting in Lima, Peru. The network expanded quickly and now includes 36 unions and five union federations in seven Latin American countries. It holds two international meetings a year that are attended by Latam union leaders and serves as a platform where practical information, skills and analysis are shared, and collective plans are made to assist each of the unions in confronting the company. Currently, they receive no external funding, but the network was originally funded by the ITF, the Dutch Trade Union Confederation (FNV Mondiaal) and FES. The network has already supported the negotiations of over 60 collective bargaining agreements. Despite companywide union busting, eleven new unions have been created. For their local work, the Latam Network unions have used the ITF curriculum on organizing and strategic campaigning.³ Between 2008 and 2014 alone, union membership at Latam tripled. The basis for this dynamic development has been a process of organizational learning where network members learn from each other's experiences. The activities at the biannual international network meetings include strategic research of the company, sharing organizing methodologies, and planning joint activities. The culture of solidarity and learning has been crucial for building trust and resilient ties between the unions in the region and can be perceived as a process of building supranational associational power. The network has continued to hold monthly meetings during the Covid pandemic and the Latam unions continue to support each other and coordinate campaigns at the international and local levels.

The Latam Union Network was particularly successful in providing support for local struggles through its member unions. One case is the struggle of the LAN Peru mechanics and technicians' union (Sitalanpe) for higher wages and an end to temporary contracts. By 2012, the mechanics and technicians at LAN Peru had not received a wage increase in over 10 years. Before starting their campaign and struggle, the workers prepared by systematically educating the base and gathering information about the company and learning about organizing strategies from other Latam unions in the network. Working together, the Latam mechanics unions in the region signed a cooperation agreement and made a commitment between bases not

3. For more information see: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/training-education/organising-manual-0> and <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/training-education/developing-strategic-campaigns>

to break their strikes (Feller & Conrow, 2017, p. 9). When the negotiations began in early 2014, the organizing campaign focused on deepening personal relationships between workers and on providing information about their legal rights and strategies for engaging the company.

Latam reacted to the organizing drive by hiring additional workers on temporary contracts, firing several protesting workers, and trying to buy the workers off with a significant bonus offer of 6,000 US dollars for each worker. The company then selected twenty supervisors and senior mechanics and created a new company union (yellow union) that could negotiate for the mechanics. An interviewed LAN Peru mechanic described the new union as an attempt to divide the workforce along gender lines: “Those who were selected to form the new yellow union were arrogant and sexist. They used to say, “you work like a girl’ – pejoratively – without caring about the women mechanics who are our comrades” (interview, mechanic). As a reaction, the organizing campaign started to hold assemblies with all workers and implemented a “work-to-rule action”. Sitalanpe organized marches and pickets in front of the company headquarters that included the workers, their families and other Peruvian unions. Latam mechanics from Brazil, Chile and Colombia travelled to Lima to join the marches. Chilean union leaders spoke to the workers about the importance of Chilean and Peruvian mechanics remaining united. LAN Chile mechanics were also under threat because the company was attempting to cut costs by moving the repair of their large aircraft to Lima. Additional international actions took place in Miami and across a number of airports in Chile, Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil and Ecuador, which informed passengers about upcoming delays and cancellations of flights (Feller/Conrow, 2017, p. 10). Latam’s anti-union actions aimed at breaking the campaign by threatening to sue the Peruvian union in the US and by exerting pressure on workers to leave the union.

In May 2014, after much workplace organizing and campaigning, Sitalanpe finally unanimously voted for a strike. The attempt of the company to bring in Chilean mechanics to replace the unionized workers failed. As the World Cup 2014 in Brazil was approaching, the campaign also received support from the Brazilian Latam unions, which exerted additional pressure onto the company. At the final hour, and just before the start of the World Cup, an agreement was reached by the Peruvian Ministry of Labor and Sitalanpe had won without a strike. The workers unanimously ratified a four-year agreement that included all temporary workers being given fixed term contracts and the rehiring of fired workers. A majority of the workers received salary increases of 50 per cent or more in along with a signing on bonus.

The struggle of the Peruvian mechanics shows that despite workers’ and unions’ high structural power (threatened work stoppages and disruptions) and societal

power (international campaign), success was only possible because of a long process of building associational power at LAN Peru itself. The organizing campaign helped to create an identity and foster high participation among workers. The Latam Union Network supported this process by creating solidarity between other Latam unions in the region. Consequently, ITF's network-based organizing approach was highly efficient in linking the local, national and regional scales and it thereby weakened international competition between different sites and prevented potential divisions across national lines. The network also became an important example for other campaigns and company networks in the aviation industry and the work of the Latam Union Network has been shared with unions across the world (Conrow *et al.*, 2011). For instance, the unionization of Ryan Air followed a comparable network-based organizing approach (Boewe *et al.*, 2021), while the ITF's campaign at Qatar airways turned out to be more complicated due to a lack of associational power on the local scale. Moreover, although they are often considered as a best practice-case for the aviation industry, the Latam Union Network is facing new challenges today. Due to the impact of the Covid-19-pandemic, which caused airline passenger transport to collapse in 2020, the company had to file for bankruptcy (using the procedure of chapter 11 bankruptcy protection by US law).⁴ Latam enforced massive layoffs and illegally cut wages by 50%. Currently, the Latam Union Network is campaigning against these measures through social media (#NoALaExtorsionLatam) and is analyzing the bankruptcy process, as Latam is expected to exit bankruptcy by 2021.

Conclusion: Transnational organizing and beyond

Global Union Federations have become crucial actors in transnational organizing, as argued in the guiding hypothesis of the article, which explores different pathways to link local struggles with global trade union action. In this article, we have analyzed the two diverging approaches of the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) and the International Transport Workers Union (ITF). The BWI has adopted an event-based form of organizing that focuses on mega sporting events like the Fifa World Cup and the Olympics. The large-scale investment in time-pressured construction offers an "opportunity structure for trade union[s]" (Schmalz & Thiel, 2017, p. 468) for local struggles over wages and working conditions. In the immediate time period before mega sporting events, workers' structural and discursive power receives a temporal boost due to tight deadlines and increased public attention. The

4. Qatar Airways also owns 10% of Latam and Delta 21%. Both companies display the highest level of antiunion behavior and have conducted sustained campaigns against organization for years.

BWI has therefore launched multi-scalar campaigns by using global campaigning and trade union action to strengthen organizational processes at construction sites and thus been successful in bringing together different actors for trade union action.

The ITF, in turn, has developed a network-based organizing approach, which brings together transport unions of transnational companies or industry-wide networks and seizes upon the vulnerability of highly flexible global production and transport networks. The high structural (or logistical) power of transport workers due to the far-reaching impact of work stoppages in transport, and the transnational character of the sector with its mobile workforce (associational power) assists with transnational organizing. The ITF has therefore created supranational structures such as the Latam union network to be able to campaign transnationally and support the local struggles of its network affiliates.

With these two forms of organizing, both GUFs use different pathways to connect the global with the local. However, as analyzed in the case studies and put forward as a guiding hypothesis of the article, these forms of organizing only work if local associational power is strong enough to push for change (see also McCallum, 2013). The success at LAN Peru shows that a high commitment of workers makes success possible, while the Brazilian case indicates that local actors working for a common goal can achieve better results. The GUFs can support local struggles, but not replace local actors. This has become particularly true in the run up to the 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar, where BWI and ITF are struggling to improve working conditions at the construction sites and Qatar Airways. The two modes of transnational organizing cannot be replicated without local associational power, nor are they universal formulas for achieving success. However, they can be understood as emergent forms of a transnational unionism which have the potential to make inroads in the coming decades.

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Abstract

Two forms of transnational organizing: Mapping the strategies of Global Union Federations

It has become a commonplace belief among academics and trade union officials that globalization has weakened trade unions. However, the expansion of global capital has also led to a rise of transnational labor organizing. Since the 2000s, Global Union Federations have developed different strategies to tackle the challenges of globalization. In this article, we analyze two such forms of transnational organizing: A network-based and an event-based form of organizing. While the network-based approach brings together unions from different countries in a company or industry-wide cross-border network, the event-based strategy is built on the engagement of the GUFs at large international events to wage local struggles with a lasting impact on labor relations. By drawing on a power resource approach and labor geography and by using empirical data from two case studies, the Building and Woodworkers International's Fifa World Cup campaign of 2014 and the International Transport Workers Union's Latam Union network, we demonstrate how GUFs are using different pathways of transnational activism to link the global with the local and why local trade union action is crucial for success in transnational organizing. Keywords: Globalization; Power resources; Transnational corporations; International labor movement; Global framework agreements.

Resumo

Duas formas de organização transnacional: mapeando as estratégias das Federações Sindicais Globais

Tornou-se um lugar-comum entre acadêmicos e dirigentes sindicais que a globalização enfraqueceu os sindicatos. A terceirização, a competição global e as realocações de fábricas redefiniram o mundo do trabalho e cobraram seu tributo na filiação sindical. No entanto, a expansão do capital global também levou a um aumento da organização transnacional do trabalho. Desde os anos 2000, as Federações Sindicais Globais desenvolveram diferentes estratégias para enfrentar os desafios da globalização. Neste artigo, analisamos duas dessas formas de organização transnacional: uma forma de organização baseada em rede e outra baseada em eventos. Enquanto a abordagem baseada em rede reúne sindicatos de diferentes países em uma empresa ou rede internacional de todo o setor, a estratégia baseada em eventos é construída sobre o envolvimento

das GUFs, aproveitando a janela de oportunidade de grandes eventos internacionais para travar lutas locais com um impacto duradouro no trabalho. Com base em uma abordagem de recursos de poder e geografia de trabalho, e usando dados empíricos de dois estudos de caso, a campanha da Copa do Mundo Fifa 2014 da *Building and Woodworkers International* e a rede do Sindicato Internacional dos Trabalhadores em Transporte da América Latina, demonstramos como as Federações Sindicais Globais estão usando diferentes caminhos de ativismo transnacional para conectar o global com o local.

Palavras-chave: Globalização; Recursos de poder; Corporações transnacionais; Movimento internacional dos trabalhadores; Acordos Marco Globais.

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Cross-border trade union networks in transnational corporations

A comparison between sectors

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Introduction

The rise of a “new labor internationalism” in the era of globalization has been a matter of contention in the field of labor studies. Original conceptualizations of the notion explored the potential affinity between unions and broader social movements around the turn of the century (see Waterman & Wills, 2001). Some interpreted emerging transnational labor networks as part of a “counter-hegemonic globalization” (see Webster *et al.*, 2008), while critics called into question the very existence of the phenomenon (see Burawoy, 2010). Lately, a growing body of research on the subject has allowed for more nuanced analyses, suggesting that, in practice, diverse “labor internationalisms” should not be viewed as an “all-or-nothing endeavor” (O’Brien, 2019, p. 1).

This article focuses on a specific kind of cross-border labor activity – union networks that are grounded in local instances of global production and target specific transnational corporations (TNC). Such networks have been at the center of recent debates on new labor internationalism, and have sparked interest, above all, because of their potential to connect transnational initiatives to grassroots, “bread and butter” labor struggles in workplaces, offering an alternative to the “diplomatic”

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practices of previous forms of international union organization (see Wills, 1994; Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005; Cumbers *et al.*, 2008; Lambert & Gillan, 2009). At the global level, union networks in TNCs have been associated with the policies of Global Union Federations (GUFs), international bodies that bring together unions in specific industries or professional categories. However, it has been generally acknowledged that global unions do not have the material or legal means to organize workers directly, relying instead on the support of local and national unions to carry out actions in different territories (see Garver *et al.*, 2007; Croucher & Cotton, 2009). In this sense, GUFs are perhaps best thought of as “intermediaries or facilitators in multi-scalar initiatives” (Ford & Gillan, 2015, p. 14), articulating previously established union organizations.

Nevertheless, engaging TNCs in this manner has been used to rescale the scope of trade union action and to push for the creation of new union powers. The most notable examples are the mandates claimed by GUFs that are presented as global union counterparts to TNCs. This ambition is supported by numerous unions organizations and its legitimacy has been implicitly recognized by powerful TNCs that have signed Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) with global unions in the last decades (see Gallin, 2008; Hadwiger, 2018), but this new field of union organization is not immediately regulated by public authorities and companies cautiously frame it as a form of “weak social dialogue within the parameters of corporate social responsibility” (see Stevis, 2011, p. 117). Indeed, we are witnessing the making of a field that is still actively contested and reflects the “transitory nature of ongoing processes within an emerging arena of the global governance of labor” (Helfen & Fichter, 2013, p. 556).

In this article, we suggest that this kind of informal, gradual, and often hesitant rescaling and rearranging of trade union prerogatives prompted by the targeting of TNCs outside of traditional industrial relations frameworks can also occur within national boundaries. We are particularly interested in studying how trade union networks tentatively create new union jurisdictions (in terms of subjects, powers, or geographical scope associated with different union mandates and organizations), and how this process is shaped and constrained by the interactions among unions embedded in previously established institutional frameworks, and between them and corporate powers. To this end, our study analyses the development and operation of trade union networks in four sectors in Brazil: metal and chemical manufacturing, garment production, retail business, and commercial banking.

Definitions and scope

Trade Union Networks in Transnational Corporations

For the purposes of this study, we define cross-border trade union networks in TNCs (from here on, TUNS or networks) as voluntary alliances that, targeting specific corporations and grounded in their operations in different localities, articulate independent union organizations across borders to create spaces of labor organization and industrial relations that would not have been possible for participant organizations on their own, reaching beyond traditionally recognized trade union prerogatives in different settings. In essence, TUNS emerge when union structures are deemed insufficient to deal with the growing power and reach of complex production networks, prompting a relatively informal, tentative response to overcome these limitations. In the studied cases, three defining features stand out:

1. TUNS are grounded in processes of trans-local production of goods and services, connecting workers and union representatives in tangible workplaces across multiple localities;
2. The boundaries of individual TUNS are defined by a correspondence to specific transnational corporations, or “target-companies”;
3. TUNS carry an implicit challenge to traditional frames of trade union action but do not break away from (and, in fact, are directly connected to) established union organizations.

Cross-border TUNS in Brazil

Although our main frame of reference is the operation of TUNS in Brazil, the networks analyzed in this article were invariably the result of interactions of union leaders operating in different places and scalar levels, which compelled us to cover a wide range of organizations. At the global level, we have analyzed two major global unions – IndustriALL Global Union, the main international union body in manufacturing industries, and Union Network International (UNI Global Union), the largest GUF in private services. We have also taken the role of major foreign supporters of TUNS into account, such as the United States-based Solidarity Center and the German union confederation Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB). Moreover, the observation of networks in action has allowed us to get in contact with union leaders from different countries. In Brazil, we have considered the policies of union centrals and national industrial confederations, and local unions affiliated to them.

We have conducted interviews with current or former leaders of every organization mentioned by name in this article, besides many others; observed several union events and activities; and analyzed documents and grey literature, including internal reports and minutes on the operation of TUNS, dated from the early 2000s to 2020.

From a multiscale research framework, it's worth mentioning a brief outline of institutional features of the Brazilian trade union organization. In Brazil, unions have a monopoly over both collective bargaining prerogatives and union organization rights in state-regulated professional and territorial jurisdictions. In essence, only one union can represent a specified category of workers (e.g., metal workers, banking workers etc.) in a delimited territorial basis (e.g., the city of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and so). Brazilian unions have often defied these determinations. For instance, "union centrals" operated informally for decades until they were officially sanctioned in 2008. Similar to international union bodies, union centrals and national industrial confederations in Brazil have limited powers and affiliate local unions rather than workers. Accordingly, networks targeting companies present in multiple localities in the country have been vehicles for national organization at the same time as they promoted international connections. The use of the expression "cross-border" instead of "transnational" is therefore deliberate – it indicates that TUNS in Brazil may be used to bridge internal borders as well as external ones.

TUNS in Four Sectors

Metal and chemical manufacturing

In Brazil, traditional manufacturing unions that spearheaded impressive workers' strikes since the late 70s started to face the impacts of globalization in the following decades. Transnational corporations established in old industrial clusters (notably, the "ABC" region in the state of São Paulo) went through restructuring processes under the auspices of global corporate determinations, spreading to "green fields" out of the reach of established unions. Suddenly, the usual methods of local unionism, based on mobilizing workers in specific factories and localities, were not as reliable as they had traditionally been. The response from unions affiliated to the Unified Workers' Central (CUT), which would become the most active supporters of TUNS, was threefold. At the national level, unions in different parts of the country started to cooperate, attempting to give union action in specific industries a national character, which paved the way to the creation of national industrial confederations and included the demand for a national labor contract (see Vêras, 2006; Oliveira, 2006). At the international level, local unions sought out foreign allies, in particular

unions at major companies' headquarters, hoping to find a path to influence global executives (see Anner, 2006). Cutting across scales, finally, unions moved away from "combative" stance to incorporate a "social-democratic" agenda (see Antunes, 2000).

The first cross-border union networks in TNCs in Brazil appeared in the chemical and metal industries and combined these trends with global union efforts emerging at the company level, establishing a model that would later be adopted (and transformed) in different sectors. An illustrative example is the union network in the German chemical manufacturer Basf. Contacts between the Chemical Workers' Union of the ABC and German unionists date back as far as the 1980s and, around the same time, union representatives in the region sought out connections with workers employed by the company in other locations in the country, including those in the states of Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul and Amazonas. The National Federation of Chemical Workers (CNQ-CUT) was founded in 1992. Under regular circumstances, national industrial federations have a limited role in collective bargaining in Brazil but can be important to promote alliances between union representatives across localities, and are often responsible for promoting international relations on a sectoral basis.

Between 1990 and 1994, meetings of chemical workers in German companies (including Basf) were held in Brazil and Germany, and in 1995 the CNQ formally joined the sector's Global Union Federation. In 1999, Icem (ex-CNQ and currently INDUSTRIALL Global Union) organized the first International Meeting of Basf Workers, symbolically held in the ABC region in São Paulo. A global union network was formally established alongside a national "inter-union" structure, the Intrab. The exchanges with foreign unions allowed local unions to strengthen relationships with important allies and, since the earlier contacts in previous decades, German industrial relations and social partnership practices offered an appealing paradigm for unions accustomed to being fiercely opposed by local corporate managers.

The history of the network in Basf has been turbulent and involved moments of open confrontation, including notable strikes that disrupted relations with the company. Nevertheless, having established considerable shopfloor influence, unions were able to achieve important changes. Notably, yearly rounds of "social dialogue" were established between the company and unions organized within the network, allowing leaders from different factories in the country to engage in supra-local spaces that are best defined as an attempt to mimic the practices of European Works Councils at the national level in Brazil and, occasionally, the international level¹.

1. Through networks, Brazilian unionists in certain companies have been invited to participate as observers in Works Councils in Europe, and some are proper members of world committees.

In these events, local leaders present grievances that could not be resolved locally, are informed about corporate plans and results, and sometimes engage in collective bargaining in regards to benefits and bonuses, although wages are out of the scope of such meetings.

This model has been replicated in different TNCs in the metal and chemical industries in Brazil, with varying degrees of institutionalization. It is more likely to be adopted in companies that are accustomed to working within social partnership arrangements, usually European corporations, but it has been successfully pursued in TNCs from different backgrounds. There are two main goals. First, the “recognition” from the company, which often means corporate financing of network activities, but at a minimum involves the acknowledgement of the network as a legitimate counterpart. Second, the establishment of “social dialogue” across different scales, from the introduction of workplace union representatives to the aforementioned dialogue rounds.

As much as global unions and national confederations may be vital as “catalysts” of trans-local connections, any mandate granted to the network is an extension of the legitimacy and legal rights of local unions that voluntarily participate in the initiative. Accordingly, issues discussed within networks are primarily those that concern local unions in their usual undertakings – working conditions and labor conflicts, wages and benefits, the right to organize, etc. The most glaring limitation of this model is that it does not challenge or expand the membership of participating unions. These are, effectively, networks of local unions, union officials and union-appointed workplace representatives, a structure that tends to exclude contract, outsourced, and office workers, in addition to those employed by suppliers of major TNCs, because these groups are usually underrepresented in the local unions that drive these alliances. In sum, TUNS in the metal and chemical industries represent the effort of local unions deeply rooted in specific plants to reach beyond the local in response to the changing industrial environment within major manufacturing TNCs.

Garment industry

Networks organized in traditional manufacturing strongholds regarding to union organization have a few advantages over those seeking to establish a foothold in sectors such as the garment industry, in which production is much more spread out. First, it is not unreasonably difficult to charter the production of capital-intensive manufacturers operating a tangible number of factories around the world, but it is a different situation in labor-intensive industries in which production involves the coordination of thousands of workplaces that are not directly owned by the target-

company. As a matter of comparison, Basf claims to operate 241 production sites in 90 countries, and their addresses are readily listed on the company's website. When CUT's research arm that supported the development of TUNS studied the operations of the company in Brazil, the network's "roadmap" in the country consisted of 9 factories. On the other hand, Inditex, a Spanish corporation in the clothing business and owner of global brands such as Zara, declares to "work with" 8,155 factories "declared by" 1,985 suppliers worldwide (see Inditex, 2020). Indeed, the availability of this kind of information was the result of pressure from workers, unions, and other social movements that fought the invisibility of labor in the garment business. The challenge, of course, is not only to map workplaces, but to use this information to connect workers and their leaders on the ground. Here, there is a second disadvantage. While metal and chemical unions often have an established presence in factories, garment unions must navigate everchanging production networks characterized by informal employment relations, anti-union practices, and precarious labor.

Given the absence of union presence across workplaces, the Global Union Federation (IndustriALL Global Union) plays a larger role in garment networks, operating as the main promoter and coordinator. In the case of Inditex, the idea is that "as a global organization, IndustriALL has the capacity to reach and defend workers spread out across the group's enormous supply chain" (IndustriALL, 2014, p. 20). In practice, things are more difficult. Global unions usually lack the resources to sustain a continuous engagement with factories spread out over vast territories. In Brazil, accordingly, global efforts in Inditex were supported by foreign unions, but also by a variety of national union organizations, including the national industrial confederations in the garment sector affiliated to CUT and Força Sindical. There is also a distinct presence of non-union organizations, such as NGOs and advocacy networks created as part of anti-sweatshop movements. Thus, the global mandate claimed by GUFs does not immediately translate into the necessary organizational capacity to reach out to workers and workplaces and does not imply the recognition of the legal right to exercise trade union prerogatives within specific territories, so the network's reach is limited and shaped by pre-existing forms of organization.

On the other hand, in workplaces where unions are absent, instruments such as Global Framework Agreements secure global unions a certain degree of legitimacy to reach out to workers directly. A GFA signed with Inditex in 2007 has allowed IndustriALL to inspect several factories associated with the company in different countries, a process that acknowledged the right of global union officials to speak to workers. Furthermore, the agreement was amended in 2014 (a further revision was made in 2019) to include protocols regarding the right to organize unions across the company's production networks, and IndustriALL took advantage of its inspection duties to

forge connections with local union leaders (see CCOO Industria, 2017). Finally, the union network has been used to conduct solidarity campaigns and training efforts in the hopes of boosting union militancy across the company's production networks.

Despite these efforts, important groups of workers employed in the company's operations are underrepresented in the network – notably, immigrant women submitted to informal or non-waged forms of exploitation. In Brazil, contacts have been sparse and focused on training efforts whose reach is mostly limited to workers already in contact with trade union organizations. Often, furthermore, the introduction of private certification instruments, instead of transforming sweatshop labor to adhere to the standards of formal employment, simply excluded the worst offenders from the networks of covered TNCs, thus maintaining their workers out of the scope of the protections associated with such regulations. For the most part, the network itself is used to arrange summit meetings, and to monitor compliance to Corporate Social Responsibility norms and the enforcement of the GFA. So far, the Inditex network embodies a top-down, paternalistic approach, although the global union has been pursuing conditions that could, in time, allow proper local union organization to flourish. In sum, it represents a global union using an uncertain global mandate to reach for the local.

Retail commerce²

In the retail business, the typical workplace operated by a transnational corporation is not the factory but a store that exists alongside thousands of similar establishments managed by the big chains in the sector. Much like other businesses in the service industries, the atomization of union representation in Brazil is pronounced, and the prevalence of high turnout and precarious labor are urgent concerns. However, there are also features that favor union organization in the sector. First, major chains hire most of their workers directly or at least go through formal employment arrangements, allowing unions to operate within established frameworks of industrial relations. Second, workplaces are open to the public, making it easier for unions to engage workers, despite corporate anti-union practices. Third, companies cannot simply relocate physical stores to localities out of the reach of established unions. This last point is particularly relevant in major cities, where retail unions have a large potential member base and can amass considerable influence.

2. The findings on retail commerce benefited largely from a previous research led jointly by Scott Martin, João Carlos Candia Veiga and Kátiusca Galhera (2021). The conclusions drawn from that research, however, are independent from those reached in this article.

Unions affiliated to CUT's National Confederation of Workers in Commerce and Services (Contracs) were among the first to be involved in the central's efforts to expand TUNs beyond traditional manufacturing sectors. One of the first targeted companies was Dutch retailer Royal Ahold, then established in the North-eastern region of the country under the brand Bom Preço. Shared demands were presented to the global president of the company in 2002 and, in that same year, 12 union organizations (local unions and sub-national federations) attended a meeting in Salvador (BA) to discuss the creation of a network. In the event, Ahold's Code of Conduct was a rallying flag. Unions took notice of the "contradictions between what is written and [Ahold's] practices", and it was said that "there are two codes – Ahold's and Bom Preço's! The company insists on adopting only the Brazilian one, saying that the Netherlands is the Netherlands, Brazil is Brazil"³. This is illustrative of the fact that, despite the common association between global union strategies and European industrial relations frameworks, the pragmatic use of European standards to pressure TNCs is not exclusive to traditional manufacturing unions in which social partnership practices are presumed to be seriously considered.

In 2004, Walmart bought Bom Preço from Ahold, and a network was soon set up in the company. Brazilian leaders took part in several meetings organized by UNI Global Union to organize unionists dealing with Walmart around the world, but, at the national level, the topics discussed within the network coincided with those of local unions: the demand that dismissals be "validated" by local unions⁴; problems with broken equipment and refrigeration in certain stores; complaints about corporate anti-union practices, such as not allowing union leaders to distribute leaflets in stores, etc.⁵ Further on, "social dialogue" in Walmart in Brazil would take the form of yearly bargaining rounds where, among other things, a national profit-sharing bonus paid by the company to workers to all workers is negotiated.

Other TUNs promoted in the sector follow the same pattern. At the surface, networks in retail are strikingly like the ones organized in traditional manufacturing – they connect local unions and pragmatically use social responsibility discourses to expand the scope of union representation and organization in TNCs. In fact, the criteria used by Contracs to measure the success of a network are very similar to the ones used in the metal and chemical industries, privileging the company's "recognition" the establishment of "social dialogue", in accordance with the early CUT guidelines for TUNs. However, there are subtle, yet important differences. Where local unions are not as

3. Internal report, Contracs.

4. A provision of the national labor legislation that, until recently, gave local union the right to oversee dismissal procedures.

5. Internal report, Contracs.

well established, union organizations with no enforceable mandate of their own, such as global unions and national industrial confederations in Brazil, may use networks to reach out to workers directly, and even to engage in collective bargaining processes. For instance, the UNI Global Union has been directly involved with campaigns and protest actions and Brazil. Moreover, given the large number of local unions dealing with the company, leaders of the major national confederations are directly involved in the bargaining processes associated with social dialogue rounds.

Because local unions are protective of their prerogatives, however, this tentative national mandate is asserted gradually, often informally, and not without a degree of ambiguity. In 2018, Contracs released a poster calling for workers in the company to gather in assembly to discuss the subject, much like a proper union would, but the actual, formal notice was addressed to affiliated local unions that would organize their own bases. In the same vein, one of the first bulletins of the Walmart network in Brazil made sure to acknowledge that “each union has its own reality and strategy, and the union committee does not want to change the strategies of each organization”. Indeed, the alternating use of “Contracs committees” and “union networks” is further evidence of this uncertainty. In essence, TUNs in retail commerce in Brazil represent a hesitant attempt to gradually centralize organization and bargaining, reaching for the local in pursuit of a scale shift.

Commercial banking

The distribution of workplaces in commercial banking could be compared to that of retail chains and other service industries – workers are in thousands of local branches operated by one of the major commercial banks, usually highly centralized transnational corporations. Banking workers are better employed than those in more precarious service industries, such as retail, but they have long been under pressure from management and technological transformations. The digitalization of services and the use of call center workers to perform actions traditionally associated with banking workers, for instance, have been major sources of union activity. Continuing a tradition of trade union militancy through frequent strikes in the last three decades, they have been able, so far, to preserve important benefits, such as a 30-hour workweek (44 is the standard in the country) and an above-average wage floor.

Regarding our research questions, the most important distinction of the sector is that, unlike virtually every other working-class professional category in the country, banking workers have secured nationwide labor contracts since 1992, the result of determined struggles that included a national strike in 1985. Indeed, although the basic contract is the same for every bank, there are national “commissions” that or-

ganize union leaders within a target-company across different levels in the country. Unlike TUNS, however, these bodies have achieved a high level of institutionalization and take part in proper, uncontested collective bargaining processes, effectively “nationalizing” trade union action in commercial banking in Brazil.

In this sense, banking unions start from the point that most networks in other sectors aspire to achieve – national collective bargaining with major TNCs. Therefore, TUNS in the sector in Brazil have been primarily used to forge international connections. Perhaps more than in any other industry, the international development of TUNS in commercial banks was in no small part the result of the efforts of leaders linked to CUT. Leaders working within CUT’s National Confederation of Workers in the Finance Sector (Contraf) engaged in international initiatives early on (see Castro, 2016), and are active members of Union Network International (UNI Global Union), the largest GUF in services industries. In practice, the industrial branch within the UNI’s regional arm (UNI Americas Finances), in which Brazilian leaders play a decisive role, became the main international supporter of company-based networks in commercial banks. Broader connections are not absent, but TUNS in the sector are established with a markedly regional focus, even in the case European banks⁶. In a way, TUNS in the sector followed in the footsteps of Contraf’s international policies, which privileged Latin American alliances. This focus was influenced by national ambitions of regional leadership, integration, and solidarity in the wake of the Workers’ Party ascendance to power in 2003, a trend that characterized CUT’s international politics as a whole in this period but also represented a reaction to the growing reach of major Brazilian banks in the neighboring countries. Moreover, TUNS in the sector are less focused on company-specific issues, often privileging broader industrial concerns and political issues⁷.

UNI Finances Americas’ TUNS gather once a year, invariably in a Latin American country, for a “joint meeting” that unites all networks. The 14th meeting, held in Peru in 2018, for instance, occurred alongside the 5th meeting of the Latin American Alliance in Defence of Public Banks, and international forums on pension funds and digitalization in the financial system. In the same vein, instead of single-company bulletins, there was a joint “Global Banking Workers Network” pamphlet, published by UNI Americas, Contraf, and the Coordination of Union Centrals in the

6. UNI Americas has signed two GFAs with two commercial banks headquartered in Brazil – Banco do Brasil and Itaú Unibanco. An oddity of these agreement is that, although they are usually listed as GFAs, in both cases the territorial coverage is explicitly defined as ‘the American continent’. In addition to these banks, there are networks in Santander, HSBC, BBVA and ScotiaBank.

7. The existence of public banks in Brazil is relevant in this regard. Workers have a seat at the board of *Banco do Brasil*, for instance, which gives them direct influence on public policies.

Southern Cone. TUNs do opera, and they are used to tackle issues related to each target-company but they are comparatively more likely to combine top-level pressure over company-specific demands (such as particular corporate policies, or cases of workplace harassment and gender discrimination), industrial campaigns that relate to outsourcing and the impacts of digitalization, and efforts to legitimize global unions. In the Spanish bank Santander, for instance, “continental journeys of struggle” demanded, at the same time, a Global Union Framework, profit-sharing bonuses, and the end of outsourcing. Although this implies a more usual “international relations” approach, it does not represent a step back towards an internationalism that is distanced from struggles at the frontlines. In sum, the Brazilian experience with TUNs in the banking sector reflects a strong trade union movement with a national basis reaching for primarily regional alliances that, nevertheless, take the lead in efforts that are global in outlook, such as the signing of GFAs.

Comparative analysis

A frame of comparison

Our research confirms the generally accepted conclusion that sectoral features are important determinants of cross-border union action (see Anner *et al.*, 2006), yet here we have focused, primarily, on the relationship between emerging union networks, previously established institutional structures, and the engagement with TNCs as an alternative means of legitimization of union prerogatives. In each of the studied cases, a coalition of labor organizations takes advantage of a transnational corporation’s productive structures (as a “roadmap”) and private authority (as a “counterpart”) to pursue a scale shift that tentatively rearranges the scope and roles of trade union organizations within a given context. The outcome is the creation of cross-union alliances and industrial relations practices (usually under the umbrella terms “networks” and “social dialogue”, although often with different meanings) that imply the *de facto* acknowledgement of new union prerogatives that are accommodated to (i.e., do not disrupt) traditional structures.

Table 1 summarizes our findings, taking as the reference in each sector the position of what we define as “key participants”. By that, we mean the main drivers of networks in different sectors, the kind of organization that better represents the “scalar shift” described in each case⁸: local unions seeking to establish primarily na-

8. This is a simplification and implies an analytical perspective, of course. In practice, there are multiple shifts at play. A strong network may, for instance, lend credence to the global mandate claimed by a

TABLE 1
Company-based TUNs in Different Industries in Brazil

	METAL/CHEMICAL	GARMENT	RETAIL	BANKING
KEY PARTICIPANTS	Local Unions	Global Union Federation	National Confederation	National Delegations
SCALAR SHIFT	Local → National	Global → Local	National → Local	National → Regional
UNION RELATIONS	Translocal connections	Top-down support	Hesitant national centralization	Latin American solidarity
CONSTITUENCY	Unionized, directly employed	Non-unionized, supply chains	Partially unionized, directly employed	Mostly unionized, directly employed
SUBJECT MATTERS	Specific workplace demands	Human rights and labor violations	Diffuse workplace demands	Company-related, broader concerns
PRIMARY SCOPE	National	Global	National	Regional
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS	Conflictive Partnership	Corporate Social Responsibility	Collective Bargaining	Top-level pressure

Source: Original research.

tional arrangements in traditional manufacturing industries; a global union reaching for the local in the garment case; a national confederation attempting to centralize union organization and collective bargaining privileges in the retail business; and the efforts of the banking workers' union movement to leverage a strong national basis to achieve regional influence. Moreover, each column presumes a labor "constituency" (workers that are conceived of as the social base of the network); an affinity with certain "subject matters"; tentatively creates a new scalar "jurisdiction"; and particular approaches to "social dialogue" and industrial relations, that is, different forms of engaging the target-company.

When read together, these cases indicate that there are no natural jurisdictions, ready-made constituencies, or exclusive issues in the scope of union networks in TNCs. They suggest a range of possibilities, not a single model. Furthermore, our results suggest that TUNs can reorganize union roles within national settings. Nevertheless, our findings also shed light on the fact that TUNs often preserve traditional definitions regarding to which workers, workplaces, and employment relations are assumed to be in the purview of union organizations and associated networks. Union leaders are aware of these limitations and address them within TUNs, but they do not pick and choose the features in the table freely, rather they are constrained by

guf at the same time as it carves out new prerogatives for a national industrial organization. The table highlights the relationship between networks and the Brazilian trade union structure, and prevalent features as illustrated by the cases presented in the previous section.

industrial settings and institutional frameworks. Therefore, our aim is not to find the one best model, but to reflect on what is at stake.

The persistence of traditional labor boundaries is indicative of broader trends that relate to debates on the continued relevance of collective bargaining and trade unions, or the risks and benefits of regulatory approaches based on private governance arrangements. In more specific terms, leaders attempting to broaden the scope or deepen the roots of TUNs in Brazil face three main obstacles. The first two have to do with inherent limitations of the institutional trade union structures in the country. First, it is illegal for union organizations (or informal networks, for that matter) to engage in collective bargaining and proper trade union organization on behalf of workers without the consent of the local union officially assigned to them. Second, under adverse conditions, unions may be compelled to prioritize their core member base, even if they profess broader solidarity principles. In other words, being *trade union* networks, such alliances are constrained by the structures from which they emerge. Finally, a third challenge is related to the ways through which TUNs use TNCs to legitimize claims over new prerogatives and spheres of action. The private authority of powerful corporations is not neutral, it shapes “social dialogue” practices. We now turn to these questions.

Old boundaries, emerging networks

The search for union “counterbalances” to global corporations reflects the perception that the growing reach and power of TNCs have created the need for matching union responses. Indeed, promoters of TUNs often refer to the mantra of a correspondence between the networked character of current global corporations and the desirable union mode of organization, that is, trade union networks. However, the connections established via TUNs do not exactly coincide with the makeup of production networks. The paradigmatic case is that of metal and chemical industries, where TUNs’ constituencies are closely related to the core member-base of participating unions (mostly, male workers directed employed by target-companies in production), despite the acknowledgement of the importance of contract, office and suppliers’ workers. In retail, likewise, TUNs implicitly accepted traditional union boundaries, privileging the experience of workers formally and directly employed by TNCs, even though in this case the relative weakness of local unions allowed for a tentative national centralization.

In the garment industry, on the other hand, the uncertain global mandate proclaimed by a GFA was used to follow the trail of proper GPN connections. However, the lack of an established union presence in workplaces significantly impaired the

effects of the network in Brazil. Finally, TUNs in commercial banking combined company-specific demands with broader industrial concerns, targeting TNCs to, among other things, demand the expansion of the scope of labor rights currently restricted by a narrow definition of “banking workers” that exclude outsourced call center employees. Even in this case, however, TUNs were not the main driver behind this shift. They reflected the national achievements of a strong and exceptional movement that had already addressed important limitations of trade union organization in Brazil.

Therefore, our conclusion is that TUNs, being directly connected to established union structures, assimilate some of their boundaries and exclusions. It is important to note, however, that TUNs are not detached from broader efforts. In traditional manufacturing sectors, in which the influence of local priorities is hardest to escape, demonstrations of shopfloor solidarity with contract, cleaning and catering, maintenance, and office workers are not uncommon, and local representatives leverage the influence achieved through TUNs to support these groups. In a recent case, moreover, a network in an automaker took it upon itself to organize workers in a supplier plant outside of the jurisdiction of participating unions. This is an exception, but it shows that institutional constraints do not necessarily lead to resignation.

An interesting development has been the creation of *IndustriALL Brasil* in late 2020. Openly inspired by the model adopted by the homonymous global union, it was not conceived as a national chapter, but as a new, independent organization that brings together CUT and FS affiliates in metal, chemical, textile and garment, construction, food and catering, and energy industries. Similarly, within CUT, a “services macro-sector” working group has been discussing joint strategies with unions in finances (including commercial banking), communications, private security, retail commerce, and data processing. In sum, union boundaries are actively being challenged, although not strictly via networks. Presumably, TUNs can be one element in a larger process of reorganization, and the fact that inspiration is being taken from global unions in the pursuit of alternatives is an evidence of their role in this regard.

Corporate Governance and Social Dialogue

We have shown that TUNs use CSR discourses pragmatically, so the formal commitment to “social dialogue” should not be viewed as an acceptance of the idea of leaving capital-labor conflicts behind. McCallum (2013, p. 13) associated union efforts in this regard with “governance struggles”, defined as “a panoply of strategies to subordinate the rules-based logic of private companies to democratic oversight by workers and their unions”. Nevertheless, once “social dialogue” is institutionalized,

establishing a set of rules and compromises that guide the relationship between unions and managers within a sphere of private governance, TNCs can shape it to a significant degree. In fact, it is doubtful that such arrangements could be sustained otherwise, given that they largely rely on voluntary commitments.

For instance, while it was certainly advantageous for Brazilian workers in metal and chemical industries to emulate (or to be included in) European-inspired industrial relations practices, and although foreign headquarters and local subsidiaries were generally not amenable to this idea at first, the core member-base of “participating unions” coincided with a fragment of the workforce with which TNCs may accept a dialogue to avoid disrupting production. In the garment industry, the jurisdiction expands dramatically but in this case, a much lighter version of social dialogue prevails, one that is closer to CSR monitoring than to proper industrial relations. Retail networks represent a middle ground, where limited supra-local collective bargaining relieves the pressure of potentially damaging national and international campaigns. In all cases, unions may have taken the initiative, but ultimately companies draw the line that determines where the dialogue ends. Once again, commercial banking offers an illuminating counterpoint to the spectrum of social dialogue-cum-private governance frameworks presented by the other networks. However, this meant that there was much less of a focus on the “recognition” of the network and on the institutionalization of private governance arrangements. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, might it be the case that company-specific strategies based on “social dialogue” practices could reinforce, rather than disturb established divisions?

That does not seem to be the case. First of all, the contested character of the relationship between TUNS and TNCs in Brazil is quite evident. “Social dialogue” is an elastic concept used by unions to describe a variety of demands and, on the whole, they are viewed as part of larger industrial and working-class agendas, and achievements in one company set a higher standard to be pursued in different settings. Unsurprisingly, in all four cases, corporate managers resisted the changes proposed by trade unions, and labor gains were invariably the result of workers’ struggles and mobilization. Moreover, union leaders engaged in TUNS in Brazil take advantage of foreign practices and global union initiatives selectively. For instance, even though a global agreement signed between IndustriALL, IG Metall, and a German metal conglomerate was praised in Germany as a landmark achievement because of its provisions on the creation of a company committee, in the spirit of social partnership, and an online reporting system, in the style of corporate compliance tools, Brazilian union leaders were skeptical about these innovations and when issues arose within the company, they preferred to contact foreign and global unions directly. Even in the garment industry, in which CSR practices have been prevalent, IndustriALL has

been working to gradually shift the paradigm. While the original GFA signed with Inditex in 2007 leaned heavily on CSR terminology, the notion is absent in the latest version of the agreement, signed in 2019.

Concluding remarks

The previous section dealt with two main questions. First, in what way and to what extent do TUNs transform existing union boundaries? About this, we have argued that networks incorporate flaws of the existing institutional structures, even as they attempt to overcome some of them. TUNs can therefore be a part of reorganization processes, but they are not likely to break away from established unions completely. Second, are company-targeting approaches that engage social responsibility frameworks trapped by the private authority of TNCs? Here, our conclusion is that TUNs venture into “social dialogue” insofar as it allows them to further union prerogatives and collective bargaining. In a sense, the latter answer depends on the former. Precisely because TUNs are intrinsically connected to an established trade union movement, they are capable of engaging TNCs within the field of corporate governance without succumbing to its limitations, always being pulled back into the realm of industrial relations and collective bargaining.

This leaves out the question of whether trade unions, especially when thought of in terms of institutionalized collective bargaining prerogatives, are the only or the best way of organizing workers in response to TNCs. It is not under dispute that global transformations are changing the nature of work and employment across different settings, and some have noted that established trade unions and collective bargaining frameworks are generally not up to the task (Van der Linden, 2016). The results of our study do not imply that alternatives outside of this scope should be ignored, but they suggest that, in countries such as Brazil, trade unions willing to reach beyond the local to defy powerful TNCs are a viable means of preserving, and under certain conditions expanding, a sphere of social protection and labor rights. Most notably, unlikely other forms of cross-border labor organization, TUNs can scale up the age-old clash between workers and their unions, on one side, and corporations and their managers, on the other.

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Abstract

Cross-border Trade Union Networks in Transnational Corporation: a comparison between sectors

This article analyses cross-border trade union networks in Transnational Corporations (TNCs) in the metal and chemical, garment, retail, and commercial banking sectors in Brazil. Conceptualized as global union responses to the growing reach of TNCs, such networks have been established in different settings in the country and have engaged major corporations outside of traditional industrial relations frameworks, venturing into the controversial field of social dialogue, corporate responsibility, and private governance. From different research backgrounds, our findings suggest that union networks in TNCs can be used to rearrange union prerogatives across different levels but remain embedded in previous institutional structures. In this sense, such unions incorporate existing union boundaries, including the exclusion of relevant groups of workers, even as they can scale up the scope of trade union action.

Keywords: Union networks; Transnational corporations; Cross-border organizing.

Resumo

Redes sindicais transfronteiriças em corporações transnacionais: uma comparação entre setores

Este artigo analisa redes sindicais transfronteiras em Empresas Transnacionais (ETNs) nos setores químico e metalúrgico, confecção do vestuário, comércio e bancário, no Brasil. Conceitualizadas como respostas sindicais globais para a crescente expansão das ETNs, tais redes têm sido estabelecidas em diferentes parâmetros no país, se envolvendo com grandes empresas fora das estruturas tradicionais de relações de trabalho e se arriscando no campo controverso do diálogo social, responsabilidade corporativa e governança privada. Partindo de diferentes bagagens metodológicas de pesquisa, nossos resultados sugerem que redes sindicais em ETNs podem ser utilizadas para rearranjar prerrogativas sindicais em diferentes níveis, mas continuam enraizadas em estruturas institucionais prévias. Nesse sentido, tais sindicatos incorporam limites prévios de atuação, como a exclusão de grupos relevantes de trabalhadores(as), mesmo nos casos em que estes(as) podem expandir o campo de ação de sindicatos.

Palavras-chave: Redes sindicais; Corporações transnacionais; Organização transfronteiriça.

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Digital communication as a global challenge for trade unions: Lessons from Brazil and Portugal¹

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Introduction

Some of the debates that trouble traditional actors such as trade unions – as entities that have historically struggled in favour of the poor and the disenfranchised (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013; Hyman, 2016) – relate to technological innovation. The evolution of industry 4.0 (Ictur, 2018; Kagermann *et alli*, 2013; Valenduc & Vendramin, 2016) is a crucial question nowadays, as the processes towards the digitalization of work are based on three points highlighted by Degryse (2016, p. 7): (i) the internet and high speed networks; (ii) huge quantities of data, from commercial, personal and geographic sources (the so-called Big Data) that are incorporated by internet platforms and are available in real time; (iii) the evolution of mobile technologies that have expanded internet access.

In fact, it is within the discussion about the “future of work” (Ryder, 2015) that it is possible to contextualize the impact of technological changes on labour and

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1. This paper benefits from the inputs of two research projects: a) the research project “Rebuilding trade union power in the age of austerity: a review of three sectors” (PTDC/IVC-SOC/3533/2014 - Poci-01-0145-Feder-016808), executed at Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, between 2016-2019. This project was supported by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT/MEC) through national funds and is co-financed by Feder through the Operational Programme Competitiveness and Innovation Compete 2020 within the project; b) the PhD project titled “Does labour get online to mobilise young workers offline? A comparative analysis of the relationship of trade union congresses with young workers through the Internet in Europe and the Americas” and supported by FCT/MEC.

employment. This debate includes, among others, the following topics: the role of industries of the future; different types of digital work; the implications of productive automation in the lives of those who work; individualisation processes in the management of working and non-working time; technological unemployment; requirements with regard to new skills; tensions between traditional public service activities and the use of technological platforms (Costa, 2017a:). Beyond the changes to labour relations, it has become necessary to embrace the technologies of globalised networked capitalism (Waterman, 2004) and of the Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) in order to communicate more efficiently and effectively.

As the world of work changes, many scholars and trade union activists believe that the labour movement is going through a crisis of identity and legitimacy (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2010; Bernaciak, Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2014). Much of it has been attributed to the changes to the labour market as a consequence of neoliberal globalisation, but external factors notwithstanding many trade unions have also undergone an institutionalisation process that has weakened the class struggle dynamics of trade unionism. This is reflected, for instance, in the difficulties of effectively reaching the increasing mass of precarious workers (Costa & Estanque, 2019) and in organising workers in the burgeoning digital economy (Degryse, 2016; Vandaele, 2018). But while the current global scenario is challenging, it has also fostered new forms of collective action that can inspire the necessary changes for organised labour to (re)engage meaningfully not only with its membership, but also with potential members and with society at large, and as such, regain its prominence as a social movement.

Our main objective in this article is to draw attention to current trends that challenge the trade union movement's adaptive capacity. We begin with an overview of the Web 2.0 and digital identities. We then consider digital trade unionism as an overarching concept that can contribute to struggle, negotiation and revitalisation of trade unionism in the digital era. Finally, we analyse the use of social media through a mixed-methods, comparative approach, applying social network analysis and content analysis techniques in order to explore the impacts of digital communications on trade union strategies. The empirical analysis focuses on the most representative trade union confederations in Brazil and Portugal.

The Web 2.0 and the new digital context faced by trade unions

Coined by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty in a brainstorming session for a sector conference, the term Web 2.0 expresses the evolution of the web after the crash of dot-com companies in 2001, which marked the end of the "first era" of widespread

access to the web (O'Reilly, 2005). As we mention elsewhere (Carneiro & Costa, 2020), many other scholars have also highlighted the transformation of the web into a highly communicative network (Castells, 2013; Lupton, 2013; Rogers, 2013) but O'Reilly's denomination caught on. Despite critiques to its theoretical foundations (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010; Han, 2010; Song, 2010), it remains a dominant term to refer to the web as a platform in which user control, participation and collective intelligence are essential features.

As summarised by Fuchs *et al.* (2010, p. 48), the main characteristics of Web 2.0 are:

[...] radical decentralization, radical trust, participation instead of publishing, users as contributors, rich user experience, the long tail, the Web as platform, control of one's own data, remixing data, collective intelligence, attitudes, better software by more users, play, undetermined user behaviour.

Formats include blogs, social networking sites, natively digital search engines, and the many other applications that encourage user interaction. However, as pointed by Song (2010), while from an industry or marketing perspective the Web 2.0 represents a new way of using the internet, from the user-end these new ways are “developing into new social practices and new forms of knowledge exchange” (2010, p. 250). As such, it is not just the technology that makes Web 2.0 so significant, but rather its “normative, or cultural, dimension.” (*Ibidem*). More poignantly, Fuchs *et al.* (2010) defend that the web is a “techno-social network that interlinks humans by making use of global networks of computer networks” (p. 50). Hence, as the evolution of the web has more to do with attitude rather than actual technology, they call for the development of a critical theory of the web and society.

Nowadays, some of people's most important activities online take place on social networks, be it through chats, posts, e-commerce, information sharing or activism. And while social networks connect practically all dimensions of people's lives, they project a high level of autonomy as they are built on personal preferences, that is, users choose how and who they want to interact with (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). In addition, “the open and accessible character of the net means that traditional centres of power have less informational and ideational control over their environment than previously” (Dalgren, 2009, in Fowler & Hagar, 2013, p. 204) which allows for more voices to be heard and for different forms of collective action to take place.

However, while some studies recognize the Web 2.0's potential to expose individuals to vast amounts of information, others have pointed to significant limitations (Bakshy *et al.*, 2015), since flows of information depend on how individuals are con-

nected to social networks and – increasingly – on the way algorithms are employed by service providers, such as Google or Facebook (Bakshy *et al.*, 2015; Rogers, 2013).

For instance, in a study about Facebook use in the US, Mitchell and Weisel showed that half (48%) of the people surveyed access political news on Facebook, which is almost as many as those who get such news from local TV (49%) (2014, p. 25). More importantly, users tend to have circles of friends or contacts that reflect their own ideological views. For instance, among users who have declared political positions on Facebook, conservative individuals are “more likely than those in other ideological groups to hear political opinions that are in line with their own views”, with 66% affirming “most of their close friends share their views on government and politics” (2015, p. 2). Likewise, left-leaning users are more likely to “block or ‘unfriend’ someone on a social network... because of politics” (*Ibidem*). This can result in the creation of what Bakshy *et al.* (2015, p. 1130) dubbed “echo chambers”, where “individuals are exposed only to information from like-minded individuals” and “filter bubbles”, in which content selected by the algorithms once again exposes users only to information in line with their views. Since the surprise outcomes of the 2016 UK’s Brexit Referendum, the 2016 American presidential elections and the Cambridge Analytica scandal involving Facebook in 2018, the discussions around privacy, data control and echo chambers have reached a broader audience through political commentary and analysis on mainstream media. In spite of the growing belief that “we live life in the network” (Lazer *et al.*, 2009, p. 721) the transparency of this network and what that represents to attempts to theorize the web must be considered.

Nevertheless, the opportunities for interaction presented by Web 2.0 have undeniably placed it as an intrinsic dimension of people’s lives. “Surfing the net” is no longer a special occasion to seek something different; rather, the web environment has become an ever-familiar space of constant – or near constant – presence, where ordinary activities, from interacting with friends to perusing news, from shopping to dating, take place (Dahlgren, 2013). As the lines between online and offline activities are blurred, the question of how the technological changes discussed above impact the construction of the self comes to fore (Belk, 2013; Bernal, 2012; Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

Bernal defends that online identities need “to be looked on as something more complex than a matter of authentication” (Bernal, 2012, p. 1). Nowadays, an individual’s need to function in the current interactive online scenario in order to fully function in the “real” world has significantly reduced the scope for artificial representations (Belk, 2013; Bernal, 2012). Online identities are now more like extensions of offline selves. In fact, Belk defends that today’s digital realms can be situated within the concept of “third places”, that is, spaces that are “neither the first

place of home nor the second place of work, but at which people hang out, enjoy themselves, and feel accepted” (Belk, 2013, p. 486).

By using the concept of “networked individualism”, Rainie and Wellman argue that recent technological developments have “changed the ways [people] interact with each other. They have become increasingly networked as individuals, rather than embedded in groups. In the world of networked individuals, it is the person who is the focus: not the family, not the work unit, not the neighborhood, and not the social group” (2012, p. 6). Rather than luring people away from offline interaction, Rainie and Wellman associate Internet use with larger and more diverse personal networks.

This new digital context is confronting the collective sense of organization typically associated with traditional actors such as trade unions. It is therefore worth asking: how can traditional trade unionism adapt to the emergence of digital trade unionism? To what extent is the use of social media platforms perceived and applied by trade union confederations? The following section further unpacks these subjects.

Digital trade unionism: challenges and opportunities from the unionists’ perspective

The pervasiveness of digital networks has added new pressures on both institutions and individuals, both because it is increasingly difficult to avoid a virtual existence and because it is necessary to understand the infrastructure and the dynamics of digital platforms in order to communicate effectively. As part of an investigation into the challenges of innovation for trade unionism, in-depth interviews with several Portuguese trade union leaders (Costa *et al.*, 2019; Costa *et al.*, 2020; Estanque *et al.*, 2020) captured first-hand perceptions as to whether the introduction of new technologies as a form of union communication has been growing, both internally and externally, and, especially, if new technologies are becoming an important way of attracting new members. The role of social media and any practical results was another aspect analysed. In addition, the interviews sought to assess to what extent the criterion of innovation should not also materialise in the approximation of trade unionism to other non-union actors.

An interview with the general secretary of the European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF) supports the notion of the internet as inescapable:

A while back, a Greek cruise company told of the case of two young men that went to work on one of their ships and who – within 24 hours, the ship had not even sailed – had already quit because they realised there would be no Internet on board when they left the port. They could not fathom how they would live without Whatsapp or Facebook (Interview, 12/1/2018).

While this anecdote reinforces the importance that young people attribute to online communications, it also points to the potential for organised labour to prioritise digital trade unionism as an institutionalised practice. However, the opportunities presented by such a practice seem to have found more acceptance among scholars and digital industry professionals than among rank-and-file trade unionists (Rego *et al.*, 2016).

One of the pioneers of Internet-based trade unionism was Eric Lee, whose writings and online news service (www.labourstart.org) were benchmarks in the optimistic current of the earlier days of the Internet that advocated for a “global labournet” that could unite workers across the globe (Lee, 2004, p. 71). Over time, however, the Internet in general, and social media platforms in particular, have become a saturated and fraught space, where various groups and interests dispute the attention of citizens and consumers. As a result of the new challenges in securing a space in the digital realm, Lee’s vision did not fully materialise. Nevertheless, how can trade unionism benefit from the Web 2.0? It has been well documented that the internet has helped organisations to communicate faster and cheaper with broader audiences (Rego *et al.*, 2016). It has also enabled the creation of digital archives for the numerous books, magazines, pamphlets and other materials developed by worker’s organisations around the world since the beginnings of organised labour, therefore securing a valuable historical record. Additionally, the capacity to transmit information in real time, such as reacting to workers’ rights violations, sending out calls for action, or raising awareness of workers’ issues has been invaluable to outreach and mobilisation efforts.

For instance, a former leader of an airport and aviation workers’ union, affirmed that:

Websites increase the ability of trade unions to connect to their members, an aspect that previously depended only on face-to-face interaction... connections were made through the union representative and general meetings, both of which there are less and less nowadays. A good website solves the issue of membership decline, as well as the format and level of communication (Interview 18/1/2018).

As such, the capacity to manage an online presence is essential. As stated by the vice-president of another national trade union for civil aviation workers:

[...] the colours, the lettering, all that matters. We have two members of the board who are between 30 and 35 years of age and who understand the new technologies. They designed the union’s new logo themselves, in partnership with a professional company... they put

together a phone app, there is a fully-functioning Facebook page that everyone likes because the response is almost instantaneous, people ask questions and receive answers right away. It is easier for people to seek clarifications on labour issues or any other issue through Facebook (Interview 18/1/2018).

Another pioneer social movement scholar and activist was the late Peter Waterman, who defended the importance of network linkages to transnational trade unionism (1998; 2004). Inspired by the anti-capitalist globalisation protests in Seattle in 1999 – the first mass protest to rely on the Internet as a main form of decentralised mobilisation – he believed trade unions had (and still have, we add) much to learn from other social movements and organisations that were quick to embrace the digital world, a dimension he thought could enable a “new social unionism”. Such optimism has been faced with a few setbacks. Actually, many of the obstacles to “e-unions” (Darlington, 2004) stem, in large part, from scepticism displayed by trade union leaders with regards to the effectiveness of digital mobilisation. Other challenges include digital illiteracy; the democracy deficit in the workplace, which limits workers’ access to the Internet; language restrictions, as a truly global labour network would require translation services to several idioms; and competing for attention in an increasingly data-driven environment. Simply existing online is no longer enough to get a message across, it has become necessary to continuously create and curate content that is tailored the specific audiences trade unions intend to reach (Carneiro, 2018).

While social media present platforms that ease horizontal interaction among users, they are far from resolving the aforementioned challenges. Specifically regarding Facebook, the national secretary of a trade union for communications and media professionals affirmed in an interview that:

While Facebook is a way of reaching people [especially because we send emails but sometimes there are issues of size and frequency], if you ask me how many responses I have posted on there, I’ll say very few. That is because often a person who is on Facebook and on the Internet will say whatever is on their mind, even if they should not... If I see a person post a question, even when I think it is relevant, I’ll send them a personal message to say ‘hey, your question should not be discussed from behind a screen, my phone number is this or if you prefer tell me where you are and I will come to meet you or call you’. We need some level of personal communication; I don’t like to stay behind the computer screen! (Interview, 14/2/2018).

Nevertheless, the challenges of digital unionism and any solutions to overcome obstacles should be assessed through evidence of the actual impact that digital com-

munications have on the relationship between workers and trade unions, in order to understand what resources are necessary and cost-effective in developing an online strategy. Yet, the high expectations placed on digital trade unionism by the Internet optimists are often confronted with the realisation that many workers' struggles happen on day-to-day situations that require direct intervention. Here, once again we highlight the position of the General Secretary of the ETF, who, despite being an internationalist and a user of digital technologies, when asked about digital trade unionism stated:

The issue of the Internet, blogs, WhatsApp and all that cannot substitute for physical involvement with the workers, for working together with them to learn about their issues. It is curious that there are some trade unions, even Nordic unions that are known for their high levels of unionisation, that come tell us in our meetings that they are learning a new way of working, which is being close to the workers, meeting them outside the workplace, sometimes going to the bars they go to, the places where they live (Interview, 12/1/2018).

The pragmatism in this position indicates that, in spite of the internet consisting of an unavoidable tool for union recruitment and mobilisation strategies, the 'virtual' unionist is still far behind the 'real' unionist (Costa, 2018). Even if the number of trade unions using the web to communicate with members and society at large is increasing across the globe, it would be useful to conduct an Internet census to measure the extent of access by trade unionists, since there are important differences between countries, sectors and unions, as well as different frequencies of Internet use (Rego *et al.*, 2014). The idea would be to verify – as pointed by Eric Lee in the turn of the millennium – if the “number of unionists online is at least at the same level as the unionists in a particular society” (Lee, 2000, p. 14). Moreover, it would be useful to determine the weight of online mobilisation in achieving concrete gains for workers.

To say that “the Internet belongs to everyone” (the title of Lee's seminal book) means to recognise it as an instrument for trade unions to renew themselves and their communication strategies in order to broaden dialogue with organised labour and beyond (Martínez Lucio *et al.*, 2009), should the workers choose to do so. The challenge is convincing workers and unions that it can also be a way to achieve practical results. In this sense, by helping overcome geographical, institutional and class barriers, digital unionism can become an important mechanism for maximising emerging opportunities. For that, it is important that this form of communication is not only embraced as a technical tool, but also as an ethical principle towards more democratic communications. This democratic challenge probably has to start “at home”. In fact, at least in theoretical terms, digital unionism could also be an instigator of the debate

about internal democracy in trade unions by stimulating the approximation between categories of workers, and between different levels of trade union hierarchy

Trade unions and social media: a comparative analysis of Brazilian and Portuguese trade union confederations

As the boundaries between the virtual and the real become increasingly blurred, the internet offers an entirely different channel for understanding what people are saying, and how they are connecting. Consequently, new research methods have surfaced that propose moving beyond how much of society is online and rather investigating cultural and social transformations through the internet (Rogers, 2013). Based on this concept and informed by the aforementioned interviews, we sought to empirically assess the relationships brokered and the content disseminated by trade union confederations through their online channels, in order to uncover how trade unions leverage digital communications to support outreach.

Although trade unions were slow to embrace new digital technologies, despite varying levels of professionalism, their use is now widespread through websites, online membership applications, social media pages, blogs, videos and petitions. Although a broader comparison has been established elsewhere (Carneiro & Costa, 2020), in this paper we focus on Portuguese-speaking trade union confederations: two from Brazil – Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) and Força Sindical (FS) – and two from Portugal – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses-Intersindical Nacional (CGTP-INT) and União Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT).

An initial exercise to map the online presence of the selected trade union confederations shows that the platforms used by trade union confederations vary significantly (Table 1). However, they all went online at around the same period by launching websites between 1997 and 1998. The same was found for the two predominant social media platforms: the four confederations joined Twitter in 2009 and mostly created official Facebook Pages in 2010.

From among the social media platforms, Facebook was selected for further analyses as it was the most consistently used by all organisations – despite them all having Twitter profiles, their use by some confederations was sporadic. Moreover, despite significant differences in general population size, the Facebook penetration rates for the two countries are similar: the number of active personal profiles accounts for 67% of the population in Brazil and 70% in Portugal². Thus, in order to assess

2. Brazil 2020, <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-brazil/2020/06>; Portugal 2020, <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-portugal/2020/06>

the activity of the confederations on social media, network analysis and content analysis were conducted with data retrieved from the main official Facebook Pages of each confederation. A Facebook application called Netvizz (Rieder, 2013) was employed to extract publicly available data (text and metadata from posts, and page likes), with network graphs constructed with the open-source software Gephi and content analysis performed on NVivo 10 software.

TABLE 1
Online presence of trade union confederations in Portugal and Brazil
(own construction, data retrieved 01 February 2020)

	CGTP-IN	UGT	CUT	FS
Website	x	x	x	x
Facebook	x	x	x	x
Twitter	x	x	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x
Instagram	–	x	x	–
Blog	–	x	–	–
Flickr	–	x	–	x
LinkedIn	–	x	–	–
Podcast	–	–	x	–

Regarding the network analysis, it is important to clarify that Facebook distinguishes between personal profiles and Pages:

People connect on Facebook using their authentic identities. When people stand behind their opinions and actions with their authentic name and reputation, our community is more accountable. If we discover that you have multiple personal profiles, we may ask you to close the additional profiles. We also remove any profiles that impersonate other people. If you want to create a presence on Facebook for your pet, organisation, favourite film, games character or another purpose, please create a Page instead of a Facebook Profile. Pages can help you conduct business, stay in touch with fans or promote a cause you care about (Facebook, 2017).

As such, the Page of an organisation can be liked by both personal profiles and other pages. Generally, individuals will like or follow pages of organisations, brands or public figures they are interested in. Institutional pages, however, tend to be more strategic in their efforts to build an online presence, and will like other pages for several reasons, such as to show support, to make other organisations aware of

theirs and increase reach, to monitor and share content, and to show visitors what other pages are aligned with their values or interests. Hence, the networks were constructed at the institutional level, that is, restricted to links established between Pages (Carneiro, 2018).

Besides the institutional networks within which the trade union confederations are placed, assessing the types of content they disseminate across Facebook also sheds light on the narratives constructed by organised labour. While a presence on social media is almost inescapable for any organisation that wishes to secure a level of visibility these days, if this presence does not effectively leverage on the platforms' affordances to connect with the intended audiences, it is easy to go unnoticed in the masses of information that make up Facebook. Based on the theoretical foundations of descriptive content analysis (Holsti, 1968; Herring, 2009; Krippendorff, 2013) a platform-specific conceptual framework was designed in order to systematically and objectively identify the characteristics of a sample of posts from the four trade union confederations (Carneiro & Costa, 2020). The table below describes the analytical categories, which were divided into mutually exclusive case coding indicators that characterise the posts, and thematic coding indicators that describe their subject focus. The sample for this analysis was drawn from randomly selected months, consisting of all posts from January 2016, February 2017 and October 2018, for a total of 428 individual posts: 72 from CUT, 101 from FS, 130 from CGTP, and 125 from UGT.

TABLE 2
Content analysis analytical categories

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Case coding</i>	
<i>Post feature</i>	Posts were coded against an exhaustive list of the types of content that can be disseminated on Facebook such as text, links, photos, videos, illustrations, text over background, memes, GIFs, infographics, petitions, audios, and events.
<i>Feature source</i>	Indication of where the content originated from. Possible sources of featured content included own content (i.e. website, other social media profiles, etc.), other labor organizations, civil society, government, media, private sector, and international organizations.
<i>Tone</i>	Posts were coded as "informative" when they simply relayed information; as "mobilizing" when they included a call to action; "positioning" when they were authored by or included statements from the confederations' leadership; "solidarity" when they indicated support for an action or cause; "celebratory" when they praised an achievement or celebrated commemorative dates.
<i>Original text</i>	Did the text box contain anything, or was the post just sharing content without any original message/commentary by the confederation?
<i>Tag (Y/N)</i>	Did the post include a tag for another page or profile?
<i>Thematic coding</i>	

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Union issues</i>	Topics directly related to union activities such as strikes, demonstrations, collective bargaining, meetings, services, etc.
<i>Labour issues</i>	Topics directly linked to the traditional labor agenda, such as wages, worker’s rights, health and safety, pensions, and others.
<i>Broader issues</i>	Broader themes not specifically about labour or trade union activity, but which represent a wider agenda of issues that indirectly affect the world of work, such as human rights, immigration, climate change, trade, etc.
<i>Interest groups</i>	If a post mentioned or was intended for a specific segment of the population, like women, young people, immigrants, minorities, etc.

Source: Carneiro & Costa, 2020.

Results: assessing the social media activity of trade union confederations

Table 3 summarises basic Page metrics for the four trade union confederations assessed, according to the two dates of data retrieval. Overall, the Brazilian CUT was visibly more active on Facebook than its counterparts, posting several times a day, whereas the other confederations present a much lower level of activity. This difference could be due to a clearer strategy by the CUT to amplify its discourse on digital platforms, as this Brazilian confederation has often been associated with the concepts of “social movement unionism” and “new social unionism” (Costa, 2015; Waterman, 2004).

TABLE 3
Official Facebook pages of trade union confederations in Brazil and Portugal

	<i>Pages liked*</i>	<i>Post activity**</i>	<i>Likes received**</i>
CUT (BR)	107	0,51	211,386
FS (BR)	116	0,08	112,528
CGTP-IN (PT)	19	0,13	25,856
UGT (PT)	50	0,07	5,016

Notes: *Data retrieved 08 October, 2018; **Data retrieved 01 July 2020; “Post activity” is a metric provided by Facebook that calculates the number of posts per hour, based on the last 50 posts.

Nevertheless, considering that Brazil has approximately 13 million unionised workers, and Portugal has about 560 thousand (Visser, 2019), these figures highlight that all four organizations have a limited number of followers given the potential population just within the labour movement. Taking CUT again as an example, the confederation represents 61% of Brazil’s unionised workers (Visser, 2019) – that is, almost eight million people. As such, if every follower of its official Page represented an individual member, the number of likes would constitute only 2.7%

of this membership. In the case of Portugal's largest confederation, the CGTP, this figure doubles to 6.5%. However, as it is known that likes on Facebook Pages do not correspond to individual people, and can include other institutional accounts, as discussed previously, this poses a question with regards to the representativeness of Facebook followers versus the dedication and the resources required to maximise the reach of social networks as part of broader communications and outreach efforts.

The visualisations of the page like networks for the four trade union confederations also reveal interesting insights about the level of engagement of these organisations with others on Facebook, with results that could reflect an offline reality as well. Figures 1 to 4 below present directed graphs, with Facebook Pages as the nodes and the connections between nodes (edges) made when a page likes another. As the trade union confederations are the central element in the networks, they are necessarily connected to all the other nodes and there are no isolated components; it is also possible to see where the other pages like one another.

In all of the graphs, five major groups are evident: Facebook Pages directly related to the trade union confederation itself (ie. regional offices, sub-committees or campaigns that have individual pages), trade unions and labour-related organisations (regardless of affiliation to that particular confederation), civil society organisations, media organisations (which encompass both mainstream/commercial media and alternative media) and government bodies. The nodes were colour coded according to these clusters and the edges were coloured to match their node source.

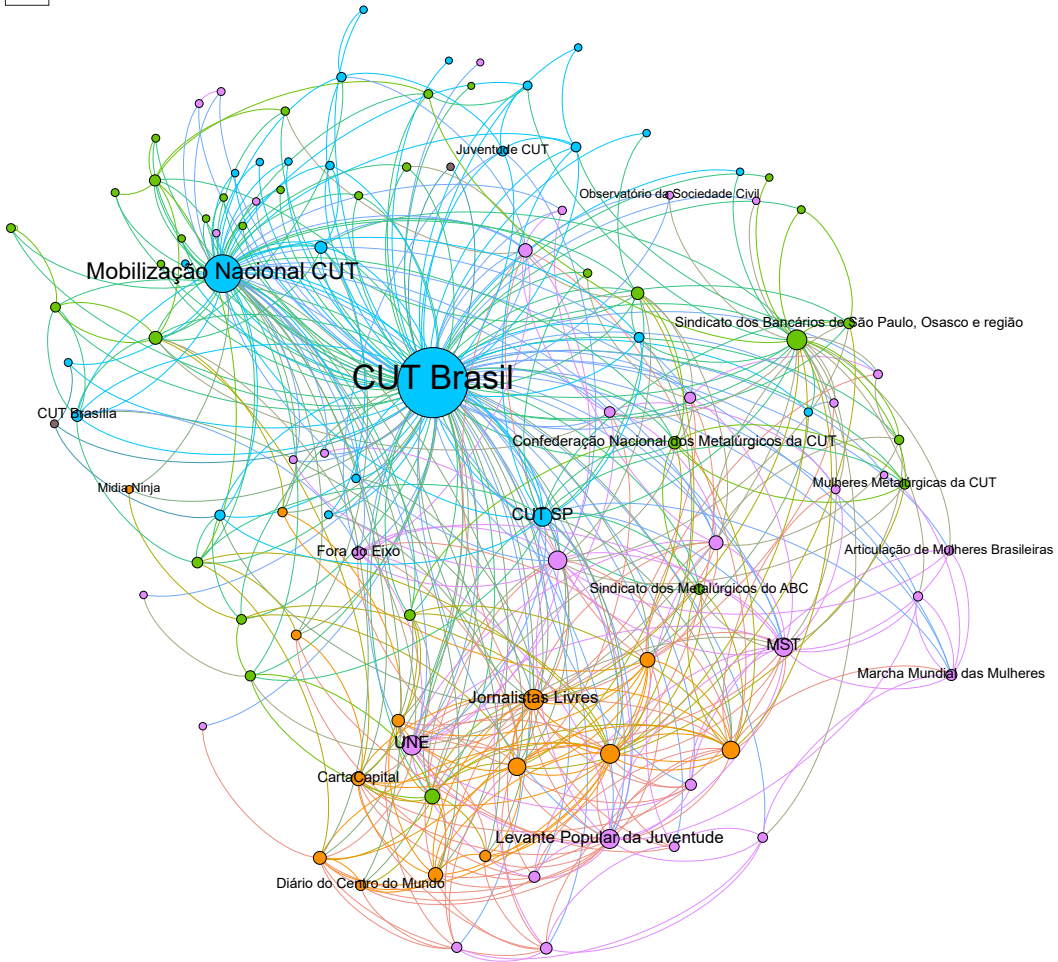
What the blue and pink clusters show is that the majority of Pages followed by these trade union confederations are related to the labour movement, be them trade unions or their own regional offices and campaigns. That is ostensibly the case for the Portuguese confederations, as 84% of UGT's likes are either trade unions or its own Pages, with CGTP-IN slightly behind at 80%. Neither organisation likes any media pages, and CGTP-IN only likes three civil society pages. The Brazilian confederations have less homogeneous networks but are still mostly concentrated around the labour movement: blue and pink nodes represent 56% of CUT's likes, and 49% of FS'. Again, this may be a reflection of the 'social movement unionism' advocated by Brazilian trade unions, which has as one of its tenets broadening the scope of trade union action to link labour causes to other social justice agendas and to dialogue with institutions beyond organised labour.

Results from the content analysis reveal that all four organisations focus their efforts in either sharing their own content – that is, posting links to articles or information from their own webpages – or sharing external links, often without any analysis, commentary, calls to action or encouragement of dialogue. In sum, they rely on Facebook mostly to relay information, rather than to seek interaction.

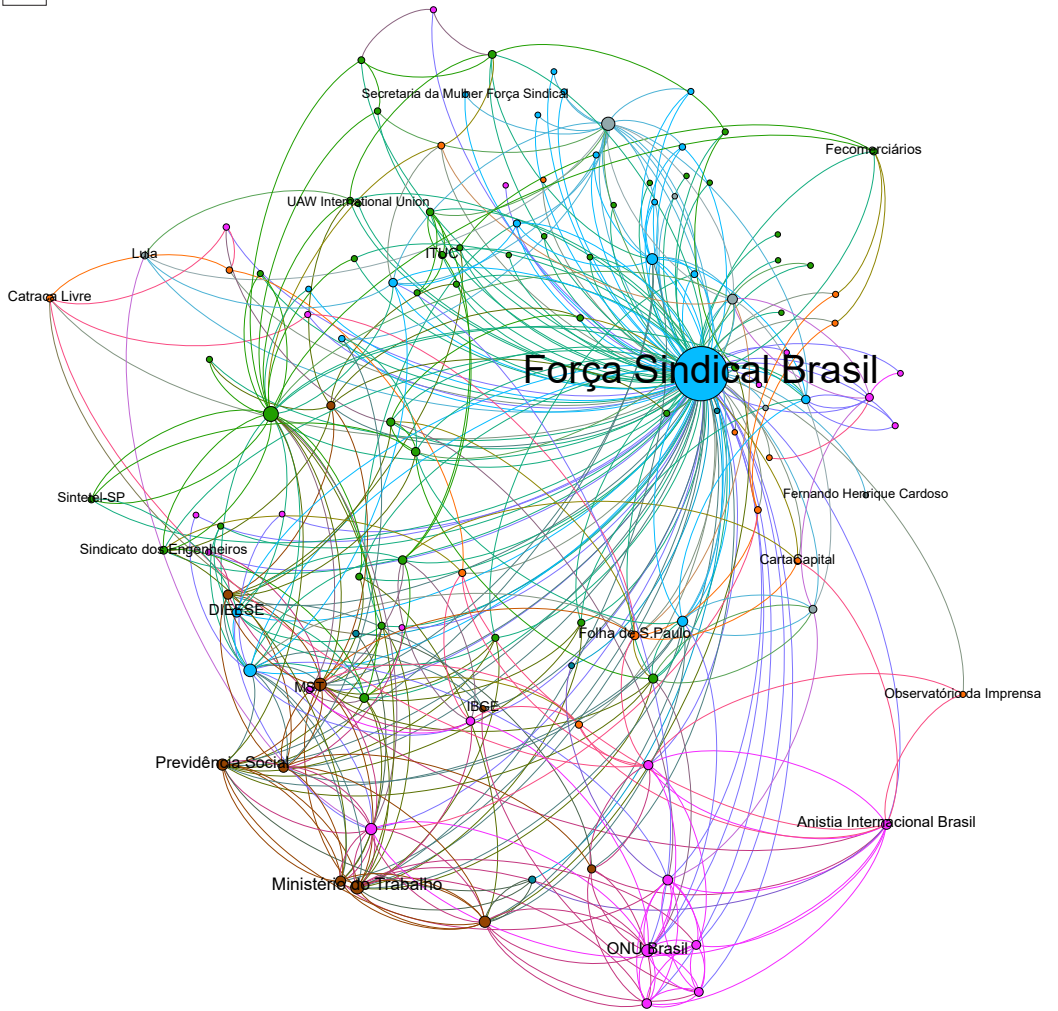
FIGURES 1-4

Network visualisations of the four trade union confederations, where blue nodes and edges represent Facebook Pages directly related to the trade union confederation; green represents other trade unions and labour organisations; pink represents civil society organisations; orange represents media outlets; and brown represents government institutions.

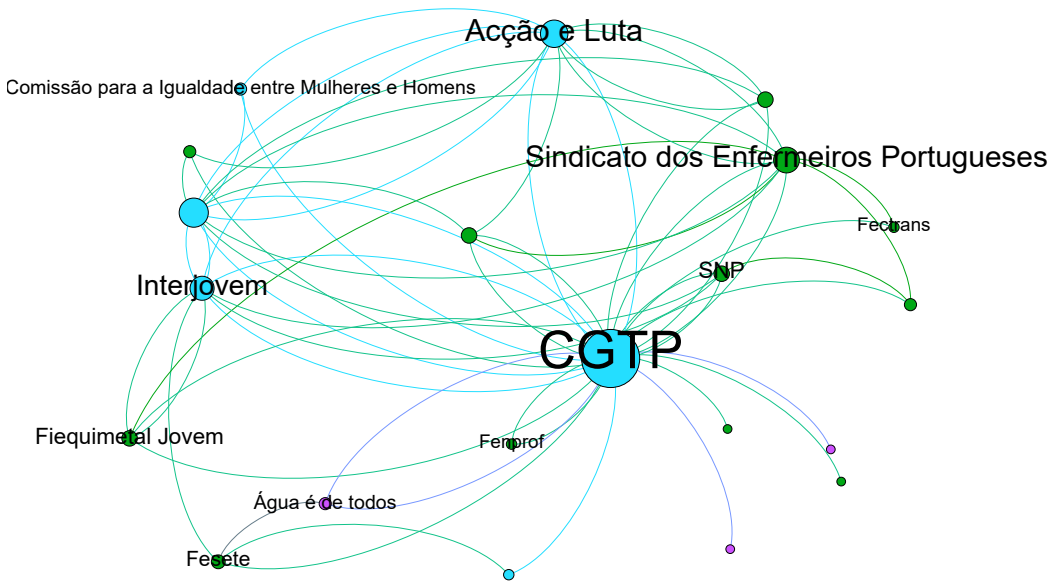
1



2



3



4

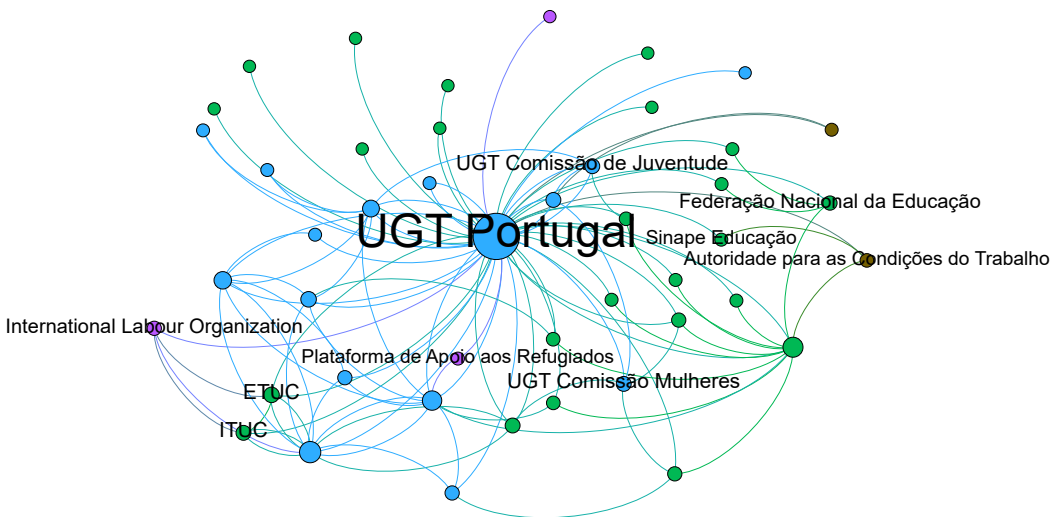


FIGURE 5
Types of content featured on the Facebook Pages of the confederations (%).

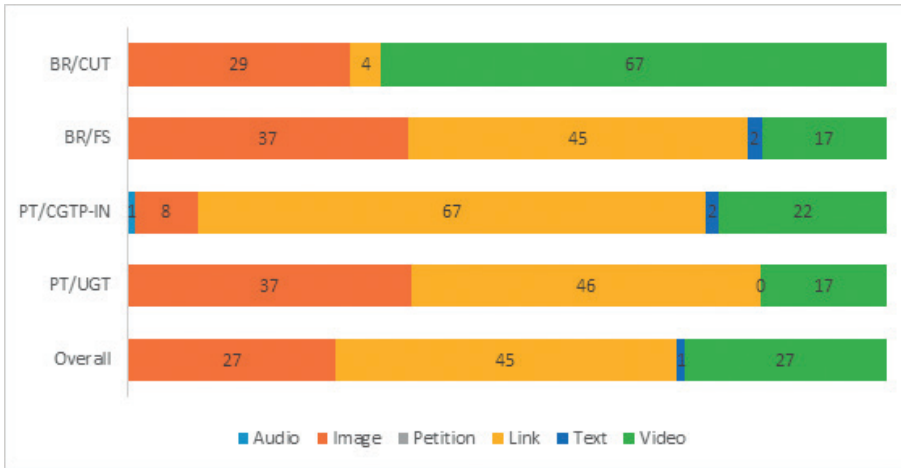


FIGURE 6
Sources of content featured on the Facebook Pages of the confederations (%).

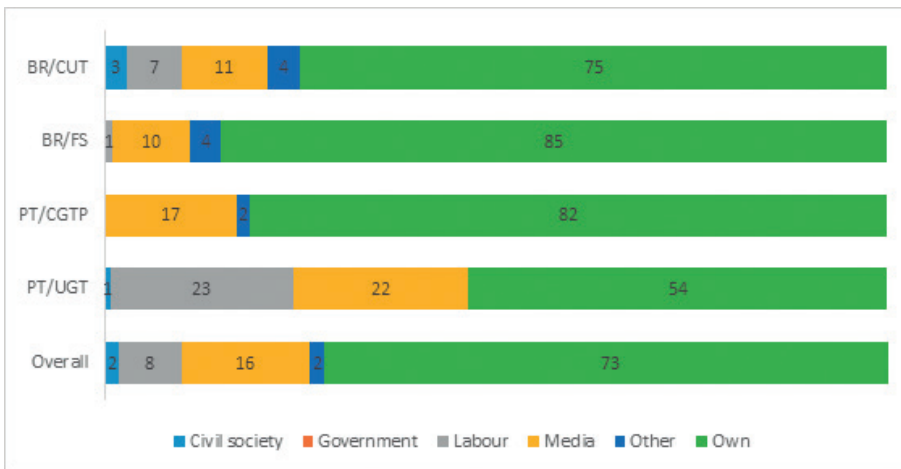


Figure 5 below shows that, overall, nearly half the posts featured links to external websites (45%), followed by videos or images (both present in 27% of posts). The CGTP was the confederation that featured links most frequently, CUT ostensibly relied on video posts. As for the sources of the information shared (Figure 6), almost three quarters of the posts included content from the confederations' own channels, such as their websites or campaign microsites. The media was the second most prevalent source of information, as 16% of the content disseminated through the pages of the confederations featured articles or videos from major news outlets. The UGT was the only confederation to share a significant amount of content from

FIGURE 7
Tone of posts on the Facebook Pages of the confederations (%).

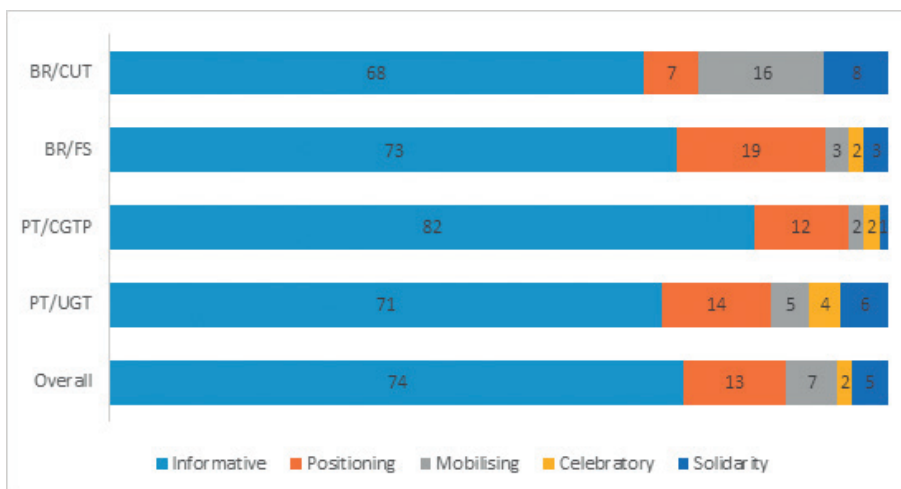
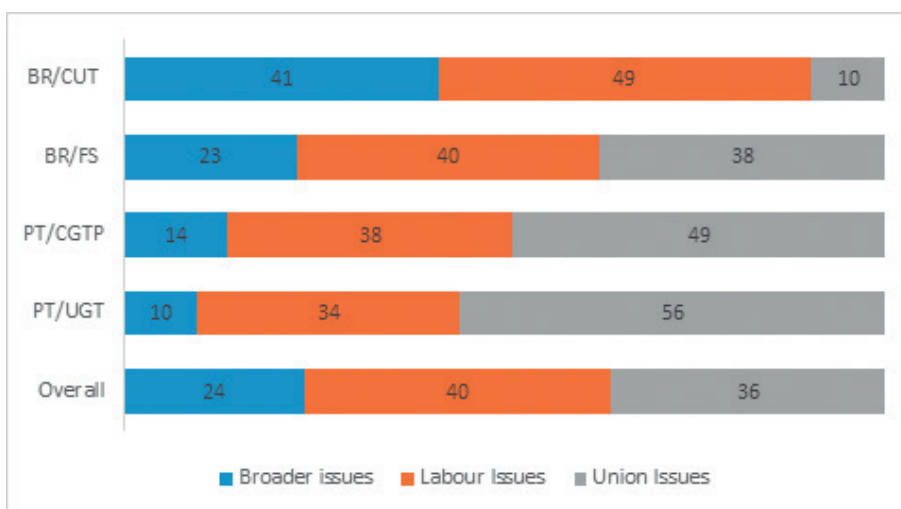


FIGURE 8
Frequency of overarching themes of posts on official Facebook Pages (%).

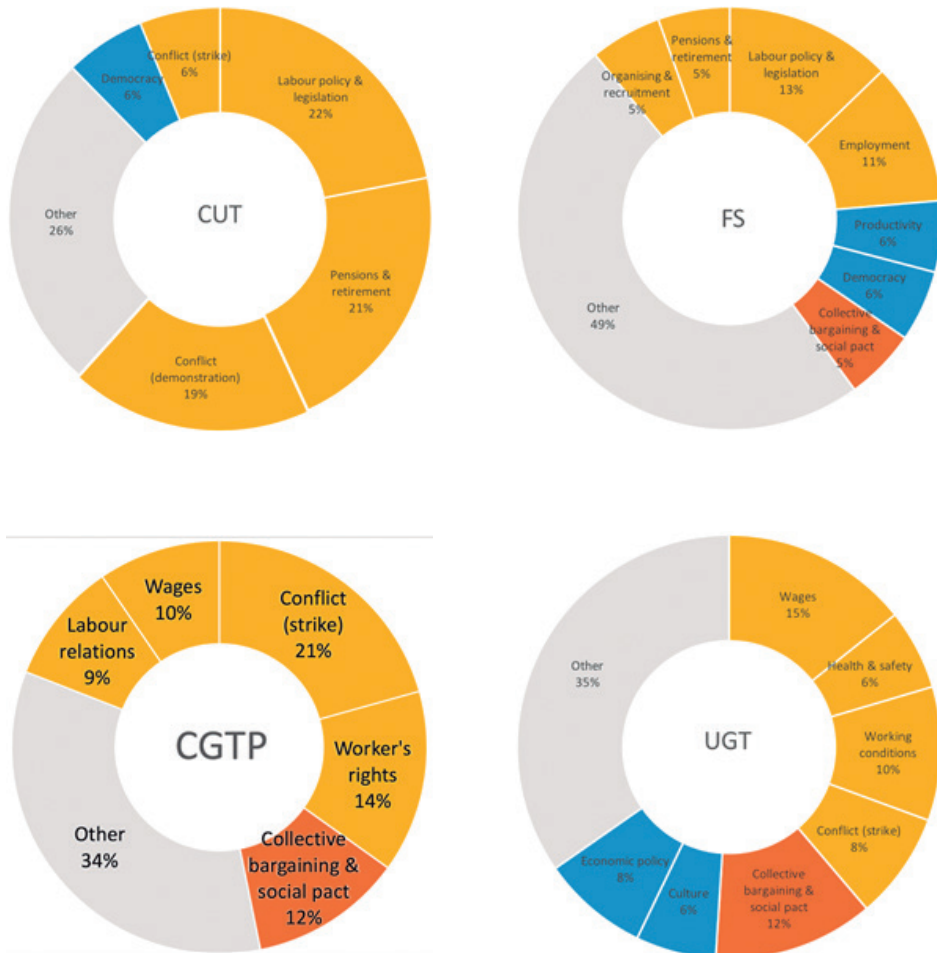


other labour organisations, while non-labour civil society organisations were virtually absent in the analysis.

Figure 7 below quantifies the tone of the posts, that is, whether they are intended to inform or mobilise page followers, if they express an opinion, stand in solidarity with other struggles, or contain information about achievements faced by the confederations or other relevant actors. As shown, among the four confederations, 74% of the posts aimed to inform and raise awareness of issues the confederations consider pertinent to themselves and their audience. Mobilisation messages made up

FIGURE 9

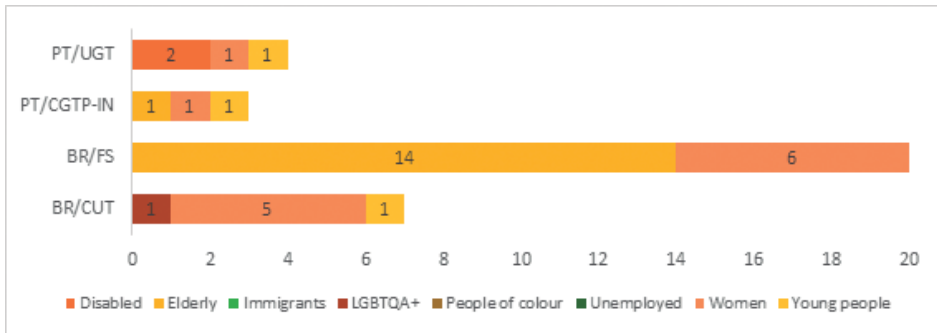
Prevalent topics by confederation, where orange represents trade union issues, yellow represents labour issues and blue represents broader issues (%).



less than a tenth of the posts. The two Portuguese confederations and the Brazilian FS have a strong focus on descriptive/neutral information sharing, with few posts calling on followers to take any action, taking a stance on something, or expressing solidarity with workers' struggles or other causes. CUT was the confederation that most frequently encouraged followers to act on issues, likely a result of CUT's strong mobilization against the impeachment process for ex-president Dilma Roussef, which was a key topic during the period of analysis.

Besides the characterisation of the posts, the content analysis enabled an assessment of the themes that the trade union confederations post about. Figure 8 shows that a significant majority of posts were about labour-related issues. Just under a

FIGURE 10
Frequency of posts targeting special interest groups (#).



quarter of posts addressed a broader agenda. Union issues accounted for 36% of posts, though that may be explained by the fact that trade union confederations normally operate at the institutional and advocacy levels, so its governance and accountability processes differ from trade unions. The Portuguese confederations were the most focused on these processes, while the Brazilian confederations gave more space for issues-based communication, with CUT’s focus clearly branching out from the traditional labour agenda and into broader issues affecting Brazilian society.

With regards to the specific sub-themes addressed by the confederations in the period analysed, Figure 9 illustrates the most frequent topics for each organisation, with the colours representing the three overarching themes. Themes vary greatly among the confederations, as there is not a single theme recurrent within the top mentions in all four. However, the graphs clearly show the tendency of trade union confederations to focus on traditional labour issues, rather than expand their narratives to embrace a broader social and environmental justice agenda and make a connection between those themes and the world of work.

Lastly, in terms of content directed to specific audiences – especially considering those “hard to reach” groups such as young people, migrants and minorities – Figure 10 shows that trade union confederations are not attempting to address them directly, with the exception of posts related to women’s issues such as harassment in the workplace, childcare or equal pay, or topics related to pensions, which target older workers. In the sample analysed, no confederation posted about issues of interest to people of colour, immigrants or the unemployed.

Conclusion

The digital age confronts us with a diversity of concepts and ideas that range from individual experiences (of autonomy and/or hybridisation of the virtual/real), to

transformations in social relations both online and offline (Web 2.0 as a platform for two-way communication; Industry 4.0 as a possible path for labour relations). Within this context – and especially as the global pandemic’s restrictions on movement have moved social relations into increasingly digitised environments – the use of Internet presents a significant opportunity for trade union renewal as a platform for outreach, advocacy and the strengthening of networks. But so far, the findings of our investigation corroborate other research on this matter (Hodder & Houghton, 2015; Rego *et al.*, 2016; Haake, 2017) that indicate that despite the widespread use of digital communications by trade unions, there is still a long way to go in terms of fundamentally changing the way they communicate.

Our analysis of the official Facebook Pages of four trade union confederations in Portugal and Brazil provide three key insights for unionists:

1. Trade union confederations reach a limited audience on social media, as shown by the reduced number of followers given the potential population just within the labour movement.
2. Their institutional networks are restricted to organisations within their immediate sphere of influence, thus enforcing an ‘echo chamber’ and hindering possibilities for outreach and alliance-building.
3. They maintain an outdated “one-way” model of online communication, using Facebook mostly to relay information rather than taking advantage of the interactive characteristics of social media and the opportunity for horizontal dialogue.

As much of the discussion about the future of trade unionism is centred on developing alliances with diverse social movements to defend a broader social justice agenda, connecting labour issues with other causes, and, on a practical level, organising hard to reach workers, such as those with atypical and precarious contracts (Bernaciak, Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2014), at least on social media, organised labour may be missing out on expanding their influence. To stand out in a virtual world saturated with information, the ability to be creative, to tell stories that foster connections, and to move beyond top-down communication paradigms are essential approaches.

As examples, Internet and social media strategies by the Union Solidarity International (USI), a UK-based organisation that aims to support international solidarity between trade unions and other worker movements, has been successful in developing an audience in English-speaking countries (Geelan & Hodder, 2017). Workers in the emerging platform economy, such as couriers, are also increasingly harnessing the ability to communicate and connect through social media in order to “forge a

shared identity, trust and solidarity, to announce local direct action and to attract media attention” (Vandaele, 2018, p. 16).

Bringing together the theoretical and empirical contributions of our research, we conclude that the ability to embrace the tools and concepts of the digital era are crucial for trade unions and for unionists to face the future of work, its new context and communication mechanisms. But while incorporating digital unionism in day-to-day trade union activity is a basic assumption, it nevertheless confronts two realities: that of the opportunities generated by new information and communication technologies, versus the “physical” struggles and needs of workers (even when the “physical” may now happen online as well). As a consequence, digital trade unionism is far from being the generator of a “common culture” shared by workers of all kinds; rather, it can be a conflictuous space in which there is no consensus in terms of strategies and expectations.

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Abstract

Digital communication as a global challenge for trade unions: lessons from Brazil and Portugal

As a cross-cutting issue encompassing all of society, the evolution of digital technologies is particularly challenging to traditional labour actors that are accustomed to physical work and face-to-face contact. This article discusses the distinctive possibilities of social media use as a forward-thinking global strategy for organised labour. After an initial clarification of useful concepts to consider in the digital age, we focus on the social media presence of trade unions, identifying the pros and cons associated with platform-based communication. Finally, the article debates the implications of social media platforms as tools to strengthen networks with non-union actors and contribute to the amplification of the labour agenda. Through a comparative analysis of four trade union confederations, two from Brazil and two from Portugal, we argue

that, despite the possibilities for outreach and interaction enabled by the new communication and information technologies, trade union confederations maintain constricted networks and an outdated top-down communications model.

Keywords: Digital communication; Trade unionism; Facebook; Brazil; Portugal.

Resumo

A comunicação digital como desafio global para os sindicatos: lições do Brasil e de Portugal

Enquanto questão transversal a toda a sociedade, a evolução das tecnologias digitais é particularmente desafiadora para os atores tradicionais do mundo do trabalho que, por sinal, estão acostumados ao trabalho em formato presencial próprios dos contatos face a face. Este artigo discute as possibilidades distintas do uso das redes sociais como uma estratégia global de vanguarda para o trabalho organizado. Após um esclarecimento inicial de conceitos úteis a ter em conta na era digital, nós nos concentramos na presença dos sindicatos nas redes sociais, identificando os prós e os contras associados à comunicação baseada na utilização de plataformas digitais. Por fim, o artigo debate as implicações das plataformas sociais enquanto ferramentas para fortalecer redes com atores não sindicais e contribuir para a ampliação da agenda trabalhista. Por meio de uma análise comparativa de quatro confederações sindicais, duas do Brasil e duas de Portugal, argumentamos que, apesar das possibilidades de alcance e interação facultadas pelas novas tecnologias de comunicação e informação, as confederações sindicais mantêm redes restritas e um desatualizado modelo de comunicação de “cima para baixo”.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação digital; Sindicalismo; Facebook; Brasil; Portugal.

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Labor and informal work in North-South relations

A study on Iberian countries and Latin-America

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Introduction

This text proposes an approach to informal work in the digital age, seeking to discuss the complexity of the phenomenon from an ongoing project (Latwork¹) involving the Iberian countries (Spain and Portugal) and three South American countries (Brazil, Argentina and Chile). It is precisely from the North/South dialogue, and in particular considering the historical relations between these European countries and Latin America, that it is important to analyze trends, contrasts and asymmetries at different scales of analysis. In the light of recent transformations in international capitalism, the goal is to address, on the one hand, the phenomenon of informality/labor precariousness and, on the other, resorting to a more prospective record, to diagnose some of the recent challenges of industry modernization based on technological-scientific

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1. Latwork – *Developing Research and Innovation Capacities in Higher Education Institutions in Latin-American Countries*. Latwork is an Erasmus+ /Key Action 2, Funding – European Commission. The project involves 12 universities, 3 of which are European (Univ. of Alicante, Univ. of Coimbra, Univ. of Aberdeen) and the other 9 are Latin-American (BRASIL: Unicamp – Campinas, Univ. F. Paraíba, Univ. F. Campina Grande; ARGENTINA: Univ. Buenos Aires, Univ. Nac. Rosário, Univ. N. del Litoral; CHILE: Univ. Viña d’El Mar, Univ. Magallanes, Univ. San Sebastian). The authors appreciate the agreement by the coordination of Latwork to use some of the empirical findings of the project for the purpose of this paper.

innovation. In this sense, we develop the hypothesis that a closer cooperation between university research centers and labor market agents (public institutions, firms, trade unions, etc.) may help to reduce informality and instill labor rights to the benefit of workers and social cohesion.

The transcontinental network developed in the scope of the aforementioned project takes advantage of the team's interdisciplinary nature, as well as of the richness and plurality of experiences incorporated by such a vast group of experts. This emerges as an interesting capital of knowledge to be valued by means of results dissemination and social sciences outputs within/for the academic community in those countries. Our analysis encompasses the sociological knowledge developed by the diverse research teams on the labor field, namely regarding informality and technological innovation. Moreover, the project seeks to combine its analytical dimension with one more focused on intervention and therefore pragmatic. The aim is to foster decent work, particularly in the Latin American countries under study, where, as known, the scourge of informality and vulnerability of the working classes is a structuring feature that remains from colonial heritage till the early peripheral industrialization. Thus, the spirit of our study lies in the effort to understand the changes taking place in the field of labor relations at a time when global capitalism is at a crossroads in the face of the brutal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Trends on the labor market in the global scale

As we know, work has always been a decisive activity for the evolution of human societies. With it, technical innovation, on the one hand, and social innovation, on the other, constitute two decisive and inseparable variables in the analysis of the historical process. By refusing technological “determinism” and its “neutrality”, sociology has always postulated that above technology – and even science – stands society, its powers and institutions. Thus, the “labor market” is the result of capitalist modernity, but work goes far beyond its economic and productive dimensions. Precariousness and informal work have grown all over the world. In Latin America this has been a structural problem associated to poverty and underdevelopment. In recent times precariousness and informality have expanded along with the growth of digitization and telework (in particular as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic). In view of the overwhelming impact of the pandemic on labor relations, the rhythm of the current changes in the world in recent decades is more likely to accelerate, that is, the trends of precariousness, segmentation and informal work that were already increasing since the beginning of the century are gaining a strong acceleration under the lockdown of our economies.

The overcoming of the barriers created by the peripheral condition from which the Portuguese economy has been suffering increased the asymmetries of the “variable geometry” in the European Union (EU) context. The prevalence of forceful global market “laws” in the neoliberal framework became the tool which determines interconnections and power relations both in the global and European scales. Since the financial crisis of ten years ago that is what we have seen regarding the powerful center (Germany, France, Northern Countries, etc.) and the fragile peripheral economies (the so called Pigs – Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain). Now that structural options in Europe are at stake, many alternatives will be discussed in the labor realm, especially considering the rapid extension of online work in pandemic context, as well as the new programs of economic recovery approved by the European Council. These trends justify the need to rethink the role of informal jobs, and its various forms and interconnections with migration processes and the strength or weakness of each national economy in particular.

Undoubtedly, these aspects need to be rethought in the light of current trends, given the brutal impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We know that the promise of the European social model has been restrained, for the past four decades, by the mercantilist hegemony of neoliberalism, which the EU has not been able to face, given its blatant inconsistency and internal contradictions. In addition to the evident diversity – cultural, historical, economic, social and even political –, the long process of building a federal model for Europe was compromised from the very beginning due to the close dependence it has maintained with the USA since the post-World War II period. The multiple perplexities that have crossed the European project since then, including the evident social divisions between North and South, the various economic crises and now the pandemic crisis that rocked the world, will have to be starting points to deepen our reflection and knowledge about the future challenges that we have to face. It should be recalled in this regard that the United Kingdom, which has just left the EU (Brexit), was the main inspirer, with Tony Blair, of the so-called “third way” that – with the help of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan – paved the way for the hegemony of the neoliberal paradigm.

In order to advance our study, it is important to project the analysis on the more general structures of society underlying the modern capitalism’s consolidation process. For that, we need to consider the North / South relations. It is worth recalling, from the outset, the world-system theory inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein. According to him, the asymmetric powers between the center and peripheries and their interconnections should replace the old theory of economic development, abundantly criticized for the rigidity of its rationalist and rigid premises of economic language (Schumpeter, 1911). If, at the beginning of the 20th century, the

strength of Western capitalism assumed, without remorse, within the framework of a triumphant imperialism, indifferent to the wreckage of colonialism, Wallerstein's approach (1974, 1980), on the contrary, not only gave visibility to the multipolar complexity at the political level, but also highlighted the role of the economy and international division of labor as the main structural axes of the world-system.

We might assume that the history of Europe was made at the expense of empires and colonies where the colonial cores imposed their model of future on their colonies. But the North-South asymmetry is today, above all, a metaphor that aims to denounce post-colonialism and the hegemonies there rooted. A critical reading of this legacy, however, does not have to replace, in the 21st century, a "Europe teaching the world" by a "world teaching Europe". And if, even in the geographical Europe, only the peripheries of the North (Nordic countries, UK etc.) have approached the Center while those of the South (Portugal, Greece, etc.) remain remote, the important thing is that the current challenges do not require reversing the terms of the past. So, according to the most prominent theorist of post-colonialism's statement, "rather than inverting teaching, we need mutual learning" (Santos, 2018, 2020, 2021). Such processes have dragged along the history of "primitive accumulation" logic. As is known, on the world scale, capitalism has developed according to modes of domination and transfer of resources between the periphery and the core countries. Since K. Marx, the role of the "*Landnahme*" means the need for the expansion of capitalism through the incorporation of non-capitalist territories. In line with the Marxist thought, "the essential feature of this development was the strengthening of capitalist property and class relations, and so he views the expropriation of the rural population as a pivotal precondition for the emergence of a new type of producer: a wage laborer who is 'free in a double sense,' with no attachments to lands or guilds" (Dörre, 2015, p. 24). On the other hand, social movements from bellow can easily evolve from an anti-capitalist goal to other expressions of inorganic revolts: "Class struggles without class" have run side by side with radical struggles of the "new precariat" bringing new phenomena that defy social scientists to map the complexity of the labor world in the 21st century (Antunes, 2018; Braga, 2019; Dörre, 2019; Estanque, 2015; Estanque *et al.*, 2020; Huws *et al.*, 2019; Standing, 2011; Thompson, 1978).

Latin America: geographies of complexity

Any reflection on the Latin American labor market will have to begin by situating the historical process of those economies integration in the global capitalist economic system. If wage labor is essentially typical of industrial societies, it is necessary to

keep in mind all the asymmetries and anachronisms intertwined with capitalist expansion in the last three centuries in order to understand the complexities inherent to a continent like South America. As we know, the transition of pre-industrial societies to a capitalist economy entailed the shift of productive activities from the domestic sphere to the industrial space. This process went hand in hand with a progressive re-adaptation of task division that overlaps with combinations, blending and demarcations both outside and within the productive context itself. Along with this division between work and non-work (leisure and “free time”), it has given rise to areas and sectors characterized by informality, especially in poorer regions where populations struggle first and foremost to escape misery and deprivation. “Work in this case is not so much what gives meaning to life, more what makes life possible: a means of gleaning something, however slight, from a hostile environment. It has no beginning and no end. Working and eating and sleeping and childcare and everything else blend into one organic whole” (Stalker, 1986, p. 8).

Cepal and structural inequalities

It was in this sense that Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean’s – “Cepal” (Eclac)² – economists conceived the development process of the South American economies as an extension of the central economies, what had as consequence condemning their peoples to misery due to the deterioration of the terms of trade. Maria da Conceição Tavares is a Portuguese economist who dedicated herself to the study of the problems of industrialization and development in Brazil and Latin America. She provides an interesting synthesis of the obstacles and projects of industrialization over more than one hundred years.

In general, the development of the export sector gave rise to a more or less intense urbanization process, during which the so-called domestic consumer goods industries, such as footwear, clothing, furniture, etc., were established. These, as we know, are traditional industries, with low levels of productivity, present in almost all Latin America, which emerged in the midst of the export model itself (Tavares, 2019, p. 62).

2. Eclac (Cepal), created in 1948, is one of the five regional commissions of the UN, whose mandate is the study and promotion of policies for the development of regions, functioning as a center of excellence for high studies that contributes to the debate on the economy and Latin American and Caribbean societies, presenting warnings, ideas and proposals for public policies. *NB*: We use here the Latin acronym “Cepal”, since it is the well-known name that projected this current of economics’ theorists world-wide.

As one can easily foresee, such a social reality expressed the condition of subordination and vulnerability, especially in the case of workers and families still linked to the rural world. The strong flows of internal (and external) migrations helped to transpose this logic to the peripheries of the main metropolitan cities, where primary sociability takes place in conditions of misery and uprooting, conducive to the multiplication of informality and poverty. The huge migratory flows from Europe at the turn of the century (19-20th) contributed decisively to instill dynamism into the capitalist market and emerging industrial workforce (especially in the Brazil's case, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo). Not only in that period but also in the post-World War II exports and intern market industry would become to reach a new vigor. It is in this sense that some authors consider that the two world wars contributed to the Brazilian industrialization (Cardoso, 1960).

In line with Cepal guidelines, it is important to highlight the role of the State. It is clear that in this context the State still contains the historical legacy of colonialism in which, both in the colonial period and after, the presence of slave labor and the plundering of natural resources is still evident. These traits were the corollary of structuring elites linked to the hegemonic powers and with little (or null) patriotic capacity regarding industrial modernization. In other words, the systemic power of international capitalism, even after the (official) end of colonialism, continued to impose its rule. At the same time, political-military coercion remained attentive, and ready to act, whenever national interests seemed to oppose the interests of the dominant economies. Moreover, Brazil, Argentina and Chile are good examples of a historical legacy that has illustrated, at different times, how imperialism operates to promote military coups whenever democratic freedoms and popular forces show capacity to resist to corrupted elites. We explore here Brazilian case in particular. In this country, the industrial growth began in the 1930s, in a historic moment when State intervention broke with the previous model and sought to impose new rules, establish exchange policies, defend coffee production, stimulate the domestic market, etc. According to Cepal economists, it was then that prospects for success in industrialization opened up, and proved that the success of industrial development should be achieved in opposition to the two core pillars of economic theory: the theory of comparative advantages and economic liberalism (Furtado, 1968; Rodrigues, 1977; Cepal, 2010).

Informal jobs in the digital era in Latin America

In Brazil, the laws regulating the labor market (some approved in 1943, such as the CLT), and regarding the degree of State intervention in the economy, became a

controversial subject in the academic debate. For some Brazilian specialists, labor legislation should have been changed in the nineties, as it was necessary to “redefine the rules and norms that govern the employment relationship in order to give companies freedom of action”. Other authors were openly against “public interference to improve the performance of the economy and the promotion of jobs and income”, highlighting above all the “problems of adaptation of the companies to the intensification of international competition” since those laws did not assure their capacity of action. Changes in the organization of production, in a period of weak economic growth, increased unemployment, illegal employment contracts, and the occasional changes in the institutional framework only worsened labor precariousness (Krein *et al.*, 2011). It can be said that the Brazilian social structure was renewed in this period, but that renewal, has, in essence, preserved labor market flexibility and worker’s vulnerability. In the 2000s, the expansion of wage labor with a formal contract was expressive; for every ten open jobs for low-wage workers, seven were formal jobs, and for every open job in the informal labor market, three other formal ones were created. In addition, the turnover rate (at around 37% of formal employment in 2009) has increased expressively, especially for the lowest-paid jobs (85.3% for the category earning up to 2.5 minimum wages), being higher for the younger strata, less educated, beyond the vast contingent of domestic workers, regarding which Brazil occupies the first place in the world (ILO, 2013)³.

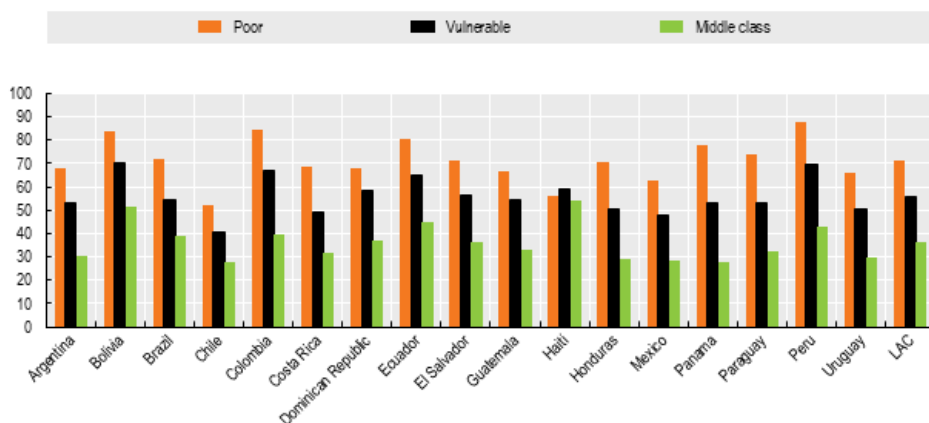
Indeed, the re-composition of the stratification pyramid did not change the unstable, flexible and precarious nature of wage labor in Brazil. The country underwent a profound productive and social conversion, in search of a developmental project that is still surrounded by uncertainty. For this reason, the outcome of this trend is doubtful. As it was confirmed after the fall of Dilma Rousseff and the arrival of Jair Bolsonaro to presidency, neoliberalism has been strengthened (and democracy weakened). Despite the increase and undeniable progress in (formal) employment creation, as mentioned above, the structural characteristics of the Brazilian working class add to current notions – that in Europe were considered outdated and anachronistic until a few years ago – such as the new proletariat, under-proletariat or subordinate proletariat. Despite the discrepancy between “*The name and the thing*”⁴ with regard to the notion of “proletariat”, according to André Singer (2009),

3. Data from ILO (2013). It is important to remember that the minimum wage increased from 41.00 USD in 1970 (equivalent), 113.00 USD in 1990 and 242.00 USD in 2009. In 2013, it was 678.00 R\$, although there are variations between the different states (for example, at that time in São Paulo it was around 725.00 R\$).

4. To remind a well-known title by Manuel Villaverde Cabral, *Proletariado: o nome e a coisa*. Lisboa, A Regra do Jogo, 1983.

GRAPHIC 1

Labor informality by socio-economic group in selected Latin American countries (2014 or latest year available)



Source: Calculations by OECD, 2019, based on World Bank tabulations of Sedlac (Cedlas and the World Bank, 2018).
 Notes: Legal definition of informality: informality is defined as workers without the right to a pension, health insurance social protection, work contracts and the general entitlements of the formal sectors.

the under-proletariat corresponds to a social layer that is still located on the margins of the capitalist production system and, therefore, is placed “below” the formal working class.

Some recent international reports tried to point out trends for the coming decades regarding the future of work and the impacts of technological innovation in Latin-American countries. One of those studies (*World Economic Forum, 2019*) points out some of the main “drivers of change”: the emerging middle class segments, change in the nature of work, big data processing, management policies in understanding disruptive changes, alignment with innovation, etc. As “recommended strategies” the report suggests: investment in the retraining of workers (59% impact), support for mobility and employee turnover (52%), focus on female talents (28%), collaboration of educational institutions (28%) and attraction of foreign talent (28%) (OCDE, 2019).

Other studies (Accenture, 2018) present interesting prospects for Latin-American countries and stress the growing use of Big Data Analytics by many companies looking to follow the international trend of substituting routine tasks. Those are the expectations to ensure average substantial growth by the year 2035, which will accelerate productivity gains and bring prosperity throughout the region, based on digital technologies. High rates of informal employment in LA are well known. According to the ILO reports, in the whole of Latin America, in 2010 the volume of

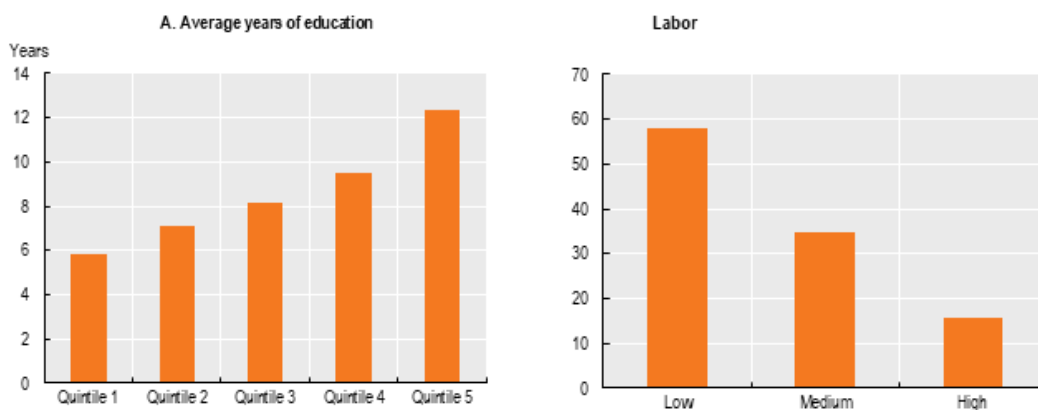
non-rural workers in informal occupations stood at 48% and was slightly reduced to 46.8% by 2015. At this point, it is important to remember the period 2003-2015 (of the PT governments in Brazil), during which all social indicators were improved. However, the old problem of the vicious circle between poverty, informality, low skills and low productivity persists, and that means, once again, the need for a strong investment in the retraining of workers. Several data-basis (OECD, ILO etc.) suggest that for each new formal job, three are at risk of being suppressed by digitalization / automation in the next ten years. In this regard, the enormous presence of informal occupations is of course a reflection of poverty levels, very low wages and lack of social protection. The match between workers' skill levels and the complex tasks and knowledge of the work of the future will be decisive. It is expected that the highly skilled occupations will expand mainly in the formal employment sector, but the same report assumes the direct relationship between routine tasks suppression and the likelihood that they will be replaced by automatic equipment. The method used made it possible to segment the amount of work time devoted to routine tasks, concluding that in LA as a whole around 43% of workers spend an average level of time in tasks of this nature (between 25 and 75 per cent) and close to 25% of workers engage in activities with 75% or more of routine tasks. At the same time, as noted above, the greater the impact of automation on the destruction of traditional jobs, the more informality in employment tends to grow. Another more recent report (OECD *et al.*, 2019) points in a similar direction. The phenomenon of informality is usually associated with vulnerability and precariousness, but the preceding social inequalities and asymmetries tend to stimulate their own reproduction in other parameters that reproduce them in time and space (Antunes, 2018).

This is so in the generational reproduction of poverty and exclusion, and in informal and precarious jobs. As shown in the graph above, higher poverty means higher rates of informality, which occur in the Latin American countries under analysis. In this criterion, the differences between the Latwork countries are slight, but there is a less pronounced situation in the case of Chile compared to Brazil and Argentina. The most suggestive scenario in this regard is depicted in the chart below, where the correlation between informality, income and education levels could not be more striking.

The phenomenon of informality is undoubtedly associated with vulnerability and precariousness. Structural social inequalities and asymmetries encourage their recurrence in various parameters through time and space. This is so in the generational reproduction of poverty and exclusion, as well as regarding informality. On the other hand, these data also show how the level of education attained interferes directly with both income and informal / formal employment. This means that increasing

GRAPHIC 2

Labor informality and education



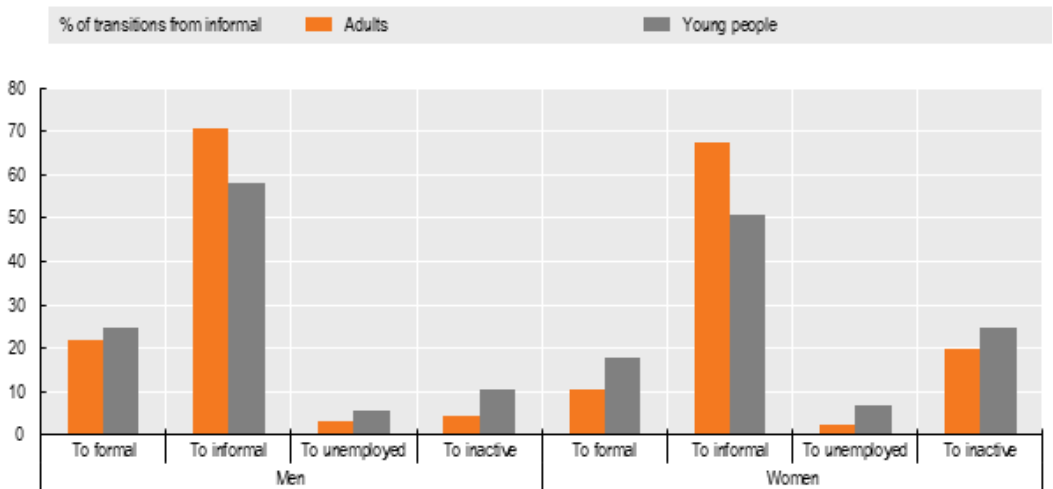
Source: Calculations by OECD, 2019, based on Cedlas and the World Bank, 2018.

educational success rates and the progression of the younger strata to higher education levels is an important mechanism to fight informality and precarious employment. Finally, the graph below concerning informality outflows represents the flows of workers through informal jobs in four Latin American countries: Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Mexico. From it we can attest the reproductive force of informality in these four countries. However, in spite of that, this holds a slight sign of hope. On the one hand, young people are slightly less in volume than the older strata leaving informality return to a new informal occupation (compared to adults); and, on the other hand, there is a slightly higher entry into the formal sector, which is even more visible among women, a segment which, as we know, is generally hardest hit by informality and precariousness.

The mobilization of companies, institutions and trade unions in each region to help workers develop new skills seems to be a priority. Making these segments of the work force able to take on reconfigured jobs, or even migrate to new jobs in the formal economy, emerges as a prime need to prevent more disastrous effects on unskilled workers. Other projects focusing on youth and the transitions from the education system to the labor market also show how (notably in countries such as Brazil) different variables must be considered regarding the trajectories of youths hit by the scourge of informality (see Report sponsored by the ILO and conducted by a team coordinated by Nadya Guimarães, (cf. OIT, 2019).

Different age groups but also differences between higher and lower education levels are important variables. The fine-tuning of future studies calls for a combina-

GRAPHIC 3

Yearly labor market transitions out of informality in Latin America

Note: Results show the average for Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. These are yearly transition rates out of informal jobs for the pooled period 2005-15. Transitions rates are calculated as the ratio between flow of people moving that transitioned from Condition 1 to Condition 2 between time 0 and time 1, over the total stock of people in the population in Condition 1 in time 0 (i.e. informal employment to formal employment). The transitions are year to year (from year t to year $t+1$). This analysis is limited to urban populations due to data availability limitations. Data for Argentina are representative of urban centres of more than 100.000 inhabitants. Source: Calculations by OECD, 2019, based on World Bank tabulations of Lablac (CEDLAS and the World Bank, 2018).

tion of the concept of “informal work” with factors such as gender, social background, race and region of origin. There are no linear trajectories in which higher education has been completed before entering the labor market, especially in lower middle-class or working class youth. There are very distinct forces that interfere with the fate of millions of these young people in search of a decent work perspective. This is the example of young adults, who show greater ability to compete for better positions in the labor market, especially when formal job opportunities expand rapidly, as occurred in the period of the referred study (2000 to 2013).

However, formal employment contracts are much more frequent among those with higher incomes than among those with lower incomes, pointing to the diversity in what concerns the quality of occupation to which one accedes. In the transition to higher education, class inequality is crucial. Among young people with lower socioeconomic status, the need to combine work and study as a strategy to ensure educational progression becomes imperative (Brito, 2014). The way in which the transition between school and the world of work operates is part of life cycles and trajectories – personal and class trajectories – which mirror lines of segmentation and class divisions and can be traced back to family origins.

Operationalizing the geographical complexity of informality through a cross-national study

The effort to provide an information system on the informal economic sector and on informal work arises from the need to address the discussion and debate on informality as a problem closely articulated with the process of globalization and expansion of digital capitalism that is transforming the deep structures of the social system and the international division of labour. Therefore, the need for a greater abundance of theoretical elements and data sources that contributes to consolidating a holistic view of this phenomenon increases progressively, guaranteeing its better and greater visibility.

The Latwork project⁵ addresses two fundamental focuses of interest. On the one hand, an integration of theoretical approaches that contributes to consolidating and coordinating the different views on the singularities of informality in Latin America. And, on the other, the need to identify, define and develop methodological strategies and data and information availability that make it possible to establish the nexus of theoretical models with the empirical dimension. That is the reason why this approach includes the articulation between scientific studies on the labour relations – linked to several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of each country – and the job market of those regions.

In the first phase of the project, the question was raised as to how the main research actors interpret and define informality as an object of knowledge and how it should be located in the general scheme of research in the university environment. For this, it was considered essential to identify the degree or level of consensus around these issues, given that, as we have already pointed out, one of the main difficulties is derived from the unique characteristics of informality in each country-context. In the following section we confine ourselves exclusively to determining the research problem of the level of heterogeneity that can be observed between the three Latin American countries that are part of the project consortium.

Comparative analysis: Brazil, Argentina and Chile

Analysis approach

The measurements carried out by international operators in relation to informality show significant differences. However, we find that differences are strongly

5. As mentioned earlier, the project was funded by Erasmus+ / European Commission. See: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/organisations/innovation-good-practices/capacity-building-higher-education_en.

determined by the use of heterogeneous measurement methods on heterogeneous realities. For instance, in the case of Chile, if we consult the data provided by ILO⁶ based on the Labour Force survey carried out by the INE, we find that for the year 2017 the informality ratio stands at 64.7%, experiencing a drastic fall to 29.2% in 2018 (a figure that remains approximately the same in 2019) situation that is likely more related to statistic criteria than to an effective reduction of informal jobs. On the other hand, the data offered for Argentina is constant according to the ILO, and based on the data of the EPH (Permanent Household Survey) of the Indec, in a stable range within the extremes of 46.8% and 49.4% between the years 2010 and 2019. The case of Brazil is similar, with figures reported by the ILO and according to the IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística), which are between 44.1% and 49.7% between the years 2011 and 2019.

An important source of variation in informal work rates may be due to methodological changes in the procedure for statistical registers and the definition of parameters. This fact can be technically controlled since statistical operators usually justify and publish the definitions and the design, versions and adaptations of their methodologies. However, a problem that entails greater difficulty is derived from the conceptualisation of informality itself and from other types of definitions of productive activity that go beyond the definition of the statistical parameter for its measurement. Such is the case of the variation in the criteria in the registration of companies that is followed according to the countries, in such a way that a company registered in the formal sector in one country may not meet the requirements in another. Thus, the data and estimates of workers in the formal and informal sectors turn out to be inadequate evidence to carry out a comparative analysis or even a calculation of the total of a region. In any case, these are methodological and operational variations which are usually described in the research results, and the nature of the heterogeneity of the results can be determined so that it is taken into account in the interpretive process.

On the basis of these differences, we carried out a discriminant analysis to check if the beneficiary's countries in the project occupy different spaces, where researchers are supposed to take a stand in their studies by focusing on the specify conceptual nuances of the meaning of informal job that better match to selective informal labour market situations.

6. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/es/topics/informality/>.

Methodology

Draw from a methodological triangulation that combined a qualitative-quantitative sequence in the same study, a measurement instrument was defined using a Likert scale to capture the most important dimensions of the problems and gaps that the Latin American consider necessary to address in order to develop the study on informal work in the University.

First, two focus groups with Latin American researchers linked to the project were carried out at the Universities of Coimbra (CES – Centro de Estudos Sociais), and The University of Aberdeen (CELMR – The Centre for European Labour Market Research), in order to determine the dimensions to be measured. Once determined, these were distributed among Latin American universities, where the focus groups were reproduced to define the indicators for each of the dimensions.

Subsequently, an online questionnaire was developed that collected the indicators. This questionnaire was distributed among researchers in Latin America belonging to research institutions and universities. A total of 312 questionnaires were completed, allowing the measurement of dimensions and operationalised indicators to be established. In this section we present a comparative study that reflects the different realities around informality and the heterogeneity of needs related to the regional research process that arise in each country. We consider that the diagnosis of this heterogeneity is one of the challenges that the project faces when establishing methodologies that include holistic frameworks, so the results obtained in this first study deserve the main attention that must be transferred both internally and externally to the project.

Challenging the operationalization

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data has shown that a wide range of nuances are in the research *praxis* applicable to the meaning of informality, opening scope of the study to different disciplines and theoretical inspirations. However, there is a significant correlation of these nuances to the geographical context, the historical development of the economy and the role that the country plays in the international division of labour.

For instance, in the case of Argentina, researchers highlight the fact that the consolidation of the informality in the labour market has a starting line consensually established in the 80s, becoming a structural phenomenon that has been deepening in periods of crisis, as it works as a “shelter” for unemployment. Nonetheless, the self-employment as well as other type of work arrangements in Argentina have been

studied and known not necessarily as a knee-jerk reaction or as a labour stoically reality accepted by workers as a result of the economic slumps, but sometimes as an opportunity to take a turn to a desired situation, (Busso, 2010, pp. 130-133). On the other side, Brazilian researchers focus their interest in analysing the role of unions in the organization of the informal and precarious workers, paying particular attention to, at least, two critical issues. On the one hand, the backgrounds of the social organization of labour which historically demonstrated a poor structural development resulting from the systematic failure in the implementation of the Welfare State. And, on the other hand, the challenge of facing the globalising dynamics of the international division of labour that pushes the peripheral and semi-peripheral economies to spread the logic of informality, particularly worrying when it takes place in labour context of workers scarcely organized, as the case of Brazil (Véras de Oliveira, 2019). Finally, in the case of Chile, researchers are orientated to the study of informality as a meaning for precariousness itself. Banco and Julián (2019) distinguish nine typologies of precariousness in Chile, many of them scrupulously analysed in terms of informality and its multidimensional features that are identified as a target to move forward formalization.

The analysis carried out within the Latwork project has been successful in determining how the specific approaches that we can find in the literature review systematically correlate to the perspective of researchers according to their country. The interpretation of this correlation is produced not only at statistical level though. Each of the one hundred items that has been identified as the most important scientific challenge to reinforce the research activity in the field of informal work are aligned selectively and logically tied to the schema of interest identified in the literature review. For instance, the academic community in Brazil is more willing to accord the importance of social actors as unions, local and regional agents, as they are considering the key institutions in the target of organizing workers and, of course, mitigate the impacts of extreme neoliberalist praxis of Bolsonaro. In the case of Argentinian researchers, we found a diversion towards the institutional level nationwide. And finally, in the case of Chile, the emphasis is focused on the research institutions themselves.

Conclusions

Globalisation and neoliberalism have brought new ways for the weaker economies occupying a peripheral or semi-peripheral position in the world-system. The outcome has been, on the one end, the limitation of the ability to retain added value in the production chain and, on the other, the exponential increase of inequalities

resulting from the growing exploitation of low labor costs, even when it is assumed that the lower strata of peripheral societies have seen their position being improved as hunger and misery are reduced.

On the other hand, as has been argued throughout this contribution, North / South relations can take on a variety of shapes, depending on the different historical and socio-cultural characteristics of each region or country. The relations of the two Iberian countries with former colonies also involve their own specificities, just as specific were the decolonization processes themselves, even when referring to the case of the former South American colonies. Including when it comes to the world-system in the context of long historical cycles, the semi-peripheral condition has changed over the centuries, both for Portugal and for Spain. Always evolving according to a logic of dynamic asymmetries on different geographical scales, the positioning of Iberian countries in Europe and, on the other hand, the positioning of Europe (including through them) on the international chessboard obeys this same logic of variable geometry.

In this approach, we proceed to a reflexive and critical glance centred on the power asymmetries and, at the same time, on the cooperation forms between the peripheries and the centre, or between the South and the North, being one and the other – as emphasized by Boaventura S. Santos (2021) – beyond geographic latitudes, since it is, above all, a matter of imbalances and interdependencies of economic and political power. It was in this light that we have questioned recent trends of change and segmentation in the labor realm, trying to establish a parallelism between their peripheral condition as Southern Europe countries and their role as privileged vehicles for a possible bilateral (or multilateral) cooperation with the South American countries, their former colonies. Precisely because we believe that in the interstices of the system there is room to reverse – or at least mitigate – the harmful consequences of both colonialism and neoliberalism, the Latwork project reveals potentialities as a tool framed by this objective. The knowledge and experiences of academic and scientific cooperation with Latin American institutions, accumulated over decades by the research centres that integrate this consortium (involving 12 HEIS⁷ on both sides of the Atlantic), constitutes an important capital capable of favouring the development of diagnoses, analyses and intervention projects endowed with critical sense and practical scope.

The challenges faced by labor research change at the dizzying pace imposed by the technological transformations sustaining the expansion of the digital and globalised economy. New concepts of work emerge as the division of labor is trans-

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formed. The loss of capacity to generate regulated and “decent work” (according to ILO definition) as the welfare state’s main source of development is the central limitation. However, beyond the generation of structures fundamentally in the field of statistics and data production, other transnational movements are both organised and structured enough to guarantee the break with the localisms that tend to reinterpret the globalised problem of informal work as a fundamentally internal issue.

One of the most relevant sociological objectives therefore consists not only in explaining the nature of this process, but also in redefining it so as to it to be identified as one of the main sources of sustainability and reproduction of the expansionist neoliberalism and especially of the international inequalities that have a direct effect on the local dimension. In the field of sociology, reflexive currents tend to demonstrate that, regarding local realities – in our case those characterized by the prevalence of informal work and economy – explanations emerge from the interaction with culture, from which is possible to derive interpretative frameworks that enable to break with the globalization process as a cause of informality and precariousness. Uncertainty and risk cannot be controlled on the basis of processes or dynamics that are beyond direct reach, such as technological development. Hence, sociology has been interested in questioning how actors end up stoically assuming informality as a consequence of the nature of immediate environment and primary needs.

The current trends of technological innovation and rapid digitization, whose devastating impact on job destruction has been signalled, may, however, offer new means geared towards a reconversion of working conditions in the Latin American countries. The fight against informal work follows the lines of the fight against vulnerabilities, poverty and exclusion. But for such endeavor to have results, it is important to question, inquire, and reinforce the role and dialogue between the State and public institutions – especially HEIs – and economic agents (the entrepreneurial framework of each region) so that the struggle for decent work and rights is also a struggle for development and social justice in the countries of the South. The Latwork project does not offer solutions, but, at the crossroads at which Europe and Latin America are today, open possibilities that can become assets at disposal of the actors of future socio-economic changes.

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Abstract

Labor and informal work in North-South relations: A study on Iberian countries and Latin-America

Departing from the North/South dialogue, and considering the historical relations between the Iberian countries and Latin America (LA), the aim is to analyze trends, contrasts and asymmetries in different scales. Asymmetric powers and dynamic tensions and negotiations are discussed both in the world-system scale and in the European Union context. In the light of recent transformations in international capitalism, our paper addresses, on the one hand, the phenomenon of informality / labor precariousness and, on the other, resorting to a more prospective record, diagnoses some of the recent challenges of technological innovation and digitalization. Considering an ongoing project related to these issues (Latwork), our analysis encompasses the sociological knowledge developed by diverse research teams on the labor field, namely regarding informality and technological innovation. For this purpose, we also gather quantitative data on research teams from the universities of LA countries (Brazil, Argentine and Chile) using factorial analysis. The aim is to foster decent work, particularly in the Latin American countries under study, where, as we know, the scourge of informality and vulnerability of the working classes is a structural feature that remains from colonial heritage till the early peripheral industrialization. Thus, the spirit of our study lies in the effort to understand the changes taking place in the field of labor relations at a time when global capitalism is at a crossroads in the face of the brutal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Informal work; Precariousness; Decent work; Digitalization; North-South relations.

Resumo

Trabalho e informalidade nas relações Norte-Sul: um estudo sobre os países ibéricos e a América Latina

Partindo das relações Norte/Sul, e considerando a ligação histórica entre os países ibéricos e a América Latina (AL), pretende-se analisar tendências, contrastes e assimetrias em diferentes escalas. Poderes assimétricos, tensões e negociações dinâmicas são discutidos tanto na escala do sistema mundial quanto no contexto da União Europeia. À luz das recentes transformações do capitalismo internacional, nosso trabalho aborda, por um lado, o fenômeno da informalidade/ precariedade do trabalho e, por outro, recorrendo a um histórico mais prospetivo, diagnostica alguns dos desafios recentes da inovação tecnológica e da digitalização. Com base num projeto em curso relacionado com essas questões (Latwork), nossa análise baseia-se no conhecimento sociológico desenvolvido por diversas equipes de investigação na área do trabalho, nomeadamente no que diz respeito à informalidade e à inovação tecnológica. Nesse sentido, referem-se alguns dados quantitativos concernentes a esses países da AL (Brasil, Argentina e Chile) para ilustrar a presença do trabalho informal e a necessidade de promover o emprego decente. Como sabemos, o flagelo da informalidade e da vulnerabilidade das classes trabalhadoras é uma característica estrutural que permanece nesse continente desde a herança colonial e durante o processo de

industrialização periférica. Assim, o espírito do nosso estudo reside no esforço de compreender as mudanças que estão ocorrendo no campo das relações de trabalho em um momento em que o capitalismo global se encontra em uma encruzilhada diante dos impactos brutais da pandemia Covid-19.

Palavras-chave: Informalidade; Precariedade; Trabalho decente; Digitalização; Relações Norte-Sul.

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Platform workers in Latin America

Transnational logics and regional resistances?

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Introduction

After the international financial crisis of 2007-2008, several platform companies based on mobility, messaging and delivery services emerged, especially from the West Coast of the United States (Srniczek, 2018, p. 44). At San Francisco, two emblematic platforms (Airbnb¹ and Uber²) were founded and became main references for the so-called *gig* or *sharing economy* (Brighenti, 2015; Farronato & Levin, 2015; Brusson, 2015).

At that moment, one could hardly think these companies would go global, participating in the economies of all major and medium cities and stimulating the boom of apps and platforms worldwide. In Europe, equivalent apps offered Delivery Hero³ in Berlin since 2011, and Deliveroo⁴ in London, since 2013. At Barcelona,

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1. Airbnb is a vacation rental online marketplace company, established in 2008, and based in San Francisco. Airbnb operates in nearly 190 countries and 33,000 cities worldwide and is a symbol of the sharing economy with Uber.
2. Uber is a pioneer app for mobility and transportation, established in 2008, and operates in nearly 200 countries.
3. Delivery Hero is a leading German multinational company of food distribution. In Latin America, the company started operations with Pedidos Ya, since 2014.
4. Deliveroo is a British platform of food delivery and operates in Western Europe since 2013.

Uber Eats⁵ arises in 2014, while Glovo⁶ and Cabify⁷ arise in 2015, amongst many other companies along different cities and countries.

In Asia, Alibaba is equivalent to Amazon, while Didi⁸ is equivalent to Uber. The company was established in China, in 2012, and has an increasing market share in Latin America. Didi purchased the Brazilian cab company “99” in 2018, and started operating in Argentina, in 2020 – the company was previously established in São Paulo, in 2012, and operates in 30 countries. In Latin America, important platforms such as Mercado Libre⁹ (equivalent to Amazon in the Latin American continent) were part of local economies and became definitively strong by the end of the 2010s. Along the continent, food delivery services started operating by 2009 (i.e., Pedidos Ya¹⁰ in Uruguay) and 2015 (the Colombian Rappi¹¹ in Bogotá), but such apps became popular in the last (three) years.

This article analyses the effects related to work lead by the six most important delivery and ride services, as well as travel platforms (Uber, Cabify, Rappi, Glovo, Pedidos Ya), and the embryonic collective organizing of platform workers. The methodology includes different primary and secondary sources and is based in a qualitative approach – as qualitative sources complement and situate the analysis. The article retrieves some discussions and data of two years of research about platforms in Argentina with other fellows; includes in-depth interviews between June and September 2020 with activists in Argentina, Brazil, Equator, Mexico, Chile and Colombia; and comprises three virtual meetings of the international delivery network – the subject of this analysis.

5. Uber Eats is the Uber’s service for food orders based at San Francisco and established in 2014. From 2015 on, the company operates worldwide as an independent app for smartphones.
6. Glovo is a delivery company originally based in Barcelona, in 2015. Glovo starts operating worldwide since 2015, and since 2019 operates in 200 cities and 25 countries (26 of them are Latin American countries by the end of 2019).
7. Cabify is a Spanish app for mobility services, since 2011. This “unicorn” company is known as the “Spanish Uber” and operates in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America.
8. DiDi is a Chinese transport platform controlled by Alibaba, a large corporation of e-commerce. The “Chinese Uber” was established in 2011 and expanded quickly worldwide.
9. Mercado Libre is the Argentinean e-commerce platform, established nationally in 2019, and currently operates in 18 countries along Latin America. This is the “unicorn” company in Argentina (see Filippetto & Pontoni, 2020).
10. Pedidos Ya is the delivery platform initially based in Uruguay, in 2009. Delivery Hero purchased the platform that operates along Latin America, since 2014.
11. Rappi is the Colombian delivery platform, established in 2015, in Bogotá. The company operates in 200 cities and nine countries along Latin America.

Mobility and delivery platforms: work and platforms

Densely populated Latin American cities are special markets for platforms due to the large number of trips and commercial interactions of such cities¹². For instance, nearly one million taxi rides were registered per month in Buenos Aires at the moment Uber started operating in Buenos Aires, in 2016 (Del Nido, 2019, p. 11).

While mobility activities take off in 2009 with Uber, delivery was a decentralized activity at nearly all cities worldwide and was promoted by apps such as: Delivery Hero in Berlin, since 2011; Deliveroo in Great Britain, since 2013; and Globo in Barcelona, since 2015. In Latin America, the company Pedidos Ya started operations even before that, in 2009 at Montevideo. Pedidos Ya used to be one of the most innovative Uruguayan companies and was purchased by Delivery in 2014. Rappi started operating in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2015, and currently operates in 200 cities and nine countries all over Latin America. Therefore, three platforms were operating under the Uber Eats label in Argentina. Uber Eats was founded in 2014 at San Francisco.

Thus, these companies were established between 2009 and 2015, but started to fully operate in Argentina only in 2016, when Uber is finally introduced in Argentina after many years of legal setbacks, and spreads through inland cities (Del Nido, 2018). Cabify, the first Spanish “unicorn” company – with a stock market valuation higher than 10 million dollars – also started operating in Argentina, in 2018. At the mobility platforms specifically, the Chinese company Didi started to operate recently, in 2020. At the delivery platforms market, Rappi, Glovo and Pedidos Ya started to operate in 2018, and only two years later expanded exponentially amongst “users” and “partners”. The platform was reinforced and gained “legitimacy” due to mobility restriction in the context of Covid-19, in 2020.

The travel and mobility platforms are regarded as “austere platforms”: they lead but do not own assets. Platforms’ assets are the algorithms, the software and data to run and demand products and services. Workers facilitating rides and deliveries (drivers) are regarded as “partners” (Srnicek, 2018, p. 72). Of course, this leads to the avoidance of social assistance and training costs as these are outsourced. However, by no means this is a simple outsourcing of a labor workforce by changing labor rights for commercial relations and/or through the back door. One additional *sui generis* issue must be added as a result of a “management of algorithms” into the platforms: rides are demanded from the platforms. Therefore, monitoring, terms

12. Uber has the greatest travel numbers (“Uber: Latinoamérica posee el mayor número de viajes”, 27 ago. 2018, *Latin American Post*).

and conditions, and payment to workers for services are linked to algorithms and apps of clients/users.

According to Jamil, surveillance of algorithms on workers (based on Uber drivers in Canada) is perfectly updated in the Foucauldian “panoptic” concept (Jamil, 2020). Differing from traditional industries, the “network effect” promotes the growth of platforms as the number of users increase – a situation that deepens the concentration and dependence of users in parallel to the improvement of algorithms. In the Uber case, this “austere” platform needs more servers – rather than automobiles (Srniczek, 2018, p. 47): “Furthermore, Uber needs Google for maps, Twilio for texts, Send Grid for mails, and Braintree for payment: it is an austere platform built upon other platforms” (Srniczek, 2018, p. 79). The fixed costs are lower and/or outsourced.

The platforms own the software and data base (data that has been produced previously or at the moment). Although platforms are presented as simple “intermediates”, they are indeed data extractors, as Srniczek emphasizes. Furthermore, platforms are data “producers” that control aspects of market rules: according to Srniczek, Uber “predicts the time and place of driver demands and raises the prices before the demand is actually produced, besides creating ghost cabs to simulate a higher offer” (Srniczek, 2018, p. 47).

Data control is the platforms’ core, and the need of more data would lead them to some kind of “convergence” regarding same market and data areas. This could explain the negotiations held by Uber with Google concerning autonomous vehicles – vehicles without drivers – that took off from the West Coast at the United States (Srniczek, 2018, p. 100). Indeed, because of the autonomous vehicles issue, Uber had to pay 245 million dollars¹³ to Google as compensation to a Patent Infringement and Employment Theft. The international competition for shared rides/travels between Uber, DiDi and Lyft is being carried out also in China and India, as well as by Amazon, Alibaba and Flipkart in the electronic commerce. Srniczek states that in the platform world, the United States and China are located in the Chinese ecosystem, while Europe seeks to move away from both (Srniczek, 2018, p. 120).

Recently, Uber pursued to increase its market share in Europe and Latin America by purchasing other companies – a debt of 700 million dollars. Uber aims to purchase the mobility and German automotive companies that seek to come away from them because of the Covid-19 crisis. BMW and Daimler merged their respective mobility

13. Agreement between Uber and Google for the vehicle without driver (“Acuerdo entre Uber y Google por el coche sin conductor”, 9 fev. 2018, *El País*). First deadly outrage of a car with no driver (Cano, 2018).

companies in 2019 in a new consortium (Your Now) that includes service companies, such as Taxi Free Now and My Taxi. Services would be available in over 100 cities, involving 100.000 drivers in Europe¹⁴.

The austere platforms grew in the context of the low incentive and profit rates after the 2008 crisis, and only some companies received a considerable part of investments to services *on demand*: “in terms of finances, Uber overcame 39% of all operating service companies in 2014. In 2015, Uber, Airbnb and the Chinese Uber competitor DiDi Chuxing have remained with 59% of financing for *startups* for services *on demand*” (Srniczek, 2018, p. 81).

Nevertheless, according to some authors (eg. Srniczek, Galloway), the austere platforms capacity of generating income is condemned to a certain limit. Furthermore, this could lead to a collapse, as a consequence of not being capable to maintain the benefits in terms of labor costs and operations (Srniczek, 2018, p. 83). In this sense, the rise of conflicts and struggles of drivers in each city along with the imposition of regulations could leave these platforms without interesting margins. As Galloway (2019, p. 225) states,

Uber is undoubtedly disruptive in the long-established disruptors in the Silicon Valley. Unfortunately, for Uber this disruption is happening in a highly regulated market, and Uber achieves great benefits behaving as if it wasn't subjected to the same regulation that include traditional taxis. Uber thinks it is possible to hire anyone who wants to drive, and that the Company can charge anything it wants – a belief reinforced by the market. Meanwhile, the taxis – which are competitors – don't have this same freedom for the most part of the markets.

Despite these prognoses, the impact over the labor market is now beginning to be deeply studied. In 2015, aligned with the recent escalation of precarious labor and within the framework of an output to the 2008 crisis without employment growth, “alternative” workers in United States reached about 15,8% of the total workforce. Self-employment created 2/3 of work conditions since the 2008 crisis, what avoided massive unemployment (Srniczek, 2018, pp. 74-75). Almost 3 million (1% of the workforce) correspond to austere platforms. In Great Britain, the numbers reached 1.4 million, 4% of total workforce in 2015. This issue was reinforced in the following years, although the licenses for platforms operations

14. Uber is released onto Free Now and offers more than 1000 million to Daimler and BMW (“Uber se lanza a por Free Now y ofrece más de 1.000 millones a Daimler y BMW”, 21 out. 2020, *El País*).

were suspended at first in 2017 and then in the last months of 2019¹⁵; the renovation of licenses was recently recovered, in September 2020¹⁶.

In Latin America, although impacts are a bit different, this market grows steeply. In Brazil, it is estimated that in 2020 there were about 500.000 delivery or mobility platform workers, overcoming the previous projection that indicated that there would be 280.000 workers in this condition during the pandemic. The increasing number is a direct consequence of the insufficiency of the emergency basic income of 600 reais approved by the Bolsonaro government. Abilio's research on 298 delivery workers of iFood, Uber Eats, Rappi and Loggi from 29 Brazilian cities points out to the increase of demands (Rappi declared a 30% raise all over Latin America during the pandemic) in parallel to a reduction of workers' incomes and no support to biosafety procedures against Covid-19¹⁷ (Abilio *et al.*, 2020). In Argentina, according to Madariaga (*et al.*, 2019), there were over 160.000 platform workers (users and service providers, what represents 1% of the activity on a national level), yet registered platform users (users, service providers and users-consumers) that offer goods and services as Mercado Libre reach almost 10 million people, or 15% of the population (Madariaga *et al.*, 2019, pp. 67-68). Additionally, there was a clear and accelerated expansion of platform workers.

Platform homogeneity trends in Latin America

Several studies inform that new forms of work organization in platforms impact the working class (Huws, 2014; Casilli, 2016) and the digital work (Fumagalli *et al.*, 2018; Miguez, 2020). In addition, there are the monopolistic tendencies of these business models and impact on competition. The approaches that seek to put this trend in a broader historical perspective assert the existence of a "Platform Capitalism" (Srnicsek, 2018), suggesting that we are experimenting a transition to a new form of capitalism characterized by the hegemonic status of this kind of organization. This perspective is potentially in dialogue with Cognitive Capitalism theories with focus on transformations in labor processes, the mobilization of a "*general intellect*" and accumulation based on the appropriation of knowledge (Hardt & Negri, 2004, 2011; Carmona & Miguez, 2017; Sztulwark & Miguez, 2012; Vercellone, 2007, 2011).

15. London denies Uber license to circulate through the streets (Oppenheimer, 2019).

16. Uber achieves license to operate in London ("Uber consigue licencia para operar en Londres", 28 set. 2020, *El País*).

17. After a few actions of Public Ministry of Labor (MPT), Rappi arrange with the Labor Justice take actions to protect workers from Coronavirus (Assé, 2020).

In Latin America there is a “homogeneity” in material and symbolic dimensions imposed by the platform model. In this section, we address some of them:

- Just a few companies tend to monopoly: for many reasons, the platform business model tends to effective monopoly. Firstly, it is a product of an excessive decline in costs that makes the small-scale competition impossible. This happens for two reasons: the millionaire sums of investments lost in large periods and the way platforms are installed and develop outwardly state regulations, avoiding tax and labor obligations. On the other hand, the same platform model expands itself through the “network effect” phenomena, that is to say, the more users in a platform, the better the services will be. Thus, the algorithms improve and become more efficient in economic terms (Srniczek, 2018). The deliberate strategy of converting into monopolies in the respective cities the platforms appear, includes the purchase and fusion of smaller companies. When the market’s hoarding is not visualized, the platforms leave without major responsibilities.
- Platforms’ business models – especially deliveries’ – have an increased homogeneity on the mechanisms of managing and exploiting labor. As we mentioned before, this scheme works by seeking extreme costs reduction, dumping over workers every service expense (Glovo, for example, charges delivery workers a monthly rate to use the platform¹⁸), as the only competitive way for players. A paradigmatic case happened with Pedidos Ya that started its activities in Argentina with registered delivery workers as formal workers, including union delegates. This model lasted for a few years, once operations of Glovo and Rappi as “independent distributors” model started in the beginning of 2018. Since then, Pedidos Ya fired the great majority of formal workers, replacing them for self-employed workers or *monotributistas*¹⁹. Differences among platforms are minimal and changes by some of them are quickly incorporated by the others. Delivery workers might float in different platforms according to criteria that occasionally lead them to get more inclined to one platform or the other, although the common reason are unilateral blockages, many times as a cause of app defects. Individual or collective complaints, grievances and demands are not substantially different.
- This homogenization process is extended in different countries. In Latin America – in a context of a highly informal and precarious labor market – the platforms’ expansion quickly exacerbated such conditions. These technology companies’

18. A plausible hypothesis is that Glovo uses this resource not only to transfer costs to workers, but also as an argument against the demands for recognizing labor relations that involve delivery workers: there is not a relation of dependency if the delivery workers pay for a service.

19. *Monotributistas* refers to a simplified tax regime for self-employed workers.

schemes can be replied in any countries with no major adjustments to follow local needs. Virtually, there is no distinction between management forms in different countries. Differences related to labor conditions, complaints and demands of delivery workers occur in each country only in terms of conversational tone; the content of these demands is the same, which easily habilitates them to become internationalized.

- The model is sophisticated through algorithms and massive capture data. This network effect has many edges, but we focus on the effects over the labor conditions in Latin American countries, such as Argentina. When the delivery workers access the app, they have to regularly accept the terms and conditions unilaterally established by the platforms. Interface, terms and conditions change constantly in every app, which brings a deterioration of labor conditions and a reduction of workers' income. In many cases and countries, these changes are direct triggers of the worker's collective organization. This was the case of the first trade union of platform workers organized in Argentina (Haidar, Diana Menendez y Arias *et al*, 2020) and also in other countries in the region, as an activist from Equator states: "[...] In November 2019 they battered us by diminishing the 1,00 US\$ fee we had to 0,50 cents, plus reducing the payment of 0,30 cents per kilometer to 0,25. Then, the first strike happened" (Equator activist, personal interview, 10/07/2020).
- The predominant presence of Venezuelan immigrants working in platforms due to the political and economic crisis that led them massively to almost every country in the region is another issue (Brazil is the country where the immigrants have less gravitation in this kind of activity²⁰). Furthermore, it is important to consider the singular characteristic of medium sociocultural layers involved in this movement – many of them professionals that live acute processes of a drop in social status (Mallimacci & Pedone, 2019). In Peru, the Venezuelan immigrants constitute 67% of total delivery workers²¹ and 33% of them have a higher education 33%; in Equator they reach 69% of the delivery workers while 57% have university degrees²²; in Chile, more than 90% are foreigners²³; in Argentina, a recent survey indicates that 48% of the workforce is Venezuelan and 31% have a

20. A study made by AliançaBike indicates that more than 90% of the workers are Brazilian, constituting an exception in Latin America (Aliança Bike, 2019).

21. Results of a survey realized by the observatory in October 2019. According to the same source, 33% have completed university studies. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/106216697867715/photos/a.106697164486335/145813900574661/>.

22. Survey realized by the *Observatorio de plataformas de Ecuador*. Available at: <https://wambra.ec/emprededor-socio-trabajador-repartidorxs-apps/>.

23. Sarmiento, 2020. Available at: <https://larepublica.pe/economia/2020/08/09/coronavirus-glovo-rappi-america-latina-repartidor-de-delivery-el-esclavo-moderno-de-latinoamerica/>.

bachelor certificate²⁴ (Haidar, 2020). For people that arrive in a country without recognition of their labor market and professional trajectories, the platforms constitute the option to a fast and significant urgent income:

I also think that they arrived here taking advantage of the historical moment we were living in Venezuela. I arrived here from my country, with all my documents totally authenticated and apostilled, and until today I can't practice my profession. This was the most accessible place to work, since I had just arrived. In Equator a boom apparently led people to receive considerable wages. (Equator activist, personal interview 10/07/2020)

Conflicts and challenges for the worker's organization

In the last two years, a large mass of workers had a great visibility: delivery platform workers in urban centers. Generally, they move through motorcycles or bicycles dressed up with monochromatic and strident colors, each with a specific color. Less visible but equally countless are the mobility services workers. A few months after the arrival of these companies, organizations of workers started emerging, vindicating a series of extensive and diverse demands related to labor conditions. The situation of the delivery workers is worsened due to a paradox that followed the pandemics: they became a, "essential" service, as they are responsible for the flow of goods limited by the social isolation.

Mobility workers face aggressive strategies of companies that take advantage of governments, competitors, and employees, such as Uber or Cabify:

Uber spends an enormous amount of money in lobby and marketing to take advantage in regulation and increase the customer's base. Uber's desperation tried to sabotage its competitors. The company has made an extensive use of this tactic on businesses with long-term taxi companies and alternative platforms of shared rides. Seeking to overcome a competitor, for example, Uber asked and cancelled rides to certain companies to obstruct rivalry (Srnicek, 2018, p. 109).

At first, authors as Srnicek sustained that driver demands would lead to a lethal effect on platforms making them unsustainable until basic rights were guaranteed (Srnicek, 2018, p. 108).

However, although Uber faced important regulations, the company grows and expands its operations. In February 2017, a conflict with Uber in New York lead

24. Realized in July 2020.

to the DeleteUber movement and the withdrawing of about 200 thousand user accounts as a response to the fact that Uber took advantage of a taxi strike in the JFK airport. The taxi drivers were protesting against Donald Trump's anti-migration laws (Galloway, 2019, p. 26). In December 2017, the Court of Justice of the European Union declared Uber a "transportation company", rather than a mere intermediation company between travelers.

In 2018, Uber had operations in 150 cities and 15 countries along Latin America, while in Great Britain²⁵ the company was suspended and abandoned operations in Barcelona, in January 2019. Furthermore, the company was blocked in big cities such as Budapest and Copenhagen, between 2016 and 2017. In Argentina, Uber arrived in March 2016, Cabify in 2018 and DiDi arrived in La Plata and other cities close to Buenos Aires in 2020 and carried out competition among the companies in Argentina. Unlike Uber, DiDi seeks to get close to taxi drivers instead of competing with them through DiDi Taxi (that doesn't charge commission for the first three months, against the 15% charged by regular DiDi Express service)²⁶.

Generally, the major conflict source is with the taxi drivers, but conflicts of workers against the platform are already being experienced. Avalos y Sofia (2015) systematized the Uber scheme disclosing its operations in various cities in Mexico: 1) operations start, leaving aside current juridical disposals, illegally or unregulated in many cases, sheltered in private rights (service contracts between private individuals), offering competitive advantages as innovation and better service; 2) competitors (taxi services and some particular passenger transport services) seek to slow down the companies' operation and ask for a response of the authorities concerned 3) the companies' operations are forbidden, generating polemics and activating defense mechanisms scripted by service users themselves; 4) acquire regulation.

In California – where Uber started operating 10 years earlier – by the end of 2019 a norm was enacted to regulate every driver as employee. Such norm (AB5) establishes a deadline to the regulation of every driver of these companies, but platforms keep arguing are simple technological intermediaries to autonomous and independent drivers. In return, Uber and other apps, such as Lyft, besides menacing to "disregard" thousands of drivers, promoted a referendum (Proposition 22) to revoke the imposition of AB5 and to declare the drivers as autonomous. The companies' response is covered by a California's legislation – that habilitates proposals propelled by citizenship since it fulfills certain requirements – and is sustained by a

25. In 2021, the uk Supreme Court, rules Uber drivers should be classed as workers (Russon, 2021).

26. The Chinese Uber arrives in Argentina: DiDi doesn't charge commission and love taxi drivers ("Llega Didi, el 'Uber chino' a la Argentina: no cobra comisiones y lo aman los taxistas", 27 ago. 2020, *Info-Technology*).

virulent campaign by the companies that costs 250 million dollars with tactics such as attacking and harassing critics, including scholars and government officials²⁷, according to activists of the platform worker's organization.

Delivery workers' resistance are expressed in actions and incipient collective organization experiences. In Spain, the delivery workers of Deliveroo organized their first strike on July 2, 2017. The strike lasted for 3 hours during the rush hour (Sunday, between 8 and 11 p.m.) and claimed for a time and customer's order setting regulation (two orders for hour and 20 hours of working time per week). A trade union section was created, as a platform for the *Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya* (IAC) action, what provoked the company's rejection²⁸.

One year later, in July 2018, the first platform workers' strike in Latin America was organized by the *Asociación de Personal de Plataformas* (APP) in Argentina, the first trade union of platform workers, that includes workers from Glovo, Rappi, Pedidos Ya, Uber, and others. Roger Rojas, the Venezuelan union's general secretary, and other workers were "blocked" by Rappi when organizing. Every year the movement go on strike and on July 1st, 2020, actions were coordinated in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Equator, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Repression in Brazil was especially hard, since delivery workers grew from 280 thousand to 500 thousand in the pandemic context and were declared as a "essential service". However, they suffered a 50% reduction of their base income by platforms as Uber Eats, iFood and Glovo. In Brazil, the situation and the protests organized by delivery workers isn't recognized by Justice, since the Superior Court of Justice (STJ), in 2019, and the Superior Labor Court (TST), in 2020, rejected the existence of employment relationship between delivery workers and platforms, considering it as a flexible labor and thus the "non-obligation of exclusivity"²⁹.

Many organizations created in urban centers started to build bridges and relations with similar regional and international organizations. Social and economic backgrounds, political contexts, pre-existing regulations and political and labor traditions vary across different countries, but the platformization process raises itself upon the globalizing inertia that tends to degrade work worldwide, homogenizing labor conditions ruled by technological centers. The platform workers in countries such as Italy, Mexico, Chile, Bolivia and Spain are submitted and subordinated to the same logics and lack of regulation characteristic of those companies that take

27. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/11/why-uber-and-lyft-are-taking-a-page-out-of-big-tobaccos-playbook-in-labor-law-battle>, accessed on 29/09/2020 (Dubal, 2020).

28. "The Deliveroo delivery workers from Spain call for the first strike against a company of the 'new economy'" (Ferrer, 2017).

29. "Pandemics, uberism and labor demands in Brazil" (Gallego, 2020).

advantage of gaps in national legislations. The set of demands claimed by delivery workers in Argentina is almost the same in Equator and Brazil, just to mention a few countries.

The growing awareness about this situation is accelerated in a pandemic context, deepens the bonds between emerging workers' organizations over such countries, and start creating broader networks and exchange spaces³⁰, as well as collective actions and strikes in a regional scale. In October 2020, four direct actions were coordinated internationally by riders, including "logouts" and mobilizations in urban centers. The last international strike (October 8, 2020) was preceded by an international press conference (September 29, 2020) to give voice to the causes and characteristics of the upcoming strike: organizations from Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Equator, Colombia, USA, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Japan and Nigeria attended the conference.

The pandemic resulted in the worsening of labor conditions and organizational time. We participated on different virtual meetings of networks in distinct instances of meeting and action that incorporates associations and countries. While only 7 organizations from Latin American countries participated in the July 1st strike, organizations from 19 countries and 4 continents joined the October 8 strike in the same year³¹. The meetings had a growing process of organization in the network.

In addition to some particular slogans of each organization according to its local aspects, the last international strike agreed on common demands that render account to the improvements in collective construction: recognition of labor rights and the unfreezing of fees; rejection to the ranking system; enforceability of labor risk insurances against theft and healthcare coverage; permits for sickness, accidents and pregnancy; rejection of the blocking system and the right to deny orders; justice and compensation for the workers killed in work accidents.

Globalization and national/international syndicalism

The literature on unionism and the impact of globalization the labor processes and the global value chains emphasizes, amongst other variable dimensions, the international integration of national economies, the placement of value chains, the national unionist models, etc. The delivery platforms – multinational companies

30. Between August 16 to 18 occurred the first international drivers virtual congress of #Niunrepartidor-menos in Latin America, where many representatives of the mentioned organizations attended.

31. This date isn't arbitrary. It was chosen in solidarity with the campaign against Proposal 22 promoted by Uber and Lyft in California, against the obligation to recognize the labor rights of drivers in that state, granted by the AB5 Law.

that spread regionally and globally in an unprecedented speed – have a low internal division of labor. At first, they seem like service companies that should operate locally, in face-to-face interactions.

We can distinguish work *within* the platform from work *controlled* by the platform (Miguez, 2020). On one side, within the platform we have an internal division of labor conformed by computer specialists and administrative workers – the only ones that the companies assume as employees – generally residing on the home countries of those companies, besides particular cases where they incorporate local bureaus. On the other hand, there is a huge and growing mass of delivery workers, always renewed (facilitated by the almost non-existent barriers to entry), that aren't considered companies' employees (neither by the platform, neither by the national legislations) and are conceived as autonomous, independent workers or "partners". In that sense, particularly in the field of collective action and self-organization experiences of riders, we can establish a first crucial point for the analysis and comprehension of these workers' experience in a regional level, but also globally. Nevertheless, these workers retain national differences: the delivery platform workers are submitted to the same labor conditions in their specific activity.

The last two decades witnessed intense debates in the Anglo-Saxon world about the renewal of unionism but were fundamentally centered in national trade unions (Levesque & Murray, 2010; Dufour & Hege, 2010; Heery, Kelly & Waddington, 2003). In some cases, when international unionism was approached, the focus on campaigns generating international solidarity was based in local actions (Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005).

In the last decades of the 20th workers witnessed a progressive undermining of labor on a national and global scale (Tilly, 1995; Hyman, 1996). More recently, some authors outlined the beginning of a new phase that habilitates growth and strengthening opportunities for the international union organizations (Evans, 2010; Bieler, 2014; Lerner, 2007; Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005; Munck, 2010) and argued about the "neoliberal globalization as the nemesis of the workers' movement" (Evans, 2010). Amongst their central arguments, the international political economy transformations are highlighted, since the 1970s, the conditions to develop international unionism were generated insofar as the global labor processes transformed the material basis of established class compromises (Burnham, 1999; Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005). These compromises are related to protect jobs and acquired privileges (Bieler, 2014), fundamentally in the global North.

The development and deployment of platforms reveal the articulation of a new capital structure that imposes its rules without any local mediation, working as a sort of international labor market operating through the effects of data extraction

and surplus labor. This situation is far more severe in crowdworking (De Stefano, 2016; Vallas, 2018), where the platform distributes micro-tasks independently of the geographic location of the worker. The outsourcing and radical precarity of labor in the platform model and the homogeneity tendency result on a blockage of class agreements inasmuch as the platforms don't configure as local mediations. By contrast, in most cases the platforms' characteristics enabled international intraclass deals, including considerable differences related to conceptions and traditions, although these articulations are still debile and incipient.

Many traditions of thought, regarding their particularities, consider the inexorability of the workers' resistance in the face of capitalist exploitation (Labor Process, Marxism), even when capital subsume new territories to expand and evade resistance, as shown by Silver (2005). However, the solidarity between workers that resulted from their common position in the production process and from their experiences of struggle are not automatic and require actions of resistance (Bieler, 2014). Therefore, worker's narratives organizations differ depending on the country. As a matter of fact, some organizations have a mutual aid origin, aiming to aid injured delivery workers. Over time, workers politicized their discourse, also influenced by the interaction experiences with other regional organizations with considerable political imprint, shaping and renewing their own demands:

At first, we were a simple mutual aid group. In the last year, in June, we began integrating an NGO called Nosotres and started to talk about labor rights, and how to pursuit and defend it. Then we saw that we actually needed it and without knowing, we were fighting with other workers in different countries. In that year, by mid-April, organizations from Argentina as ATR, El Ancla and Dar Vuelta Todo invited us to participate in the mobilizations (Activist from Mexico, personal interview 3/10/2020).

We were complaining against Glovo, then we come into contact with some guys in Argentina [ATR organization]. That's when the first international strike happened and when the Glovers organization of Equator is born: from the first international strike. (Activist from Equator, personal interview 14/9/2020) (citação)

The collective actions of workers are as immediate as the landing and deployment processes of platforms in each city they are introduced. Although the structural conditions to algorithm management and the unprecedented power asymmetry between capital and labor hinder and difficult the arising of collective organizing and bargaining, it doesn't prevent it – even in the case these are fragile and immediate responses (Haidar *et al.*, 2020).

Another inherent element to this emerging process is its fast international articulation. Many organizations quickly started to establish relations and links with neighboring countries' organizations to nourish from more advanced experiences, and to articulate common actions to think about combined strategies. There is specific data that appears in the interviews and shows something particularly important: every activist is relatively well informed about organizations, situations and instances of judicial and legislative processes of other countries in the region, including Europe. The information flow between organizations, provided by the same technology used to exploit them, which also constitutes a sign of an epoch, besides being a facilitator of collective organization.

[The articulation of the international network] started long ago: the movement has only three months. People from many places became aware of the massive strikes and then began speaking with people to engage in strikes. However, this is just a starting point, as I said, and we are late. There are [experienced workers in] countries and cities with many years of struggle, and we are just now creating ours (Activist from Brazil, personal interview 18/09/2020).

Mostly, the bibliography on global unionism points out to the relevance of consolidation and establishment of bridges between national union organizations. Critics addressed to its practices spin around the lack of vision or compromise within international networks, fundamentally because they keep thinking themselves locally, in relation with (and aiming) to national states. Furthermore, these union organizations don't understand the need to strengthen the global dimension of dispute and negotiation with corporations. Nevertheless, the networks we analyzed proceed the other way around. Without a strong local organizational basis – a result of certain structural and structuring effect over its objective conditions –, these new forms of organizing finds out on an international dialogue and the networks of connection between collective actions, as an imperative from its origins.

There's this idea that one can enter the app whenever you want and there's no schedule to fulfill, but in practice you need to work 12 hours in the streets to achieve a minimum wage: what kind of freedom is that? That's why I say that this is a global occurrence, because the fascist march is also global and is happening in many places, but our struggle also is, because the apps took over the world. They might have different names or appear as different companies, but the kind of work they promote is the same (Activist from Brazil, personal interview 18/09/2020).

This situation is consonant with Evans' (2010) proposition: in sociocultural terms, the revolutionary turning points in communication are combined with the advent of a globally shared culture and daily practices that enable the possibility to raise new solidarities. Also, there is a singularity in the Latin American regional process, because there are effectively more possibilities of articulation to propagate an homogeneity in the labor conditions, including a certain culture radiated and reinforced by the large migratory Venezuelan exodus that permeates almost every delivery platform experiences in the region. This happens to such an extent that some of these experiences were activated and motorized by migrant workers, such as the APP organization in Argentina or Glovers in Equator.

Conclusion: workers reduced to their own strength?

As we were able to rebuild through this paper, in most cases the organizations here analyzed aren't supported by established and/or preexistent trade unions. The workers are in a self-organizing process. It's an absolutely de-institutionalized conflict, without a clear regulation. The pandemics conducts them to illegality, even virtually. The disposition to act as a key aspect of worker's associative power is being faced by algorithm management and blocking, without any cost for the companies.

In this sense, it's noticeable that part of the bibliography (Fairbrother & Hammer, 2005; Munck, 2010) states the renovation of struggles from international institutions and the recognized spaces of union participation point of view, as a product and a result of Fordist dynamics. Platforms, however, deny all those structures and break up with the negotiation and dialogue channels. Workers strive from other starting points, with other kinds of power resources, completely different and much more fragile than traditional Fordist ones.

The platform locus finds itself in an earlier stage. Labor conditions regress to the end of the 19th century, a time when first trade union organizations fought for basic rights. In almost every country, legal demands and legislative initiatives began, although the favorable definitions were denied or delayed. The respective national regulations on labor activity that result from the workers' struggles and claims can serve as a basis to initiate an articulation between regional agreements. One of the proposals that was raised in the International Congress of Delivery Workers was the implementation of meetings between lawyers of distinct countries to develop common strategies and to benefit from not only legislative, but legal experiences.

In Latin America, traditional union structures don't have regional movements besides symbolic solidarities with grassroots organizations. The ILO has been raising debates about this specific theme and elaborated the first global studies about

work in Platform companies (De Stefano, 2015), but didn't constitute itself as a determinant ally. In the light of this research, we considered that the unionist and associative strategies nourish from international experience to achieve results on their demands in national urban spaces, but they also need to establish bridges with institutions that already have consolidated organizational experiences to oppose to the disruptive forces of global capital under the Platform system.

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Abstract

Platform workers in Latin America: transnational logics and regional resistances?

The platforms boom in Latin America is at the current core of the industrial and retail sectors. Platform workers (i.e., drivers, motorcyclists and bikers) started organizing along different repertoires taken from other countries thanks to the global character of productive processes and the weight of migrant labor in services, such as mail, post services, and mobility of people. From a qualitative approach, this article proposes an overview of main organizing experiences and burgeoning struggles in this new context aggravated by the intensification of such platforms within the Covid-19 crisis.

Keywords: Platforms; Work; Algorithms; International unionism.

Resumo

Trabalhadores de plataforma na América Latina: lógica transnacional e resistências regionais?

O auge das plataformas na América Latina está no centro dos processos industriais e de provisão de serviços nas cidades da região. Os trabalhadores comandados pelas plataformas (motoristas de automóveis, motocicletas, bicicletas etc.) começaram a organizar-se, e suas lógicas tomam repertórios de diferentes países, pelo caráter global desses mesmos processos produtivos, assim como pelo forte peso do trabalho migrante nesses setores de serviços de mensagem, correio ou mobilidade de pessoas. Com base em uma abordagem qualitativa, o artigo trata das principais formas de organização e dos processos de lutas emergentes no novo contexto, que se vê potencializado pela maior intensidade do uso desse tipo de plataformas desde a crise da Covid-19.

Palavras-chave: Plataformas; Trabalho; Algoritmos; Sindicalismo internacional.

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Labour and globalisation

Complexity and transformation

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The future of labour in the era of late globalisation has been transformed as the rest of social life has by the Covid-19 pandemic. We hear repeatedly now (May 2021) that we will have to live with Covid-19 and that there will be a “new normal”. But what does that mean in the context of labour and the labour movement? Many psychologists tell us there is a huge tendency after a crisis for people to want to “get back to normal” (see Taylor, 2019). But is that even possible after Covid-19? Does it mean we should just strive to return to the status quo? Covid-19 is a health crisis but also a social, political and cultural one, and will, of course, have a major economic impact, not least on the world of work that has been seriously disrupted.

Back to normal?

To answer these questions we might need to think through the relationship between the normal and the pathological, based on the seminal work on the subject by philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem, who argued that “We shall say that the healthy man [sic] does not become sick insofar as he is healthy. No healthy man becomes sick, for he is sick only insofar as his health abandons him and in this he is not healthy. The so-called healthy man thus is not healthy. His health is an equilibrium which he redeems on inceptive ruptures. The menace of disease is

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one of the components of health” (Canguilhem, 1991, p. 56). How does this relate to the contemporary workplace and work relations? Was it healthy and then did it become pathological because of the coronavirus? For Canguilhem, being healthy and being “normal” are not altogether equivalent since the pathological is but one kind of normal. Being normal also implies being normative but then being healthy (as in a body) implies being able to transcend the norm. To be in good health means being able to fall sick and recover, according to Canguilhem. So, was the world of work and work relations really healthy before the coronavirus? Does the current pathology signal a simple accentuation of normal phenomena or does it lead to a “crisis” defined in medical terms as “the turning point of a disease when an important change takes place, indicating either recovery or death”? The Covid-19 crisis has brought home the essential role that workers play in keeping the wheels of society going, not least health workers of course but all those workers who could not “work from home” as many white-collar workers were encouraged to do.

We might finally, at this point, take up a potentially positive reading of “crisis”, which is implicit in its original definition as “the turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or fever” (*Merriam-Webster*, 2020). An alternative scenario would be that people learn from the crisis that they are living through and call for fundamental system change. Rebecca Solnit (2010) has argued that the Mexico City earthquake of 1985 and the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster in the US unleashed great reserves of human solidarity, energetic improvisation and purposeful intent that augured well for the future. In relation to the current Covid-19 crisis, Solnit argues that “ordinary life before the pandemic was already a catastrophe of desperation and exclusion for too many human beings, an environmental and climate catastrophe, an obscenity of inequality” (Solnit, 2020) so that fundamental change is overdue and a return to “business as usual” is not an option. In other words, we may not wish to return to “normal”, and the “pathological” period we are living through could help us create the conditions for a new, more humane social order.

It was within an already chaotic situation that the Covid-19 crisis emerged and sent real shockwaves through the global economy, now threatened imminently by a depression that would dwarf that of the 1930s (see IMF, 2020). In March 2020 we witnessed a near-fatal crisis in the financial system, kept going only through spectacular interventions by the Federal Reserve in the US, the Bank of England and the European Central Bank. Production and employment plummeted with the enactment of Covid “lockdowns” and credit contracted dramatically. The question now arises as to whether capitalism can once again rise from its sick-bed and recover its legendary animal spirits? For Adam Tooze, any notion of a unified global order has now dissipated: “we will somehow have to patch together China’s one-party

authoritarianism, Europe's national welfarism and whatever it is the United States will be in the wake of this disaster" (Tooze, 2020). We are certainly a long way from the optimism of 1989-90 when the collapse of communism and the beginning of globalisation painted a rosy future for capitalism. The social impact of the Covid crisis was very rapidly felt. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020), by March 2020 almost half the global workforce – 1.6 billion people – were in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed by the economic impact of Covid-19, and the International Monetary Fund forecast a 3% contraction (*Guardian*, 2020). Of the total global working population of 3.3 billion, about 2 billion work in the "informal economy", often on short-term contracts or in self-employment, and suffered a 60% collapse in their wages in the first month of the crisis (ILO, 2020). In global terms, we are facing a crisis of livelihoods of unprecedented proportions where a future without income, food or security is on the horizon for many. It is not surprising that forward-thinking economists such as Mariana Mazzucato are calling for a re-think of the global economic order as and when it reboots (Mazzucato, 2020). We now have to see whether the organisations representing workers can rise to the occasion and help forge a progressive post Covid process of social transformation.

The editors of the *Global Labour Journal* have recently carried out an inventory of the ways in which Covid-19 has impacted on the world of work and the questions posed for a critical study of labour from a global perspective (Cooke *et al.*, 2021). While we still cannot be clear on the outcome (as of May 2021) we can certainly discern dramatic shifts in the nature of workplace relations and the emergence of an extreme wave of exploitation of workers. This is an era of unprecedented complexity with social, economic, political and cultural transformations likely to change the very parameters of work, meaning that a "return to normal" is simply out of the question. The Global Labour editors pose a number of questions for us that will need to be addressed: *How is the pandemic reconfiguring the global and the national? How is the pandemic further destabilising distinctions between formal and informal sectors? How has the pandemic exacerbated inequalities and sharpened the class divide? To what extent has the pandemic and responses to it engendered new or revived forms of resistance and organisation among workers? How does the use of digital infrastructures implemented in this crisis alter the labour process? What is their impact on workers? How does the pandemic, and its political and economic effects, affect attempts to address the global ecological crisis, and what does this mean for workers?*

These are questions that a number of the articles in this special issue, see above, address either explicitly or implicitly. We are no longer thinking in binary terms of the global North and South as though they were different species of capitalism and therefore subject to different laws of development. The formal/informal divide can-

not be reduced to a North/South geographical explanation as we see it impacting in both spaces. The development of a digital economy is not, for its part, confined to the once prosperous heartlands of capitalism. The pandemic has both exposed and exacerbated social inequalities and laid bare the predatory inhuman nature of capitalism. There have been defensive mobilisations by workers in many countries for example to demand protective equipment and against coercive practices. What has also come to the fore is the clear realisation that the future of workers and of the planet are interlinked and the climate crisis will now be addressed as a matter of priority.

Current challenges

Michele Ford provides us with an overview of the achievements of the international labour movement in regards to Asian unions' responses to temporary labour migration that have been stronger and had more impact than one would have perhaps expected. In countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong, where the unions are relatively weak there have been considerable advances when working directly with international migrants, most often supported by the global unions. Impact of its interventions on the approaches and practices of the unions with which they worked most closely on migration. In the three countries where they were most active – Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand – advancements as a result of these programs are particularly remarkable, given unions' low levels of institutional power in those contexts. This success has then in turn empowered the unions giving them greater mobilising capacity and perhaps legitimacy. In Hong Kong, the union's decision to support a migrant led organisation of foreign domestic workers in alliance with migrant workers NGOs has led to legislative change in regards to the treatment of migrant workers. In Malaysia the recruitment of migrant workers in timber and electronic sectors has greatly energised the unions and even helped reform their bureaucratic internal practices.

Caleb Goods, Andrew Herod, Bradon Ellem, Al Rainnie examine the way the large global production networks of Komatsu and Caterpillar have evolved through internal company logics but have also been shaped by their interactions with the state and, crucially for our purposes, with their workforces. Workers are active players in the unfolding of companies' transnational strategies and not just passive victims of this process. Interestingly we find that Caterpillar has had a much more adversarial relationship with its workforce than Komatsu and managed labour in different ways but in both cases labour helped shape the development of capitalism. Today with the rise of labour-saving robotisation and automation we can expect the labour question

to become even more central with access to skilled, rather than just cheap labour being crucial to both companies. In the complex politics of scale and the search for a “spatial fix” for the problems of capitalism it may well be that China is not the last stop in that process. High skilled engineers and computer operators, rather than the semi-skilled production line workers of the past, will probably be the lead players in this process and the ongoing struggle between labour and capital. This chapter reminds us that labour shapes capital as much as the other way round and keeps to the fore the question of agency.

For their part Leonardo Mello e Silva, Ricardo Framil Filho and Katiuscia Moreno Galhera examine the way in which cross-border trade union networks operate within transnational corporation through a comparison between various sectors in Brazil such as the metal and chemical, garment, retail, and commercial banking sectors. These union networks are grounded in local instances of global production and target specific transnational corporations. They seek to join together higher level networking with bread and butter issues on the ground with varying degrees of success. They have often operated outside of traditional industrial relations frameworks with a flexible repertoire including social dialogue, corporate responsibility and private governance. This flexible practices of scaling up union activity has, to varying degrees created new union subjects with different geographical scopes and new forms of trade union action. While these activities are clearly constrained by previously established institutional frameworks and exclusionary practices they do indicate that through rescaling at a national level novel forms of struggle can emerge. What begins as an informal, even hesitant, process driven by this process may be throwing up new forms of industrial relations and ways in which labour can contest the rule of capital.

Elísio Estanque and Víctor Climent in turn examine labor and informal work in north-south relations through a comparative study of the Iberian countries and Latin America analyzing trends, contrasts and asymmetries based on different scales. The growing phenomenon of informality and labour precarity at a global scale is seen to have particular regional impacts and modalities at the EU and regional Latin American levels. The recent and growing challenges of technological innovation and digitalization are thus placed in their particular regional settings. This article reports on an ongoing project in Latin America developing sociological knowledge in a university setting that engages with trade union organisations. They argue that there is a specific Latin American context in which these global processes play out, shaped by the colonial heritage and its ongoing impact on labour relations and the nature of late peripheral industrialization. The study and the ongoing research project seeks to contribute to our understanding of the way in which global capitalism is at

a crossroads due to the brutal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the increasing need for decent work in which North-South dialogue can play an important role.

The issue of platform workers in Latin America in terms of transnational logics and the regional resistances it engenders is examined by Pablo Miguez and Nicolas Diana Menendez in a study which examines the six most important delivery and ride services, as well as travel platforms (Uber, Cabify, Rappi, Glovo, Pedidos Ya), and the embryonic collective organizing of platform workers that has emerged in recent years. This has not been carried out, on the whole, by existing unions but rather through the independent organizing efforts of the platform workers themselves. These workers, that include drivers, motorcyclists and bikers have organized in ways that have been inspired by global best practice and articulating a number of novel repertoires of action. We note an important presence of migrant workers in the services such as mail, postal services and the transport of people. This type of organizing in some ways take us back to the early period of the industrial revolution before the emergence of what today are called industrial relations. The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the degree of exploitation and precarity of these workers whose struggles reflect the past but also, arguably, the future of labour organizing.

Ways forward

Current debates on the way forward for labour tend to be rather polarised. On one side are many analysts, both conservative and radical, who believe that labour, as a relevant social actor, is an anachronistic idea and that labour unions are an archaic organisational model, not relevant in our postmodern globalised world. It is understandable that pro-market fundamentalists will emphasize any way in which unions, as collective organisations, may no longer be relevant. The neoliberal theoretical revolution of the 1990s was based precisely on the virtues of the market and the evils of collectivism. There is also a radical approach to “the crisis of world labour”, well exemplified by Marcel van der Linden, who argues that “both old-style trade unionism and old style worker’s parties can no longer cope with the challenges offered by the contemporary world” (Van der Linden, 2015, p. 10). This, in itself, is correct, but he then goes to argue that the global union density of 7% worldwide, as well as the decline of the global capital/labour ratio, makes the task of confronting the new global order extremely difficult if not impossible. I think this analysis is one-sided, in that it focuses only on some very broad – and inevitably partial – aspects of how labour organises globally.

Contemporary critical thinking is still strongly influenced by binary oppositions, a system which, in language and in thought sets up two theoretical concepts defined

strictly in relation to each other. Thus we have seen the opposition set up in the critical literature between the “old” and the “new” social movements. The first, of which labour is the paradigmatic example, is deemed bureaucratic and stale whereas the “new” movements are seen as democratic and vibrant. A whole set of related binaries could be mentioned: state versus civil society, North versus South, top-down versus bottom up, and, of course, local versus global. All these binary oppositions are characterised by a presence-absence dichotomy and relation of dominance. The political critique of binary oppositions – as practised throughout this book – is not simply the reversal of the opposition but its deconstruction. The problem of logocentrism – words as a fundamental expression of an external reality – which lies behind those binary oppositions are often ethnocentric and they are as much an issue on the left (as in local=good) as on the right of politics.

Just one, quite technical, term we could deconstruct is that of “trade union density” across time and space. Most often this apparently simple indicator is used to show that unions are in terminal decline, at least in the advanced industrial societies since the onset of neoliberal policies in the 1980s. Yet union density is not the only factor affecting the bargaining power of a union. Employer/state negotiations are equally important, not to mention political power. John Kelly goes further in decoupling union density from the prospects for union revitalization, arguing on the basis of complex data that “despite the problems they have faced in recent years and their denigration as a merely sectional interest group, unions remain a powerful force both for egalitarianism and for democracy” (Kelly, 2003, p. 21). In shaping their role in society, unions may reshape their identity and goals, fundamentally altering their economic, political and social roles.

So, moving forward “beyond the impasses” we can see for example that it is not a question of counter-posing a pessimistic analysis with an optimistic one; that would be a poor critical response. But, a longer term analysis of the making and remaking of the global working class and its organisations over time, from a broadly Polanyian “double movement” perspective, would provide an alternative framework. As against the fairly static negative view outlined above, the emphasis here is placed on the dynamic and dialectical nature of the capital/wage-labour relation. Thus Beverly Silver stresses how “one of the key driving forces behind [capitalism’s] tendency towards ‘ceaseless change’ is labour – capital conflict” (Silver, 2003, p. 49). If capitalism, as we know it today, in its informationalised and globalized form, is in part due to historic labour resistance, then capitalism has not leapt beyond its dependent relationship with labour, established during the Industrial Revolution. Each time workers’ bargaining power is weakened by technological advances or relocation to low wage regions, this contradiction comes to the fore once again.

The Polanyian frame was one which made sense around 2000, not because it was “optimistic”, but because it allowed us to capture the significance of seemingly disconnected signs that the one true model of market driven globalisation was being contested. It seems wrong to see this as an example of the “Pollyanna principle” (a subconscious bias towards the positive) as Burawoy argues somewhat less than constructively (Burawoy, 2010). Burawoy’s attack on “the false optimism of global labour studies” argues that the adaptation of the Polanyian “double movement” hypothesis leads inevitably to an unfounded optimism around the prospects for labour successfully responding to neoliberal globalization. Apart from an unnecessary attack on the practitioners of the new global labour studies and a disabling pessimism which sees all resistance as futile, Burawoy does make a rational point. Burawoy argues that we first need to decide” where one sits in relation to.... exploitation [Marx] or commodification [Polanyi] – [will] dictate the strategy one deploys in moving forward” (Burawoy, 2010, p. 307). We can either promote transnational labour alliances or local alliances embracing all impacted by market-driven commodification he argues. In reality, this binary opposition presents no such stark choice, workers make alliances across national borders and, often at the same time, with broad social and community layers nationally in pursuit of social movement unionism.

There is, notwithstanding, the somewhat inflated nature of the optimism/pessimism binary, a real problem with the way in “which the new global labour studies (this author not excepted) builds general pictures of ‘labour and globalisation’ based on somewhat scarce empirical material”. As Brooks and Mc Callum note in a review of the field “the labour as counter-movement strand [of the new global labour studies] suffers from a tendency to assume that several individual instances of transnational action comprise a single global movement” (Brooks & Mc Callum, 2017, p. 202). Many instances of cross-national organising and international bargaining have actually ended in failure, something not usually noted in triumphalist accounts. There has been since 2000 a veritable explosion in concrete studies of transnational labour action which need to be integrated into the “bigger picture” of the Polanyian counter-movement thesis, to prove or disprove its assumptions. In short a facile optimism is an inadequate answer to the debilitating pessimism of Burawoy for example. The articles contained in this special issue help us move beyond simplistic divisions between pessimistic and optimistic frames, they recognise that workers make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing.

Stefan Schmalz, Teresa Conrow, Dina Feller and Maurício Rombaldi pose a discussion on new forms of transnational labour organizing around case studies of two global union federations. The Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) has adopted a high profile event-based form of organizing focusing on mega sport

events like the Fifa World Cup or the Olympics. In the immediate lead in to these events the trade unions have a strong platform to initiate local struggles for wages and working conditions but from a multi-scalar perspective insofar as pressure is applied globally on the construction companies. The international Transport Workers Union (ITF), in turn, has developed a network-based organizing approach which brings together transport unions in transnational company or industry-wide networks. The transport sector workers have traditionally been able to have high impact due to the vulnerability of global production networks to focused labour actions. These two forms of organizing show there are different ways to connect the local with the global, but neither is successful without local associational power. In brief, while the Global Union Federations have become key agents in terms of transnational labour organizing they cannot replace local organizing and need to act in synch with these for this strategy to be successful.

Hermes Augusto Costa and Bia Carneiro, for their part, offer a consideration of digital communication as a global challenge for trade unions through case studies of Brazil and Portugal. They see the cross cutting issue of digital technologies as challenge to traditional trade union practice that still sees face-to-face communications as the norm. They present the very real possibilities that the social media offer a forward looking strategy for organized labour. Through a comparative analysis of the digital media presence of four trade union confederations – two in Brazil and two in Portugal – they find that the traditional trade union approach to digital communications still prevails. Despite the possibilities offered for inner union communications and, crucially, communications with non union social movement actors, this has not been taken up in any decisive way. The way these federations maintain constricted communications networks and an outdated top-down communications model does not augur well for the transformation of unions in a social movement direction. The way forward clearly involves an embrace of networked digital communications as technology and political practice.

Warren Mcgregor and Edward Webster, for their part, discuss the building of a regional solidarity network of transnational activists through an African case study with a focus on the role that can be played by worker education. A network of transnational activists was initiated by the Global Labour University across Sub-Saharan Africa dedicated to the development of skills for a new type of union organiser. The authors show how this network has helped forged solidarity across national boundaries and regional frontiers through educational work and the promotion of campaigns to strategize and put into action new forms of transnational solidarity. It is the alumni of the GLU courses that form the backbone of the activist network of labour activism that are then brought into contact with other labour activists

and labour organisation. What this experience shows is the general importance of a labour strategy that is able to navigate the local and the global at the same time, going global does not do away with the need to remain local. There is a long tradition of labour education and it has always built capacity amongst workers and fostered the ethos of solidarity. What this example also shows are the huge challenges in terms of scale when faced with the reality of capitalist and imperialist power.

Another approach to a way forward for labour is advanced by Jörg Nowak who examines the nature of global economic planning as a challenge for the labour movement. The basic argument is that the needs of the current conjuncture are of such urgency and magnitude that they cannot be answered by current institutional strategies such as the Decent Work agenda or the building of more Global Framework Agreements. Nor will the current turn towards a new industrial strategy to respond to the failings of the market driven de-industrialising liberalism suffice. What is needed from this perspective is a new strategy of global economic planning that could map the operations of the transnational corporations and then provide an avenue for the labour movement to intervene in key issues such as climate change based on mass participation. It could take up specific issues such as the conversion of the automobile industry and the creation of community based health systems, an obvious need in the light of the Covid-19 crisis.

Fernando Elorza Guerrero and Manuel García Muñoz examine EU conditionality and trade union action in the promotion and defence of workers' rights through an examination of the Spanish case. There was, for a time a belief in Europe that the move towards supra-national decision making by the Troika (conditionality) would substitute for the national social contract and lead to a radicalization of labour and other struggles. However, the EU modified its early centralised and imposed financial rescue plans for countries that needed them (such as Greece, Ireland, Spain etc.) and opened up a more participatory and dialogic dynamic. At that point most trade unions decided to engage critically with that sort of reconstruction process within the well-established social partnership mechanisms that brought them into dialogue with the state and employers' associations. In this way the more radical possibilities of a broad social alliance between labour and civil society was foreclosed and alternative to predatory capitalism was not even discussed. This is not surprising insofar as labour has always been part of an industrial relations apparatus that acts to dampen the class struggle, a fact of life in the global South as much as in the EU.

Dimitris Stevis addresses the crucial question of the globalization of just transition in the world of labour in terms of the politics of scale and scope. Key questions are posed that are vital for the future of the labour movement and inescapable for the "what is to be done" agenda. The just transition agenda seeks to breach the historic

green/red divide and take labour to the heart of the environmental question. Some variants of environmentalism, for example those that downplay environmental dispossession, that are in danger of marginalizing working class communities and even drive them into the arms of polluting capital. Nor can we mechanically add up environmental issues if each union has a position on its industry. The just transition approach seeks to build a social and an ecological synthesis (along the lines of the Green New Deal) where both carry equal weight and through which we can identify the social equity aspect of ecological goals. The depredations of late global capitalism have an impact on the environment and also on workers, their families and communities. Forging a common agenda is probably the main issue facing the labour movement on a global scale today.

Building on the studies contained in this collection and looking back at the thirty years or so since globalization made its entry into the social sciences as well as global politics, we can see how it has created as many opportunities for labour as it has caused problems, or closed off traditional avenues for contestation. Peter Evans, amongst others, has stressed how “globalization, both as generic shrinking of geographic and social space, and in the form of specific structures of the contemporary neoliberal capitalist political economy, stimulates and facilitates the mobilization of labour solidarity at the transnational level, as well as the construction of labour movement organizations and networks” (Evans, 2014, p. 356). If capital can reinvent and revitalize itself, so can labour and its organizations, that should never be seen as static.

Antonio Gramsci – a labour activist and leader before he was a theorist – wrote in relation to the “modern crisis” of the 1930s: “the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 276). The old ruling class had lost its consensus, was no longer “leading” or hegemonic. And yet, the new class – the workers – and their organisations were not ready to take power, even though “the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and they no longer believe what they used to believe previously” (Gramsci, 1970, p. 276). We can I think adapt his model to the post 2000 situation and, in particular the post Covid-19 we are now entering.

The other strand of analysis we need to foreground, to break beyond the current impasse, is a long term view of labour’s relation with *democracy*. For Gerald Friedman “the labour movement began as a popular struggle for democracy” (Friedman, 2007, p. 15) and, if it is to have any meaning today, it needs to renew that commitment. Labour – as a social category and as a social movement – basically advances a project for social, economic and political democracy. What the ideas of the French Revolution – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – meant for the original labour movement, perhaps today the ideas of the global justice movement could provide similar inspiration for

labour. The success of the trade union and labour movement in the past was based on organization and solidarity to create a genuine community of interest. Turning away from spontaneity and grass roots democracy leads only to bureaucratisation, demoralisation and ultimately decline – because this is hardly a social movement that will attract new members. But if labour is a social movement (and that is of course debatable), then it has the capacity to renew and reinvent itself so as to meet the new challenges of the era.

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Abstract

Labour and globalisation: complexity and transformation

As a matter of balance of the contributions joined in the Dossier, this final word draws a comprehensive picture of the issues discussed by the authors and raises some questions pointing to a possible agenda for current labor studies. First, it sparks reflections going in the sense of discussing the actual meaning of what is to be considered either “normal” or “healthy” after Covid-19 crisis. Then it addresses such discussion to the world of work with interesting consequences, asking what is actually “normal” in labor relations. In the same vein, it reminds us the role of the so-called “essential workers” during the sanitary crisis: a lot of invisible realities which are now becoming visible. On the other side, the author call attention to imminent economic crisis, affecting jobs and companies. Similarly, he warns about the worsening of the working conditions under a post-Covid world: no “return to normal” is envisioned without shaking important structures of the already-known world. One of those pillars is the North-South divide: according to the author, that divide is loosing because the neat two-worlds mapping is blurred today – we find informality on both “worlds”, as well as either digital economy and inequalities are present North and South, so clear-cut differences may tend to disappear. The author finally proceeds to make a short comment about every of the contributions to the dossier, pointing out what is crucial and distinctive in each of them.

Keywords: Post-Covid; Normal and pathological; Essential workers; North and South.

Resumo

Trabalho e globalização: complexidade e transformação

A título de balanço conclusivo das contribuições reunidas neste Dossier, o artigo traça um quadro abrangente dos tópicos discutidos pelos autores e levanta algumas questões que apontam para uma possível agenda de estudos sobre o mundo do trabalho hoje. Inicia refletindo sobre o sentido de se discutir o significado real do que deve ser considerado “normal” ou “saudável” após a crise

do Covid-19. Em seguida, direciona a discussão para o mundo do trabalho, com consequências interessantes, questionando o que é de fato “normal” nas relações de trabalho. Dentro do mesmo diapasão, é lembrado o papel dos chamados “trabalhadores essenciais” durante a crise sanitária, quando muitas realidades invisíveis se tornaram visíveis. Por outro lado, o autor chama a atenção para a crise econômica iminente, afetando empregos e empresas. De forma similar, alerta sobre a piora das condições de trabalho em um mundo pós-Covid: nenhuma “volta ao normal” pode ser concebida sem um abalo das estruturas importantes do mundo tal como existe. Um desses pilares é a divisão Norte-Sul: de acordo com o autor, tal divisão está se afrouxando, pois o desenho de dois mundos estanques está hoje menos nítido – encontramos informalidade em ambos os “mundos”, bem como a presença da economia digital e das desigualdades, que estão presentes tanto no Norte quanto no Sul, de maneira que as diferenças tendem a desvanecer. Por fim, o autor passa a comentar uma a uma cada contribuição para o Dossiê, apontando o que é crucial e distinto em cada uma delas.

Palavras-chave: Pós-Covid; Normal e patológico; Trabalhadores essenciais; Norte e Sul Global.

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Cultura e sociedade na primeira Teoria Crítica

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A relação entre cultura e sociedade surge como uma questão crucial já no primeiro programa da Teoria Crítica, o discurso de posse de Max Horkheimer na direção do Instituto de Pesquisas Sociais, proferido em 24 de janeiro de 1931. Nele, Horkheimer propõe, como solução para a antinomia entre proposições generalizantes e pesquisa empírica, “uma contínua interpenetração e desenvolvimentos dialéticos entre a teoria filosófica e a prática da ciência particular” (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 128).

Fio condutor da fase inicial do Instituto, o trabalho coletivo de “filósofos, sociólogos, economistas, historiadores, psicólogos” (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 128) tem a incumbência de investigar a “conexão entre a vida econômica da sociedade, o desenvolvimento psíquico dos indivíduos e as transformações que têm lugar nas esferas culturais” (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 130). Horkheimer prescreve que o objeto da primeira pesquisa serão os grupos sociais constituídos por operários qualificados e por empregados do terceiro setor na Alemanha (cf. Horkheimer, 1999, p. 131).

Nesses termos, a elaboração de uma teoria da sociedade exige tanto a consideração da intermediação dos processos psíquicos dos indivíduos, como uma compreensão determinada da cultura. Essa última é definida por Horkheimer, em sentido estrito, como “os assim chamados conteúdos espirituais da ciência, da arte e da religião, mas também o direito, os costumes, a moda, a opinião pública, o esporte, as formas de divertimento, o estilo de vida etc.” (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 130).

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No decorrer do texto, Horkheimer refere-se a concepções mais amplas de “cultura”. Distingue, por exemplo, a filosofia social que surge no Idealismo alemão do pensamento filosófico anterior pela sua preocupação com fenômenos que só podem ser entendidos em conexão com a vida social, “com a cultura material e espiritual da humanidade em geral” (Horkheimer, 1999, p. 121).

O conteúdo cultural, cujas transformações o Instituto propõe investigar, situa-se assim num ponto intermediário entre a delimitação hegeliana da esfera cultural – constituída pela tríade “arte, religião e filosofia” – e a compreensão antropológica que tende a identificar a cultura com a totalidade social. O recorte que ele privilegia – a apreciação da cultura em sentido estrito – abre caminho para o exame da dinâmica social encetada pelas interconexões entre a produção econômica, os indivíduos e a cultura. Trata-se de uma opção metodológica que combina dimensões próprias da teoria marxista (a consideração da especificidade do modo de produção capitalista), da psicologia social (na vertente inaugurada por Freud) e da tradição sociológica (a relação entre indivíduo e sociedade).

Com a ascensão de Hitler ao poder, em 1933, a pesquisa focada na classe trabalhadora alemã não pôde ser concluída¹. O projeto inicial assumiu novas feições que resultaram no livro *Estudos sobre autoridade e família* (1935)². Na apresentação geral do volume, Horkheimer começa explicitando, em um artigo específico, como concebe o conceito de “cultura”. Para tanto, delimita três acepções distintas e complementares do termo (cf. Horkheimer, 1990).

A primeira, apreendida no âmbito da periodização marxista da história, uma *Weltgeschichte* própria, delimita a cultura como um conjunto de “traços característicos” de uma época. Esses traços constituem para o historiador um índice que permite identificar o período histórico de um evento, de uma instituição ou de uma obra determinada, “da mesma forma que o biógrafo de um sábio ou de um poeta é capaz de estabelecer o momento em que um texto recém-encontrado foi escrito” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 179).

A determinação da especificidade cultural de uma época, como, por exemplo, a da sociedade capitalista, pressupõe uma segmentação da história humana, a existência de períodos de relativa homogeneidade, que “imprimem sua própria marca não só à

1. Embora os relatos oficiais do Instituto de Pesquisas Sociais (IPS) insistam no caráter inconcluso dessa pesquisa, sabe-se hoje que essa primeira investigação empírica do IPS alcançou dimensões consideráveis. O conjunto do material só teve sua publicação autorizada por Erich Fromm em 1980, não por acaso anos depois do desaparecimento de Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer e Herbert Marcuse. Cf. Fromm, 1980.

2. O relato pormenorizado da passagem de uma pesquisa à outra, assim como uma interpretação das continuidades e discontinuidades entre uma e outra podem ser conferidos em Dubiel, 1978.

atividade econômica, ao direito, à política, à arte, à religião e à filosofia, mas também aos indivíduos” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 179).

A segunda acepção ressalta o “caráter dinâmico” da cultura. Destaca que, no âmbito de cada período, não se preservam estruturas fixas, antes se operam tendências e contratendências inerentes a um andamento contraditório. A cultura repercute os antagonismos entre as classes sociais e também – decisivos na era do imperialismo – entre as nações.

Horkheimer alerta que os ritmos das modificações culturais, históricas e sociais nem sempre estão sintonizados com as transformações na esfera econômica. Exemplifica essa defasagem, a relativa autonomia da cultura, por meio de detalhada exposição dos hábitos então predominantes nas sociedades asiáticas. Na China ainda persistia, como força paralisante, a “veneração e o culto dos antepassados” (Horkheimer, 1990, pp. 185-186). Apesar de contrariar os interesses materiais dos indivíduos, seu enraizamento na vida psíquica dificultava a penetração das formas econômicas capitalistas e das modalidades de pensamento e ação próprias do mundo moderno.

O conceito de cultura como um processo dinâmico desdobra-se numa terceira acepção. As teorias idealistas e racionalistas da história explicam o funcionamento da sociedade por meio de determinações culturais assentadas na consciência ou na razão. Em contraposição a elas, cabe à concepção materialista destacar que o aparelho psíquico dos indivíduos se organiza por meio de procedimentos de “interiorização, sublimação e complementação da violência física” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 182).

Responsável pela atribuição de sentido para o sofrimento individual e para o destino coletivo, a cultura tende, em suas explicações, a ocultar a coerção, encobrendo o peso e o papel da violência na vida social. A postura do indivíduo em relação à sociedade – insiste Horkheimer – não pode ser explicada apenas pelo dissenso e conflito entre concepções de mundo: é determinada por gradações de sentimentos de medo e angústia que têm sua matriz no próprio “corpo” dos indivíduos³.

Nesse processo, a cultura configura-se como instância de mediação entre o indivíduo e as estruturas de dominação da sociedade. Constitui fator determinante no direcionamento das pulsões, decisivo no desenvolvimento psíquico dos indivíduos. A ambivalência suscitada pelo entrelaçamento das diversas dimensões da cultura, em seus impactos sobre os comportamentos, pode favorecer tanto posições conformistas como críticas, orientando pensamentos, afetos e condutas que apontem “para a conservação ou para a ruptura da ordem social” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 181).

3. Tratei, de forma mais demorada, dos delineamentos dessa teoria materialista (marxista) de cultura em Musse, 2018.

A submissão à autoridade, prevalecente na sociedade e na família, indica o grau de dificuldade da luta pela emancipação. No modo de produção capitalista, a capacidade de ação efetiva de indivíduos, grupos e classes depende de um fator específico, da amplitude da reificação. A conjuntura histórica marcada pela emergência de Estados autoritários, segundo Horkheimer, apenas prolonga e intensifica a impotência dos indivíduos diante do mecanismo econômico.

A pseudoindependência dos indivíduos, representada pela filosofia moderna na imagem de uma “mônada” solitária, não aponta para uma proclamada autonomia. Indica antes a subordinação à racionalidade econômica. Nas palavras de Horkheimer, “a mais completa adaptação possível do sujeito à autoridade efetiva da economia é, ao mesmo tempo, a forma da razão na sociedade burguesa” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 202). Sob a égide da reificação, os impulsos psíquicos e as formas de consciência predominantes no capitalismo, suportes da pretensa “liberdade” do indivíduo abstrato, estão direcionados para a submissão à hierarquia estabelecida, em consonância com a dependência cega à sociedade.

Horkheimer considera a família – descrita como uma instituição “unitária e concreta” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 236) – como uma instância decisiva na consolidação social da prevalência do princípio da autoridade. Suas modificações históricas, “de unidade de produção em comunidade de consumo”, não configuram mais que alterações nas formas e nas bases da dominação paterna.

No capitalismo, em consonância com os mecanismos do fetichismo das mercadorias, a autoridade paterna, assentada no poder monetário, oculta seu caráter de relação social, aparecendo como uma qualidade fixa, naturalizada. A socialização da criança – promovida no interior de um núcleo familiar hierarquizado em termos de mando e obediência – mimetiza a estrutura social, interiorizando a submissão à autoridade, estabelecendo-a como hábito.

Essa tendência geral não é, porém, unívoca. No processo de socialização, a família age tanto de forma deliberada, adotando providências conscientes (à maneira da igreja, da escola, de associações políticas etc.), como por meio de procedimentos não controlados, inerentes à vida pública e privada. Sua importância ímpar, no entanto, advém do fato de que, segundo a teoria freudiana, o rumo do desenvolvimento psíquico dos indivíduos é “determinado pelas relações da criança com os pais, ou seus representantes, e com os irmãos” (Horkheimer, 1990, p. 221). A energia libidinal cristaliza, pela via da repressão e da sublimação e, sobretudo, por meio de configurações específicas do “complexo de Édipo”, modalidades distintas de subjetividade, ecoando um espaço de indeterminação e ambivalência presente ou latente no âmbito da cultura.

A pesquisa consolidada no livro *Estudos sobre autoridade e família* procura averiguar também as modificações então recentes na estrutura e na função da família.

Trata-se de aferir em que medida a família ainda consiste na principal instância de socialização, no contexto de corrosão acelerada de sua base econômica, de intensificação do desemprego e de emergência de Estados autoritários. A pressão do Estado e da economia monopolizada sobre os laços familiares, o recuo na clivagem entre cultura e produção tendem a inibir a espontaneidade e a autonomia dos indivíduos, pressupostos de um comportamento crítico⁴. A cadência histórica reforça, assim, a pertinência do projeto do Instituto de acompanhar as transformações da relação entre cultura e sociedade.

As investigações propostas e iniciadas por Max Horkheimer foram desdobradas, em vertentes distintas, em dois artigos publicados no volume de 1937 da *Revista de Pesquisas Sociais*: “Sobre o caráter afirmativo da cultura”, de Herbert Marcuse, e “Eduard Fuchs, colecionador e historiador”, de Walter Benjamin.

O ensaio de Marcuse estabelece, de antemão, a diferença entre o conceito de “cultura” delineado nos *Estudos sobre autoridade e família* e a definição burguesa do mesmo termo. O primeiro debruça-se sobre a totalidade da sociedade, explorando o entrelaçamento do “âmbito espiritual” com o processo histórico de produção e reprodução da vida social. O conceito afirmativo de cultura, por sua vez, considera a cultura como o “reino dos valores e dos fins autênticos” e a contrapõe ao mundo material da necessidade, da utilidade e do trabalho (Marcuse, 1997, p. 95).

A cultura burguesa afirma-se assim como uma esfera, supostamente autônoma, superior ao mundo efetivo da luta diária pela existência. Nesse diapasão, modulados em um tom elevado e solene, a recepção das atividades e dos objetos culturais converte-se em atos de celebração e exaltação, e sua fruição em uma busca de satisfação, parcialmente preenchida por meio da posse de mercadorias⁵.

A determinação da cultura afirmativa mais destacada por Marcuse é seu idealismo. Ao postular a posse de características humanas universais, ela responde “à miséria do corpo com a beleza da alma; à servidão exterior com a liberdade interior, ao egoísmo brutal com o mundo virtuoso do dever” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 98). A cultura se presta assim ao controle das massas insatisfeitas, reconciliando os antagonismos sociais e ocultando a atrofia corporal e psíquica dos indivíduos.

O idealismo da cultura afirmativa, embora tenha suas raízes em Platão e Aristóteles, não se confunde com o idealismo da filosofia clássica alemã. Em seu núcleo

4. Considerações muito pertinentes sobre as determinações da categoria “indivíduo” em Max Horkheimer podem ser encontradas em Wiggershaus, 1998. Na obra do frankfurtiano as páginas que tratam mais explicitamente desse conceito estão no capítulo IV de *Eclipse da razão*, significativamente intitulado “Ascensão e declínio do indivíduo” (cf. Horkheimer, 2015, pp. 143-178).

5. Alguns desdobramentos da crítica de Marcuse à dimensão solene da cultura podem ser encontrados em Kangussu, 2008.

encontra-se não o conceito de espírito, mas a ideia de “alma”, assinalando sua estreita “afinidade com o historicismo” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 112).

Segundo Marcuse, a partir do Renascimento estabeleceu-se uma concepção de individualidade apartada e desconectada do processo histórico de desenvolvimento do indivíduo. A ideia de “pessoa” dotada de “alma” obscureceu a sua constituição efetiva a partir de relações sociais ancoradas na forma específica que o trabalho adquiriu no capitalismo, matriz de características como abstração, concorrência e isolamento.

A alma é postulada como uma essência superior e distinta do dispositivo de forças e mecanismos psíquicos, sobrepondo-se ao âmbito da sensibilidade. A busca da felicidade individual é desviada do plano da satisfação e do prazer sensível: “o caráter humano se converte num estado interior” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 103).

O conceito de “alma” glorifica a resignação, “elevando o indivíduo, sem libertá-lo de sua subordinação efetiva” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 103). Mas também, por outro lado, aponta para desejos que não podem ser contemplados no cotidiano da sociedade burguesa; sob sua égide, “o ideal cultural assumiu o anseio por uma vida mais feliz, por qualidades humanas como bondade, alegria, verdade, solidariedade” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 113).

Marcuse destaca, portanto, na cultura burguesa tanto seu caráter afirmativo como seu potencial de negação do existente. Trata-se de uma dialética rarefeita, assentada em um paradoxo singular. O ideal cultural se constitui como uma dimensão excluída da reificação, relativamente imune às suas determinações; mas justamente por isso incapaz de lhe opor uma resistência efetiva.

A possibilidade de um rompimento privado da reificação é maior no âmbito da arte. No *medium* da beleza, na esfera estética, “o mundo reaparece como aquilo que é por trás da forma mercadoria: uma paisagem é efetivamente uma paisagem, um homem, efetivamente um homem e uma coisa, efetivamente uma coisa” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 119). A arte proporciona uma satisfação imediata, ausente tanto na filosofia como na religião. Segundo Marcuse, “somente na arte a sociedade burguesa tolerou a realização efetiva de seus ideais, levando-os a sério como exigência universal. Ali se permite o que na realidade dos fatos é considerado utopia, fantasia, rebelião” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 113).

A felicidade propiciada pela arte da cultura afirmativa, porém, além de efêmera, restringe-se ao domínio da vida interior. Ela funciona como um consolo, um alívio para a ausência de liberdade da existência social. A ideia de “alma”, de personalidade, dissimula a debilidade e a atrofia dos indivíduos promovida por uma integração social comandada por forças econômicas.

Na medida em que atribui aos conteúdos da cultura burguesa uma ambivalência estrutural – marcada pelos polos afirmação/negação, contentamento/insatisfação, resignação/crítica, acomodação/rebelião –, Marcuse a situa como um caso particular do

conceito dinâmico de cultura, definido por Horkheimer nos *Estudos sobre autoridade e família*. O artigo de Marcuse, contudo, valoriza com maior ênfase as reivindicações da cultura, em especial as da arte burguesa. Esta, enquanto “recordação daquilo que poderia existir”, constitui um manancial inestimável para a prática política que tenha por meta saltar “a um mundo totalmente outro” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 99).

Essa situação se altera com a prevalência do capitalismo monopolista e a consolidação do Estado autoritário. A forma da cultura afirmativa se modifica, acompanhando a transição da “mobilização parcial”, que ainda preserva a vida privada como uma esfera reservada, para a “mobilização total”, exigida e implantada pela nova modalidade de dominação política.

O idealismo cultural da sociedade liberal se reorganiza como “realismo heroico”. À primazia da “interiorização”, premissa de uma comunidade abstrata assentada em valores universais como liberdade e dignidade, segue-se o primado de uma exteriorização aderente a uma falsa coletividade (de raça, sangue e solo) que exige subserviência, disposição ao sacrifício e ao cumprimento do dever imposto. Essa mutação não prescinde do conceito de “alma”. Nas palavras de Marcuse, “o indivíduo provido de alma se submete mais facilmente, se curva mais humildemente ao destino, obedece mais à autoridade” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 125).

A nova mentalidade, atinente à disciplina política autoritária, recusa tanto os princípios da ciência objetiva como a forma artística que busca e assenta seus fundamentos em si própria. A arte é incitada a promover o “culto do Estado” e a “se colocar a serviço da defesa nacional, da disciplina militar e do trabalho” (Marcuse, 1997, p. 126). A despeito desse giro, a cultura afirmativa mantém sua função básica: disciplinar e integrar o indivíduo, cada dia mais amorfo, às novas formas de sociabilidade e de existência da ordem social capitalista.

Em sua obra posterior, Marcuse descreve o processo de autoabolição da cultura afirmativa, salientando sua absorção à lógica da produção mercantil e sua assimilação aos mecanismos de controle próprios da fase monopolista do capitalismo. Constata, porém, a presença de formas artísticas que não se rendem ao pensamento unidimensional. O modernismo estético, as vanguardas (o surrealismo em especial) não prescindem da “imaginação” e da “fantasia”, atividades mentais independentes e antagônicas ao princípio de realidade⁶.

Em *Um ensaio para a libertação*, livro de 1969, Marcuse considera as afinidades reveladas entre as revoltas da juventude e as vanguardas artísticas como indício

6. A arte como uma possibilidade de contraponto ao pensamento unidimensional, tópico recorrente na obra tardia de Marcuse, é assumida explicitamente na entrevista que ele concedeu a Jürgen Habermas (cf. Habermas, 1968).

do surgimento de uma nova sensibilidade. Numa (contra)cultura desembaraçada do conceito de “alma”, torna-se possível a reabilitação da sensibilidade, a busca da “supremacia dos instintos da vida sobre a agressividade e a culpa” (Marcuse, 1977, p. 40).

A emergência de outras formas de pensar e sentir adquire assim uma dimensão política, num projeto de integração da teoria crítica, da imaginação estética e da práxis humana. Em seu combate ao marxismo tradicional, Marcuse recorre à “tese surrealista que, sem abandonar as premissas materialistas, protesta contra a separação entre o desenvolvimento material e o cultural”, advertindo que “a subordinação do último ao primeiro reduz (se é que não nega) as possibilidades libertadoras da revolução” (Marcuse, 1977, p. 51)⁷.

O apoio de Marcuse às vanguardas não é, no entanto, incondicional. Além de constatar o enfraquecimento de seu *pathos* de insubmissão e revolta, o déficit de negatividade de seus conteúdos, rejeita seu programa de dissolução, não mediada, da arte na vida. Ele aponta para os riscos de a poética do gesto, a desmaterialização da arte (procedimentos paradigmáticos de uma das vertentes da vanguarda modernista), desembocar na assimilação ao existente, comprometendo o ímpeto transformador da arte⁸.

Em contraposição, Marcuse defende enfaticamente o potencial crítico e utópico da arte autônoma. Num artigo sobre Aragon, ele adverte: “A arte como instrumento de oposição depende da força alienadora da criação estética: de seu poder em permanecer estranha, antagônica, transcendente à normalidade e, ao mesmo tempo, de ser o reservatório das necessidades, faculdades e desejos reprimidos do ser humano, de permanecer mais real do que a realidade cotidiana” (Marcuse, 1999, p. 270).

Sempre atento à presença de germes fascistas na democracia capitalista, Marcuse é mais atual que nunca quando observa – em *Contrarrevolução e revolta* (1972) – que “o ‘fim da arte’ é concebível somente quando os seres humanos não são mais capazes de distinguir entre o verdadeiro e o falso, o bom e o mal, o belo e o feio, o presente e o futuro. Isso seria o estado de perfeita barbárie no ápice da civilização – e tal estado é, com certeza, uma possibilidade histórica” (Marcuse, 1973, p. 121).

O ensaio de Walter Benjamin sobre Eduard Fuchs, uma encomenda de Horkheimer entregue três anos depois da solicitação, consolida a aproximação institucional e teórica entre Benjamin e o Instituto. Apesar de afinidades intelectuais e das ami-

7. Fredric Jameson, no capítulo de *Marxismo e forma* dedicado a Marcuse, toma por fio a presença do surrealismo na estética do frankfurtiano (Cf. Jameson, 1985).

8. Os pontos de aproximação e de divergência de Marcuse em relação às ditas “vanguardas estéticas” foram desdobrados, com muita pertinência, em Fabbrini, 2013.

zades pessoais, esse movimento foi marcado, durante muito tempo, por reticências de ambos os lados⁹.

Não é por acaso, portanto, que a análise do trabalho editorial, da atividade de colecionador e da obra historiográfica de Fuchs – um eminente quadro da social-democracia alemã – constitua apenas o estopim para considerações acerca da relação entre cultura e sociedade. A reflexão sobre essa questão, diretriz apontada no discurso de Horkheimer de 1931, tornou-se efetivamente uma das tarefas prioritárias do Instituto de Pesquisas Sociais.

No início do artigo, Benjamin demarca a linha de sua intervenção no debate. Propõe estabelecer nada mais nada menos que uma “teoria materialista da cultura”. Trata-se de um tópico que Marx não julgou premente desenvolver e que passou a ser, assim, uma das lacunas de sua doutrina. O trecho da obra de Marx mais incisivo acerca desse tema, situado no Prefácio a *Para a crítica da economia política*, afirma que “a estrutura econômica da sociedade [constitui] a base real sobre a qual se ergue uma superestrutura jurídica e política e à qual correspondem determinadas formas sociais de consciência. O modo de produção da vida material condiciona o processo da vida social, política e espiritual” (Marx, 1978, pp. 129-130).

Benjamin considera as interpretações dessa passagem, fixadas por Plekhanov e Mehring, e prevaletentes na social-democracia, muito distantes do espírito da obra de Marx. Ele recorre, como estratégia de combate, a uma peça do arquivo do adversário: uma carta de Engels a Mehring, datada de 15 de julho de 1893. Engels reconstitui aí, num registro mais expandido que a menção ao tema feita por Marx, os fundamentos da crítica à história idealista das ideias delineada em *A ideologia alemã*, um manuscrito publicado apenas em 1928.

Benjamin destaca, no trecho da carta de Engels citado no artigo, pontos que contestam premissas comuns a diversas vertentes da história das ideias: “o hábito de apresentar um novo dogma como ‘evolução’ de um anterior [...], a prática de apresentar essas novas constelações separadas de seus efeitos sobre as pessoas e de seu processo de produção, tanto espiritual como econômico. [...] o ‘enclausuramento’ das várias áreas do saber” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 127).

9. A redação desse artigo, uma demanda postergada por anos, consolida uma relativa e autorreconhecida adesão de Walter Benjamin ao programa de pesquisas delineado por Max Horkheimer em seu discurso de posse na direção do Instituto em janeiro de 1931 (Horkheimer, 1999). A recepção ressalta, em geral, as divergências e polêmicas entre Adorno e Benjamin em torno do caráter da “atenção distraída” da arte pós-aurática, sobre o papel da síntese na dialética e em torno do teor fantasmagórico da mercadoria (um bom roteiro dessas diferenças encontra-se em Gatti, 2009). Por conta desse contencioso – amplificado pela publicação da correspondência entre eles (Adorno, 2012) –, as relações entre Benjamin e Horkheimer permaneceram em segundo plano.

À primeira vista trata-se apenas de uma retomada de princípios do “materialismo histórico”, bastante conhecidos pela geração que teve oportunidade de ler *A ideologia alemã*. A sutileza da exposição e a terminologia utilizada antecipam, no entanto, o propósito de Benjamin: promover uma crítica da história da cultura, passo inicial para a refundação da teoria materialista da história¹⁰.

A crítica formulada por Benjamin contesta frontalmente as três tendências então predominantes na historiografia da cultura: o historicismo, o positivismo e o evolucionismo. Ele desaprova no historicismo a atitude contemplativa inerente à construção de uma imagem épica e eterna do passado e seu correlato despreço pela história da recepção. Em contraposição, a reflexão dialética que se ocupa das formas políticas e jurídicas, da ciência, da arte e da religião, ao liberar cada domínio de seu “enclausuramento”, torna a compreensão dos objetos culturais inseparável de sua história prévia e posterior – momentos concebidos como um “processo em permanente transformação” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 128)¹¹.

A consideração da recepção da produção cultural modifica sua inserção temporal, a transmissão de seu legado e até mesmo a apreensão de seu teor. Ela ensina, nas palavras de Benjamin, “como a função da obra é capaz de sobreviver ao seu criador e de deixar para trás suas intenções; como a recepção pelos contemporâneos é parte integrante do efeito que ela exerce sobre nós próprios; e como esse último assenta-se no encontro não apenas com a obra, mas com a história que permitiu que ela chegasse aos nossos dias” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 128).

A relevância da determinação da constelação histórica dos objetos culturais torna-se ainda mais perceptível quando Benjamin examina a historiografia da cultura predominante na social-democracia alemã, uma mescla de positivismo e evolucionismo.

O prestígio concedido às ciências naturais, a associação do ideal de progresso com o desenvolvimento do conhecimento científico e da técnica, contaminou o conceito de história da cultura forjado pela geração de Mehring e Fuchs. Equiparados às descobertas da ciência, os objetos culturais foram apreendidos também como produtos desvinculados da práxis. O programa de “popularização da ciência” do SPD (Partido social-democrata alemão) – tributário de uma visão positivista que “só foi capaz de reconhecer os progressos da ciência, não os retrocessos da sociedade” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 135) – desdobrou-se no esforço de tornar acessível à classe trabalhadora uma cesta de bens culturais.

10. Para um acompanhamento detalhado da relação entre a crítica da história da cultura e o projeto benjaminiano de uma refundação da teoria materialista da história, cf. Chaves, 1998, e Rampim, 2018.

11. Tiedemann mostra como a teoria da história de Benjamin se constituiu como uma crítica de três tendências: historicismo, positivismo, evolucionismo (Cf. Tiedemann, 1987).

Essa prática, decorrente da elevação da cultura a valor universal, ignora, segundo Benjamin, o caráter dinâmico da cultura e os traços fetichistas, a reificação que transpassa suas obras. A “representação histórica” dos objetos culturais, exposta sob a forma de “homenagem celebratória”, encara-os “como independentes, se não do processo que os viu nascer, pelo menos daquele em que sobrevivem. [...] A sua história não seria mais do que os resíduos depositados na consciência dos homens pelas coisas memoráveis, mas desprovidas de experiência autêntica, isto é, política” (Benjamin, 2012, pp. 137-138).

O pressuposto comum a toda historiografia da cultura consiste em posicionar seus objetos em um tempo homogêneo e vazio. O “materialista histórico” (na terminologia recorrente em Benjamin), por sua vez, procura expor as obras no “tempo-de-agora”. Não se trata apenas de conceder prioridade ao momento em que os objetos culturais são conhecidos, ao nosso tempo, mas, sobretudo, de apreender a experiência derivada de cada presente como uma “constelação saturada de tensões” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 19).

Os fragmentos do passado surgem aí como mônadas, como imagens dialéticas, resgatando a dimensão política inscrita nos objetos culturais. Constituem assim um elemento essencial para a crítica do presente e para a apreensão de futuros irredutíveis ao futuro que a tradição lhe reserva. A subversão da relação usual entre passado, presente e futuro “arranca a época à continuidade histórica reificada, e assim também a vida à sua época e uma determinada obra ao conjunto de obras de uma vida. Esse procedimento consegue conservar e suprimir *na* obra a obra de uma vida, *na* obra de uma vida, a época, e *na* época, todo o decurso da história” (Benjamin, 2012, pp. 19-20).

A compreensão da história da cultura pela social-democracia tampouco destoa do fundamento teórico da tática política do SPD: a crença determinista em um progresso essencialmente irresistível, percorrendo, por moto próprio, uma trajetória reta. O otimismo geral, a opinião disseminada na classe trabalhadora alemã de que “nadava com a correnteza” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 15), tornou-a cega à perspectiva da barbárie em gestação.

A teoria materialista da cultura, ao contrário, no movimento de se desvencilhar dessa ilusória e falsa consciência se depara com o caráter contraditório dos bens culturais. Segundo a recomendação de Benjamin, um simples olhar distanciado para o passado permite descobrir que “a arte e a ciência têm uma proveniência que não pode ser considerada sem horror. Sua existência se deve não apenas ao esforço dos grandes gênios, seus criadores, mas também à escravidão anônima de seus contemporâneos. Nunca há um documento da cultura que não seja, ao mesmo tempo, um documento da barbárie” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 137).

Esse trecho do artigo sobre Fuchs é reproduzido literalmente na Tese VII de “Sobre o conceito de história”, com a menção de que tampouco o processo de transmissão desses bens está livre da barbárie¹². E com a seguinte adição: “Por isso, o materialista histórico, na medida do possível, se afasta dessa transmissão. Ele considera como sua tarefa escovar a história a contrapelo” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 13)¹³.

No mesmo volume da *Revista de Pesquisas Sociais* em que saíram os artigos de Marcuse e Benjamin, foi publicado também o ensaio “Teoria Tradicional e Teoria Crítica”, de Max Horkheimer, uma espécie de balanço e manifesto do que Habermas denominou posteriormente de “materialismo interdisciplinar”¹⁴.

O ensaio institui uma diferença metodológica essencial entre a teoria tradicional e a teoria crítica, aferida a partir do exame da relação entre sujeito, objeto e teoria. Enquanto a teoria tradicional, na esteira da lógica cartesiana, supõe uma invariabilidade entre esses momentos constitutivos da investigação, a teoria crítica, em sintonia com a dialética inerente ao decurso histórico, permanece atenta às transformações da estrutura social e às concomitantes alterações nas configurações da teoria, do sujeito e do objeto.

Horkheimer concebe o sujeito do conhecimento da teoria crítica, seguindo a formulação de Marx em *A ideologia alemã*, como “um indivíduo determinado em suas relações reais com outros indivíduos e grupos, em seu confronto com determinada classe e, finalmente, no entrelaçamento mediado com a totalidade social e a natureza” (Horkheimer, 1983, p. 132). Sua determinação organiza-se como a exposição de uma série de nexos – numa tessitura que se desdobra por meio da compreensão do objeto, da sociedade que lhe é subjacente –, como uma descrição abreviada da experiência histórica.

Estabelece-se assim uma justificativa para os procedimentos de atualização e ampliação da doutrina marxista, correntes desde a obra do último Engels, mas ainda carentes de fundamentação. Em uma direção específica, Horkheimer busca preservar essa linhagem, em uma época marcada pela contrarrevolução e pela estabilização do capitalismo, situação na qual não se podia mais contar com suas âncoras tradicionais, o proletariado e o partido. Hibernando sob a forma de uma “tradição intelectual”, a resistência e a crítica passam a se concentrar na investigação do presente histórico.

O processo de decomposição do “capitalismo liberal”, concorrencial, culminou em sua substituição pelo “capitalismo monopolista”, principal resultado do desen-

12. A continuidade entre o ensaio de W. Benjamin sobre Eduard Fuchs e as Teses “Sobre o conceito de história” é visível na recorrência de conceitos e no aproveitamento de parágrafos inteiros do artigo nas Teses.

13. Para uma leitura atenta dos desdobramentos do lema “escovar a história a contrapelo” cf. Gagnebin, 2014.

14. Jürgen Habermas usa essa expressão em inúmeros momentos de sua obra. Uma determinação sintética do significado dessa categoria pode ser conferida em Habermas, 2015.

volvimento da técnica e de uma contínua concentração e centralização do capital. Neste, com o predomínio das grandes corporações, os proprietários jurídicos são afastados, e a direção empresarial adquire um poder autônomo que se estende à organização do Estado.

Na nova fase do capitalismo, na emergência de formas diferenciadas de Estado autoritário, Horkheimer identifica alterações substanciais tanto no aparelho jurídico e político como no funcionamento da ideologia. “Com a redução do círculo dos efetivamente poderosos” (Horkheimer, 1983, p. 150), a geração espontânea da ideologia pelo mercado, pelos mecanismos de troca, cede lugar à construção consciente, deliberada.

Nesse cenário, a relação entre cultura e sociedade modifica-se significativamente, até mesmo em seus pormenores. Instância decisiva na mediação entre elas, o indivíduo perde sua autonomia relativa e a capacidade de ter “pensamentos próprios”. Nas palavras de Horkheimer:

[...] com a destruição do indivíduo típico o conceito de “dependência do cultural” face ao econômico há de ser entendido de modo mais materialista vulgar do que antes, por assim dizer. As explicações dos fenômenos sociais tornaram-se, ao mesmo tempo, mais simples e mais complexas. Mais simples, pois o econômico determina os homens de modo mais imediato e consciente, uma vez que a relativa força de resistência e a substancialidade das esferas culturais estão desaparecendo; mais complexas, pois a dinâmica econômica desenfreada, na qual a maioria dos indivíduos são degradados a meros instrumentos, matura, em ritmo vertiginoso, novas feições e novos infortúnios. (Horkheimer, 1983, p. 151).

Horkheimer retoma essa questão no artigo “Arte e cultura de massa”, redigido em inglês e publicado na revista do Instituto em 1941. Ressalta aí as ameaças à autonomia individual, o encurtamento da distância entre a esfera privada e a ordem social. Segundo ele, “a dissolução gradual da família, a transformação da vida pessoal em lazer e do lazer em rotinas supervisionadas até o último detalhe nos prazeres do cinema e dos parques de diversão, o *best-seller* e o rádio trouxeram à tona o desaparecimento da vida interior” (Horkheimer, 1941, p. 5).

Na sociedade de massas, a cultura transforma-se em ocupação do tempo livre. Torna-se um mero apêndice encarregado de revigorar as energias e a disposição dos indivíduos para o trabalho. O tempo consolida-se assim como medida tanto da jornada de trabalho como das horas de folga¹⁵.

15. Neste artigo usa-se pela primeira vez no âmbito da Escola de Frankfurt a expressão “indústria cultural”. Embora Horkheimer tenha introduzido o conceito, hoje se associa quase automaticamente esse termo

Essas observações, esparsas e pouco desenvolvidas no artigo, o enquadramento da recepção da cultura como atividade do tempo livre, como fruição por um indivíduo, em processo de aniquilação, de prazeres manipulados, delinearão coordenadas prontamente incorporadas na reflexão da Teoria Crítica. Constituem premissas do conceito de “indústria cultural”, desenvolvido, em 1947, na *Dialética do esclarecimento*, mas também da última conferência pronunciada em vida por Theodor Adorno, em 1969, intitulada justamente “Tempo livre”¹⁶.

O fragmento “A indústria cultural: o esclarecimento como mistificação das massas”, seguindo a indicação do título, pode ser melhor compreendido observando a confluência de dois movimentos: como um momento da inflexão programática do Instituto, sinalizada em *Dialética do esclarecimento*, e como uma espécie de atualização, de um reposicionamento acerca da função e do significado da cultura na sociedade de massas.

Adorno e Horkheimer – impactados pelas teses “Sobre o conceito de história”, de Walter Benjamin – formulam um diagnóstico do presente por meio de uma constelação conceitual que procura reconstruir as determinações da dominação social ao longo da história. Eles adotam como ponto de partida, em seu esforço para entender a barbárie contemporânea, a seguinte passagem da tese VIII: “a tradição dos oprimidos nos ensina que o estado de exceção em que vivemos é a regra”. *Dialética do esclarecimento* orienta-se por um mote correlato, enunciado no início do livro: “No sentido mais amplo do progresso do pensamento, o esclarecimento tem perseguido sempre o objetivo de livrar os homens do medo e de investi-los na posição de senhores. Mas a terra totalmente esclarecida resplandece sob o signo de uma calamidade triunfal” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 17).

O “Prefácio” do livro antecipa o nexos específico entre mito e esclarecimento vigente no âmbito da cultura. Nas palavras de Adorno e Horkheimer: “o segmento sobre a indústria cultural mostra a regressão do esclarecimento à ideologia, que encontra no cinema e no rádio sua expressão mais influente. O esclarecimento consiste aí, sobretudo, no cálculo da eficácia e da técnica de produção e difusão. Em conformidade com seu verdadeiro conteúdo, a ideologia se esgota na idolatria do existente e do poder pelo qual a técnica é controlada” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 15).

à obra de Theodor Adorno. Disseminou-se, inclusive, a lenda, desmentida pela documentação, de que Adorno teria escrito sozinho o excerto da *Dialética do esclarecimento* intitulado “A indústria cultural. O Esclarecimento como mistificação das massas”. Essa distorção talvez se deva ao fato de Adorno, nos anos 1950, ter pronunciado, em Paris, uma conferência sobre o assunto (Adorno, 2021), cuja disseminação mundial popularizou o conceito.

16. Uma análise detalhada desse ensaio, bem como de seu lugar na obra de Theodor W. Adorno, pode ser conferida em Musse, 2016.

O termo “indústria cultural” designa, portanto, em uma primeira indicação, a forma histórica da cultura predominante na “sociedade de massas”. Trata-se de um sistema que articula, a partir de princípios comuns, campos aparentemente distintos como o cinema, o rádio, a televisão, a imprensa e a opinião pública, o esporte, a moda e a publicidade. Adorno e Horkheimer detectam na lógica imanente a cada uma dessas esferas uma surpreendente afinidade com a racionalidade que preside a ciência e a técnica.

A mesma “razão abstrata”, subjacente ao processo histórico de dominação da natureza (interna e externa), orienta a totalidade da vida social. Sua prevalência pode ser atestada nas múltiplas dimensões do conceito de “Eu”: como *homo oeconomicus*, como mônada social, como indivíduo reduzido à função mimética, como fundamento metodológico da filosofia e da ciência moderna etc.

As produções artísticas da indústria cultural se diferenciam da arte autônoma e, mesmo, das formas estéticas da cultura afirmativa. No âmbito da indústria cultural, o processo de produção organiza-se, seguindo os ditames da racionalidade técnica e da busca de lucro, por meio de um “esquematismo de procedimentos” – fórmulas prévias geram efeitos premeditados por finalidades impostas pela primazia do valor de troca. Os produtos culturais tornam-se mercadorias no sentido pleno do termo.

A padronização e a produção em série, o planejamento técnico em grande escala e o esquematismo prescrito pelas equipes de produção transformam o caráter e as formas de consumo dos produtos culturais. Sua “constituição objetiva” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 104) predetermina as modalidades de apreensão e fruição. Com a exigência combinada de atenção e automatismo, com a inibição da atividade intelectual, a imaginação e a espontaneidade do consumidor cultural se atrofiam. Nas palavras de Adorno: “o consumidor não é rei, como a indústria cultural pretende fazer crer, não é sujeito dessa indústria, mas seu objeto” (Adorno, 1986, p. 93)¹⁷.

A forma artística dos produtos da indústria cultural caracteriza-se por uma “turva identidade” entre o universal e o particular, por um simulacro de harmonia na qual o todo e a parte, intercambiáveis, “exibem os mesmos traços” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 104). O detalhe, subordinado à totalidade, perde sua independência, torna-se fungível. O estilo da indústria cultural elimina a tensão entre a “regra e a pretensão específica do objeto”, “sacrificando o que fazia a diferença entre a lógica da obra e o sistema social” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 100). Segundo Adorno e Horkheimer, as manifestações artísticas da indústria cultural, conformadas em estrita obediência ao poder e à hierarquia social, bloqueiam a busca

17. Gabriel Cohn examina, com muita pertinência, o papel do sujeito na produção, circulação e consumo das mercadorias culturais, em Cohn, 2017.

da verdade negativa, a “expressão caótica do sofrimento” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 107).

A ideologia inscrita nos produtos da indústria cultural “tem por objeto o mundo enquanto tal” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 122). Desprende-se da exigência de fornecer uma explicação para o significado da vida, de emitir juízos de valor, concentrando-se no “culto do fato”. Por conta de um calculado efeito de realidade, encena uma proximidade à vida cotidiana. No “paradoxo da rotina travestida de natureza” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 106), na “sensação confortável de que o mundo está em ordem” (Adorno, 1986, p. 99), consoma-se – mesmo sob o rótulo de “novo” – a reprodução do sempre igual. Assim, dizem Adorno e Horkheimer, a indústria cultural “se converte na proclamação enfática e sistemática do existente” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 122).

Em simbiose, intercambiam técnicas de engodo e compartilham interesses econômicos. No auge do capitalismo monopolista, a propaganda perde seu teor informativo, apêndice necessário à troca mercantil, e torna-se mero reclame da marca, consolidando, por meio de seus *slogans*, “os grilhões que encadeiam os consumidores às grandes corporações” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 134). A indústria cultural, de forma análoga, transita entre a autopromoção e a afirmação do poderio social.

O impacto da indústria cultural sobre a subjetividade corrobora a trajetória regressiva do processo de individuação. Como atividade do tempo livre, reitera e complementa a alienação inscrita na organização capitalista do trabalho. Como forma histórica da cultura predominante no “mundo administrado”, a indústria cultural constitui uma das instâncias de socialização, de formatação reificada da consciência e do inconsciente dos indivíduos¹⁸. Dispensado do esforço de individuação, seu consumidor é descrito na *Dialética do esclarecimento* como o protótipo da “pseudoindividualidade”. Designa-se com esse termo o caráter fictício dos indivíduos, reduzidos a “mera encruzilhada das tendências” predominantes na “aparelhagem econômica e social” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 128).

Na dialética entre as duas faces do esclarecimento, a autopreservação e a emancipação, a indústria cultural, unidimensional, ocupa apenas o polo que reafirma e reforça o existente. Daí o veredicto de Adorno e Horkheimer: “A barbárie estética consoma hoje a ameaça que sempre pairou sobre as criações do espírito desde que

18. Depois do desfecho da Segunda Guerra Mundial – e, sobretudo, a partir de 1947 com o início da Guerra Fria –, Theodor Adorno passa a usar o conceito de “mundo administrado” em lugar de “capitalismo monopolista” ou “capitalismo de Estado”. Essa escolha indica a divergência de Adorno em relação à conceitualização de Franz Neumann e Frederic Pollock, mas também procura ressaltar as identidades de fundo entre os dois blocos antagônicos.

foram reunidas e neutralizadas a título de cultura. Falar em cultura sempre foi contrário à cultura. O denominador comum ‘cultura’ já contém virtualmente o levantamento estatístico, a catalogação, a classificação que introduz a cultura no domínio da administração” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 108).

Os temas desse parágrafo foram desdobrados por Adorno, implícita ou explicitamente, em uma série de artigos publicados nas décadas de 1950 e 1960. A exposição das determinações atinentes à dialética entre cultura e administração conduziu Adorno a redimensionar os dois conceitos, destacando suas conexões.

Em um artigo de 1960 denominado justamente “Cultura e administração”, ele retoma, em chave crítica, o conceito usual de cultura. Segundo ele, a atribuição de um mesmo nome, cultura, à reunião de esferas díspares como filosofia e religião, ciência e arte, formas de vida e costumes, ao espírito objetivo de uma época, denuncia o olhar administrativo, o afã de tudo classificar e organizar a partir de uma perspectiva externa. Trata-se de uma antinomia, pois o específico da cultura é seu descolamento do processo de reprodução da vida material. Adorno reconhece ainda que não é possível estabelecer uma definição precisa do termo. Nessa, por exemplo, estão excluídas as esferas do direito e da política e, nas atuais circunstâncias históricas, até mesmo as ciências naturais.

Adorno desdobra o conceito de “administração” a partir de uma análise crítica da “sociologia da burocracia” de Max Weber. Adorno considera, em linhas gerais, que fenômenos como a superação das formas tradicionais de gerenciamento, a autonomia do aparato organizacional, sua expansão para além da esfera estatal, não podem ser explicados apenas pela superioridade técnica dos modernos procedimentos administrativos. O funcionamento da organização segundo uma lógica própria, à maneira de um “sujeito automático”, não pode ser compreendido ignorando o fato de que a relação de troca, no capitalismo monopolista, abrange a totalidade da vida social. A reificação, o pensar em equivalentes, a comensurabilidade entre os objetos constituem o fundamento da redução das diferenças entre os setores e dentro de cada um, viabilizando a eficácia de regras abstratas e reduzindo assim as resistências à planificação e à administração.

Sob a égide da racionalidade administrativa, a cultura é avaliada de forma heterônoma, segundo normas e padrões abstratos e universais que subsumem o particular, desconsiderando seus aspectos qualitativos e seu protesto frente ao universal. A cultura é submetida assim a um processo de naturalização e uniformização, consolidando sua tendência a apartar-se, sem fissuras, do mecanismo social e da práxis possível.

Adorno alerta ainda que a razão administradora não opera apenas como uma instância externa. Ela afeta o âmago dos produtos culturais, pois sequer seus criadores escapam da crescente “composição orgânica dos seres humanos” (Adorno, 2020,

p. 261), do predomínio do aparato sobre a espontaneidade. Ele indica como sinal da neutralização do cultural o fomento por instituições oficiais de manifestações artísticas contestadoras que, com frequência, denunciam o institucional. Ressalta também a presença disfarçada de categorias administrativas em produtos da arte autônoma e da vanguarda.

A sociedade administrada intensifica, assim, a negação do próprio conceito de cultura. Seus elementos constituintes tendem a ser cancelados. A autonomia desaparece quando o sujeito abdica do poder de formular as regras internas do objeto, atendendo à exigência de seguir o previamente estipulado. A espontaneidade declina; a planificação do todo prevalece sobre a experiência e a emoção individual. A crítica passa a ser considerada como um comportamento antiquado, sendo substituída, sem percalços, pela “informação”.

Nesse artigo, Adorno não se furta à tarefa de propor recomendações para a política cultural, sugestões acerca do que fazer aqui e agora. Paradoxalmente, atribui um potencial crítico àquilo que designa como “o mais questionável no mundo administrado, o funcionamento autossuficiente das instâncias executivas” (Adorno, 2020, p. 272). Descortina aí a possibilidade de uma administração cultural, informada por uma reflexão crítica, que se empenhe em “absorver no planejamento o não planejado, o espontâneo” (p. 268). A criação de “espaços de liberdade”, de refúgios que permitam salvaguardar a cultura dos ditames do mercado e de governos autoritários, não prescinde do apoio de *experts*, de intelectuais aptos a representar os interesses do público contra a opinião pública.

Adorno conclui o artigo afirmando que, apesar da reificação inerente à “cultura” e à “administração”,

[...] ambas não o são totalmente, tal como ainda a mais venturosa maquinaria cibernética, ambas remetem a sujeitos vivos. Por ora, na ordem democrático-liberal. Mas também nas instituições e com seu auxílio, o indivíduo ainda tem espaço suficiente para contribuir um pouco para sua correção. Quem quer que opere os meios administrativos e as instituições com imperturbável senso crítico pode ainda realizar algo mais que a pura cultura administrada. As mínimas diferenças no sempre igual, que lhes permanecem abertas, representam, ainda que frágeis, uma possibilidade de diferença em relação ao todo; na própria diferença, na divergência, se concentra a esperança (Adorno, 2020, 273).

Não se trata, porém, de um atributo exclusivo de uma categoria profissional determinada, mas de uma perspectiva aberta à ação de todos. Os artigos e, sobretudo, as intervenções públicas de Adorno (muitas delas recolhidas em livros) seguem uma diretriz indicada em *Minima moralia* ([1951] 2008) e desdobrada no ensaio “Notas

marginais sobre teoria e práxis”, de 1969: ante a possibilidade “extremamente limitada” de alteração dos fundamentos objetivos da sociedade administrada, as formas de resistência, as práticas concretas – no empenho de fortalecer a autonomia do indivíduo – devem conceder prioridade à dimensão subjetiva. Numa situação em que a impotência, a apatia e o imobilismo se encontram disseminados, o âmbito da cultura constitui um campo de forças decisivo para o esforço de evitar a integração plena da consciência e as tendências regressivas que estão na raiz da barbárie.

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Resumo

Cultura e sociedade na primeira Teoria Crítica

A questão acerca da relação entre cultura e sociedade constitui um dos temas centrais da primeira geração da Teoria Crítica, num percurso que se estende do discurso de posse de Max Horkheimer na direção do Instituto de Pesquisas Sociais aos últimos textos de Adorno. Este artigo se propõe a acompanhar a questão ao longo dessa trajetória. Para tanto, concentra-se no comentário de alguns conceitos decisivos: cultura, autoridade e família; cultura afirmativa; teoria materialista da cultura; indústria cultural e cultura no mundo administrado.

Palavras-chave: Teoria crítica; Indústria cultural; Cultura e administração; Teoria materialista da cultura; Cultura afirmativa.

Abstract

Culture and society in the first Critical Theory

The question of the relationship between culture and society is one of the central themes of the first generation of Critical Theory, it extends from the famous speech of Max Horkheimer at the Institute of Social Research to Adorno's last texts. This article aims to follow the issue along this trajectory. To this end, it focuses on commenting on some decisive concepts: culture, authority and family; affirmative culture; materialist theory of culture; cultural industry and culture in the administered world.

Keywords: Critical Theory; Cultural industry; Culture and administration; Materialist theory of culture; Affirmative culture.

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Memória e ditadura militar

Lembrando as violações de direitos humanos

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Introdução

[...] precisamos de todas as nossas instituições da memória: da escrita histórica tanto quanto do testemunho, do testemunho tanto quanto da arte.

(Hartman, 2000, p. 215).

Movimentos conservadores radicais têm se fortalecido na última década e com eles a tentativa de apagamento e falsificação do passado. Governos autoritários e totalitários tiveram o poder tanto de construir monumentos em homenagem a seus ditadores, como também de apagar personagens e fatos históricos que não lhes fossem favoráveis. Entre 1964 e 1976, ditaduras militares se consolidaram na maioria dos países da América Latina. Nos diversos contextos pós-ditaduras, movimentos sociais, instituições, leis e políticas públicas cumpriram papéis importantes junto aos processos de transição para a democracia, tornando a ameaça de falsificação da História – que requer o silenciamento de vozes dissidentes – mais difícil. A criação de arquivos, lugares da memória e museus fez parte desses processos, potencializando as denúncias de violações de direitos humanos, e exercendo papéis educativos no respeito à vida e à diferença, na formação de valores como solidariedade e justiça, e na reflexão ética sobre o significado de igualdade.

São vários os estudiosos, de diferentes campos disciplinares, que destacam a explosão de estudos, filmes e disputas ocorridas em torno da memória (cf. Huyssen,

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1995; Hartman, 2000; Sarlo, 2007; Santos, 2003). Arquivos, monumentos e museus, que exerceram durante muito tempo um papel celebrativo das formações nacionais, mudaram suas narrativas e seu público. Nas últimas décadas, alguns deles se voltaram para a lembrança de massacres, genocídios e demais violações de direitos humanos, que se sucederam ao longo da história – com o intuito de proporcionar aprendizado, reparação e mudança (cf. Seligmann-Silva, 2000; Hartman, 2000; Olick, 2007; Sodaro, 2019). Nessas abordagens, o oposto do esquecimento não é a lembrança, mas a justiça (cf. Yerushalmi, 1996, p. 117). Memórias constituídas coletivamente influenciam formas de agir, sentir e julgar. Quando imersas em situações de ampla participação, elas direcionam de forma positiva o relacionamento conflituoso entre passado e presente, sendo capazes de promover processos de reparação. Contudo, nem sempre o trabalho da memória tem a capacidade de evitar contranarrativas e a repetição de atrocidades cometidas no passado.

O objetivo deste artigo é analisar avanços e limites na construção de suportes da memória relacionados com as violações dos direitos humanos ocorridas durante a ditadura civil-militar no Brasil. As memórias coletivas se constituem e são transmitidas de diferentes formas, têm alcances e potenciais distintos, maior ou menor duração no tempo, e são reproduzidas em esferas locais, nacionais e/ou transnacionais (cf. Santos, 2003, 2013). A transmissão das lembranças constituídas pode ser pensada por meio da comunicação entre grupos de pessoas e gerações, como também em condições de distanciamentos espaciais e temporais maiores. Em sociedades contemporâneas, em que o ritmo da vida e as novas tecnologias dificultam os encontros e permanências, já não falamos tanto de memória comunicativa ou de grupo, mas, sim, de memórias culturais, que são exteriorizadas e armazenadas a partir de meios de comunicação, os quais nestas condições podem ser denominados de suportes da memória (cf. Assmann, 2008, 2011; Assmann, 2010).

As produções de arquivos, sítios históricos e museus foram priorizados neste artigo, uma vez que estão diretamente ligados à transmissão de memórias mais duradouras capazes de estender por períodos maiores de tempo. No Brasil, temos tido avanços e limites na construção e manutenção de memórias coletivas associadas à defesa de direitos humanos e em oposição aos desmandos de governos autoritários. A análise cuidadosa desses processos é essencial, pois eles estão entrelaçados a contextos políticos, econômicos e sociais mais gerais que podem tanto potencializar a transmissão das memórias produzidas como torná-las marginais. As fontes de dados utilizadas estão presentes em documentos produzidos por organizações governamentais e da sociedade civil, leis promulgadas, meios de comunicação, sítios eletrônicos, instituições visitadas, bem como em algumas entrevistas realizadas.

Primeiras organizações e formações de arquivos

Entre as décadas de 1960 e 1980, os países da América Latina passaram por ditaduras militares, responsáveis pela violação da justiça e dos direitos humanos através de crimes e abusos de todos os tipos. Uma das marcas desses regimes foi a tortura e o assassinato de milhares de pessoas que se opuseram aos governos autoritários, acompanhados de ocultação de cadáveres, sequestro de crianças, inquéritos com provas forjadas, imposição do medo e censura generalizada. Trabalhos importantes têm sido escritos sobre o papel desempenhado pelas políticas da memória no período de democratização desses países (cf. Jelin, 1994, 2003). No Brasil, a ditadura se estendeu de 1964 até 1985. Já nesse período encontramos grupos e instituições que foram criados com o intuito de denunciar os atos de exceção praticados pelos militares e que deixaram documentos, arquivos e livros que permitem a transmissão da memória para gerações futuras.

Três iniciativas surgidas na sociedade civil se destacaram: o Projeto Brasil Nunca Mais, o Comitê Brasileiro de Anistia e o Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais. A primeira contou com o apoio do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas e da Arquidiocese de São Paulo, e foi conduzida por lideranças religiosas: o cardeal Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns e o pastor Jaime Wright. Pesquisadores obtiveram acesso e analisaram, ao longo de seis anos, 850 mil páginas de processos que transitaram pela Justiça Militar entre 1964 e 1979, e denunciaram a tortura rotineira, as mortes e os desaparecimentos. Em 1985, a Arquidiocese de São Paulo publicou um relatório reduzido do material analisado, revelando a extensão da repressão política. O livro *Brasil: nunca mais*, publicado pela editora Vozes, exerceu um papel fundamental na denúncia de perseguições, torturas, prisões e assassinatos ocorridos em unidades militares, delegacias e locais clandestinos. Os relatórios e toda a documentação do projeto foram doados ao Arquivo Edgar Leuenroth da Unicamp no início dos anos 1990. Em 2013, a versão digital do arquivo foi lançada, disponibilizando documentos, fotografias, vídeos, depoimentos e reportagens sobre o tema¹.

A Lei da Anistia (Lei nº 6.683) foi sancionada durante a ditadura, em 1979, após uma ampla mobilização social, da qual participaram organizações de familiares de presos e desaparecidos políticos e entidades influentes como a Ordem de Advogados do Brasil (OAB), a Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (ABI) e a Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB). Os movimentos sociais se dividiram em relação ao conteúdo da anistia, e as propostas envolveram os conceitos de reconciliação, reciprocidade e direito à justiça (cf. Rodeghero, 2009). O Comitê Brasileiro pela

1. Ver <http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br>, consultado em 05/05/2020 (Arquidiocese de São Paulo, 1985).

Anistia (CBA), fundado em 1978, exerceu um papel crucial ao denunciar os atos de violação dos direitos humanos e ao lutar pela anistia ampla, geral e irrestrita de todos aqueles atingidos pelo regime. A organização se multiplicou, manteve-se presente em vários estados, além de obter grande repercussão no exterior. A lei promulgada não requer o julgamento dos responsáveis por assassinatos e torturas (cf. Reis, 2001; Rodeghero, 2009). O arquivo do CBA também está disponibilizado pela internet e se encontra no Arquivo Edgar Leuenrouth².

A terceira iniciativa a ser destacada foi a criação do Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais (GTNM), em 1985, por ex-presos políticos e familiares de mortos e desaparecidos. O grupo foi criado inicialmente no Rio de Janeiro e se multiplicou por vários estados, mantendo conexões com organizações internacionais e tendo um papel crucial na formação de pesquisas, relatórios e dossiês sobre os mortos e desaparecidos³. O grupo se mantém ativo e tem feito denúncias constantes sobre a incapacidade dos governos civis pós-ditadura de desenvolverem pesquisa sobre o paradeiro de mortos e desaparecidos, punição dos agentes governamentais, políticas reparatorias de maior alcance e abertura incondicional de todos os arquivos da repressão sob jurisdição do Estado (cf. Ferraz & Campos, 2018). Além da divulgação de dossiês detalhados sobre os mortos e desaparecidos, o GTNM mantém contato com entidades internacionais, promove manifestações coletivas, e divulga suas campanhas através de publicações e *sites* na internet⁴. O GTNM/RJ e a Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos/SP apoiaram e participaram, por exemplo, da petição, iniciada em 1995, pelo Centro pela Justiça e o Direito Internacional (Cejiil)⁵ e pela organização Humans Rights Watch/Americas. A denúncia foi realizada em nome de pessoas desaparecidas na guerrilha do Araguaia como resultado de operações do Exército na década de 1970. A ação teve como resultado a condenação do Estado brasileiro, em novembro de 2010, pela Corte Interamericana de Direitos Humanos (CIDH/OEA)⁶. O julgamento conseguiu visibilidade em âmbito transnacional, mas não internamente (cf. Santos, 2010, p. 21).

2. *Comitê Brasileiro pela Anistia*: <http://memorialanistia.org.br/comite-brasileiro-pela-anistia/>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

3. Informação obtida por meio da entrevista realizada com Joana Ferraz, membro da direção colegiada do GTNM/RJ, em 30/09/2020.

4. Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais do Rio de Janeiro (GTNM/RJ): <https://www.torturanuncamais-rj.org.br/>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

5. Centro pela Justiça e o Direito Internacional, Cejiil: <https://cejiil.org/es/amici-curiae>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

6. Organização dos Estados Americanos, Comissão Interamericana de Direitos Humanos, 2009: <http://www.cidh.org/demandas/11.552%20Guerrilha%20do%20Araguaia%20Brasil%2026mar09%20PORT.pdf>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

Comissões governamentais e seus desdobramentos

Estudos substanciais já apontaram as práticas e conflitos do Estado brasileiro relacionados com a construção da memória no período pós-ditadura militar (cf. Santos, Teles & Teles, 2009; Teles & Safatle, 2010; e Teles 2015). O objetivo atual é rever esse caminho, em função do legado deixado em arquivos, acervos, livros e documentações disponibilizadas pela internet. Quatro iniciativas serão destacadas: a publicação do livro *Direito à memória e à verdade*, produzido pela Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos/CEMDP; o programa “Memórias Reveladas – Centro de Referência das Lutas Políticas no Brasil (1964-1985)” do Arquivo Nacional, em parceria com a Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos (SEDH); o projeto “Marcas da Memória”, vinculado ao Ministério da Justiça; e o relatório final da Comissão Nacional da Verdade (CNV).

Em 1995, dez anos após o início da abertura política e durante o mandato presidencial de Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2002), foi decretada a Lei dos Mortos e Desaparecidos (Lei 9.140/1995), reconhecendo a responsabilidade do Estado pelos desaparecimentos de presos políticos. Além disso, foi criada a Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos (CEMDP), ligada à Secretaria de Direitos Humanos⁷. A composição da Comissão foi constituída por sete membros, dentre eles um representante das Forças Armadas. Embora a Comissão tenha reconhecido formalmente que a ditadura cometeu crimes contra a humanidade, não obteve o poder de julgar aqueles que violaram os direitos humanos, impedimento que dificultou investigações mais aprofundadas sobre os crimes cometidos (cf. Teles, 2001; González, 2002). Em 2007, o livro *Direito à memória e à verdade* foi publicado, relatando o trabalho desenvolvido pela CEMPD⁸.

Ao longo dos governos petistas (2003-2016), informações obtidas pelo governo sobre violações cometidas ao longo da ditadura militar foram publicizadas. Ainda assim, o caminho de produção de dados foi constituído por conflitos. Em 2005, o governo sancionou a lei do sigilo eterno (Lei nº 11.111/ 2005), na contramão do direito à memória e do acesso a informações. Nesse mesmo ano, contudo, a Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos (SEDH) ganhou status de Ministério, dando início a diversas iniciativas. Em 2009, foi criado o programa “Memórias Reveladas – Centro

7. Duas leis ampliaram o campo de ação da CEMDP: a lei 10.536/2002 estendeu o período de responsabilidade do Estado de 1964 a 1979 para 1961 a 1988, e a lei 10.875/2002 permitiu reparação aos que cometeram suicídio para evitar tortura e prisão.

8. Brasil. Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos, Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos, 2007, https://bibliotecadigital.mdh.gov.br/jspui/bitstream/192/459/1/BRASIL_Direito_2007.pdf, consultado em 05/05/2020.

de Referência das Lutas Políticas no Brasil (1964-1985)” do Arquivo Nacional, com o objetivo de valer o direito à verdade e à memória, ao denunciar a censura, a violação dos direitos políticos, as prisões, as torturas e as mortes. Desde 2006, o governo havia solicitado a todos os ministérios o encaminhamento de acervos relacionados à atuação do Sistema Nacional de Informações (SNI) para o Arquivo Nacional. Dados foram encaminhados também de universidades, empresas públicas, delegacias, divisões de ordem política e social dos estados, Polícia Federal e também da Agência Brasileira de Inteligência (Abin), a qual mantinha custódia dos arquivos dos extintos SNI, Conselho de Segurança Nacional e Comissão Geral de Investigações⁹. Apesar do empenho de setores governamentais, os centros militares (Cenimar, Cisa, CIE) não encaminharam documentos ou informações, como também não comunicaram ter havido qualquer eliminação de documentos oficiais, o que, por lei, só poderia ser efetivado mediante a autorização do Arquivo Nacional (Lei 8.159/1991)¹⁰.

A Comissão de Anistia foi criada em 2001, pelo Ministério da Justiça (MJ), com o objetivo de promover a reparação de violações a direitos fundamentais praticadas entre 1946 e 1988. A partir de 2007, ações foram tomadas com o propósito de envolver a sociedade civil, os movimentos sociais e grupos historicamente excluídos na agenda dos direitos humanos. A Comissão de Anistia, em edições sucessivas, promoveu as “Caravanas da Anistia”, levando o processo de avaliação das petições por anistia aos locais onde ocorreram as violações. Em 2010, o MJ lançou o projeto “Marcas da Memória”, promovendo filmes, livros¹¹, peças de teatro, exposições e oficinas¹². A criação prevista do Memorial da Anistia Política do Brasil, na cidade de Belo Horizonte, nunca se concretizou.

Em 2009, o governo aprovou a implementação do Programa Nacional dos Direitos Humanos (PNDH-3)¹³, com o objetivo de defender a garantia dos direitos

9. Memórias Reveladas, Centro de Referência das Lutas Políticas no Brasil (1964-1985): <http://www.memoriasreveladas.gov.br/index.php/institucional>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

10. Ver depoimento do diretor do Arquivo Nacional, Jaime Antunes da Silva, no Seminário “Direito à Memória e à Verdade”, promovido pela Comissão de Direitos Humanos e Minorias da Câmara dos Deputados, em 2012 (Silva, 2012).

11. Ver, por exemplo, *Livro dos votos da Comissão de Anistia: verdade e reparação aos perseguidos políticos no Brasil*: <https://bibliotecadigital.mdh.gov.br/jspui/handle/192/1032>; *Caravanas da Anistia: o Brasil pede perdão*: <https://bibliotecadigital.mdh.gov.br/jspui/handle/192/1055>; e *Justiça de transição para uma transição para a Justiça*: https://www.justica.gov.br/acervo_legado/anistia/anexos/acesso_-livro-em-baixa-resolucao.pdf, consultado em 05/05/2020 (BRASIL, Ministério da Justiça, Comissão de Anistia, 2012; 2013).

12. Todas as iniciativas financiadas pelo projeto podem ser encontradas em: https://www.justica.gov.br/acervo_legado/anistia/projetos/marcas-da-memoria-i-2010, consultado em 05/05/2020.

13. http://www.dhnet.org.br/dados/pp/a_pdf/pndh3_programa_nacional_direitos_humanos_3.pdf, consultado em 05/05/2020.

humanos de forma universal, a cidadania plena e o fortalecimento de uma cultura de direitos. A possibilidade da revisão da Lei da Anistia entrou novamente em pauta e, com ela, os conflitos interministeriais. Por um lado, a SEDH e a Comissão de Anistia/MJ acatavam demandas sobre a revisão da lei, e, por outro lado, o Ministério da Defesa e a Advocacia Geral da União (AGU) defendiam o esquecimento do passado em nome da estabilidade política (cf. Santos, 2010). A Comissão Nacional da Verdade (CNV) foi criada, em caráter provisório e sem competência para encaminhar julgamentos e punições, no primeiro mandato presidencial de Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014). A Comissão enfrentou a oposição das forças armadas e de setores conservadores, a sociedade civil não participou de sua constituição, e o apoio administrativo oficial foi débil (cf. Weichert 2014, pp. 114-5; Seixas & Souza, 2015). Ainda assim, a Comissão obteve apoio de mais de uma centena de comissões em estados, municípios, universidades, sindicatos e organizações estudantis e profissionais. Uma subcomissão se formou no Congresso: a Comissão Parlamentar de Memória, Verdade e Justiça, ligada à Comissão de Direitos Humanos e Minorias (CDHM). O primeiro relatório da CNV, entregue à presidência da República em 2014, denunciou nominalmente um número maior de torturadores e elucidou casos de violação, mortes e desaparecimento de corpos. Dentre as proposições, também constava a proibição de realização de eventos oficiais em comemoração ao golpe militar, a criação de medidas relacionadas à abertura e disponibilização de arquivos, a preservação de sítios históricos ligados às violações de direitos humanos, a instalação de um Museu da Memória, e também a alteração da denominação de logradouros, vias de transporte e instituições públicas¹⁴. Povos indígenas e camponeses ficaram à margem dos processos de reparação (cf. Novais, 2015), e a proposta de criação de um museu não foi adiante. A documentação concernente às pesquisas realizadas pela CNV foi entregue ao programa “Memórias Reveladas”, do Arquivo Nacional.

Em 2016, dois anos após a divulgação do relatório da CNV, houve o *impeachment* da presidente Dilma Rousseff. Em 2017, ocorreu uma determinação do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF) para que os documentos, principalmente aqueles relacionados a julgamentos militares, fossem liberados ao público; mas a determinação, uma vez mais, não foi cumprida. O Ministério da Mulher, Família e Direitos Humanos, formado em 2019, em substituição às antigas Secretaria de Direitos Humanos, Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres e Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção de Igualdade Racial, substituiu parte dos integrantes da CEMDP, cancelou a emissão de certidões de óbito que atestavam a responsabilidade do Estado, fechou os projetos de

14. Para uma análise detalhada do relatório final da Comissão Nacional da Verdade, com seus avanços e limites, ver, entre outros, Weichert, 2014.

criação de memoriais e museus, e tem encaminhado medidas contrárias às denúncias das violações aos direitos humanos.

Lugar da memória – o Deops/SP

Objetos e sítios históricos são portadores de uma lembrança que pode ser reinterpretada por diversas gerações, permitindo que a memória individual e a memória do grupo responsáveis por sua criação tenham desdobramentos no tempo. O termo “lugares da memória” ficou conhecido a partir das análises de objetos e lugares, ou seja, de artefatos simbólicos, presentes na formação da nação francesa (cf. Nora, 1984). Em um sentido próximo, “lugares da memória” podem ser definidos como componentes importantes da memória cultural, a qual difere da memória comunicativa – que é partilhada entre grupos por meio da interação de seus componentes – pela maior capacidade de transmissão de significados inerentes a uma tradição coletiva ao longo do tempo (cf. Assmann, 2008). Podemos dizer que esses objetos e locais têm o potencial de nos fazer lembrar, porém só o fazem se conseguimos preservá-los e retirá-los do esquecimento.

No Brasil, há um número razoável de sítios que foram ocupados pela repressão e que deveriam ser preservados¹⁵. Eles têm sido objeto de luta de diversos coletivos e entidades: diretórios estudantis, conselhos profissionais, partidos políticos diversos, Ocupa Dops/RJ¹⁶, Anistia Internacional, OAB/RJ, GTNM, Centro de Antropologia e Arqueologia Forense (Caaf)¹⁷, CEMDP, e Justiça Global. Até os dias de hoje, observamos mobilizações, audiências públicas, investigações e campanhas para a preservação de locais associados às torturas e desaparecimentos. Há algumas tentativas para que se estruture um roteiro de lugares de memória da ditadura (Núcleo Memória, 2017, pp. 38-9). Recentemente, destacam-se as investigações de arqueólogos, que identificam ossadas de desaparecidos políticos em cemitérios. O sítio clandestino “Vala de Perus”, revelado em São Paulo há trinta anos, ocultou corpos de vítimas assassinadas pela ditadura militar, dentre outros (cf. Soares & Funari, 2015, pp. 291-314). Contudo, a preservação da maior parte dos marcos simbólicos inventariados ainda não teve muito sucesso. Uma exceção ocorreu a partir do processo de tombamento do prédio que abrigou o Departamento Estadual de Ordem Política e Social do Estado de São

15. Para um levantamento destes sítios, ver a publicação da Coordenação de Direito à Memória e à Verdade (org.) da Secretaria Municipal de Direitos Humanos e Cidadania, *Memórias Resistentes, Memórias residentes: Lugares de Memória da Ditadura Civil-Militar no Município de São Paulo* (2017), o *Guia dos Lugares Difíceis de São Paulo* (Cymbalista 2019), ou, ainda, a palestra da historiadora Deborah Neves, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbyejAZFYow&t=1545s>, consultado em 26/07/2020.

16. <http://ocupa-dops.blogspot.com/>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

17. <https://www.unifesp.br/reitoria/caaf/>, consultado em 05/05/2020.

Paulo (Deops/SP), localizado no Largo General Osório, no centro da cidade de São Paulo, o qual, posteriormente, se tornou sede do Memorial da Resistência.

O Deops foi criado em 1924, para controlar e reprimir movimentos políticos e sociais, e fiscalizar a entrada de imigrantes. Durante a ditadura militar, a instituição foi denunciada e reconhecida pela truculência e tortura durante interrogatórios. Entre 1937 e 1983, ocupou o prédio centenário da Estrada de Ferro Sorocabana. O processo de tombamento do prédio se iniciou em 1976, quando o Deops ainda estava em funcionamento naquele local, sendo efetivado pelo Conselho de Defesa de Patrimônio Histórico, Arqueológico, Artístico e Turístico do Estado de São Paulo (CONDEPHAAT) em 1999. O tombamento ocorreu devido ao valor histórico do edifício, que fora construído no início do século XX, para ser a sede da antiga Estrada de Ferro Sorocabana (1914-1940). O prédio foi desocupado em 1997, e repassado à Secretaria de Estado da Cultura no ano seguinte. A intervenção arquitetônica, ocorrida entre 1997 e 2000, gerou inúmeras polêmicas, pois seus responsáveis não preservaram as marcas deixadas pela repressão política, como inscrições em paredes. Vários projetos foram considerados para a ocupação do prédio, entre eles a abertura de uma escola de música, de uma escola de teatro e de um museu de artes populares, sem que fossem efetivados. Em 1999, contudo, duas atividades marcaram o prédio: a exposição *Anistia 20 Anos*, sobre a luta pela anistia, produzida com o apoio do Arquivo Público/SP, e a peça de teatro *Lembrar é resistir*, com texto de Izaías Almada e Anely Alvarez, que teve o apoio das Secretarias estaduais de Cultura e de Justiça (cf. Menezes & Neves, 2009, pp. 29-38).

As memórias traumáticas são aquelas que trazem sofrimento aos que passaram por violência e maus-tratos contra seus corpos e mentes, e muito se tem escrito sobre formas de musealização nestes casos, principalmente após os anos 1980 (cf. Seligmann-Silva, 2000; Hartman, 2000; Olick, 2007; Sodaro, 2019). O trauma individual deixa marcas e retorna independentemente do desejo. Sociedades são heterogêneas e respondem às experiências traumáticas de diferentes maneiras. Pactos políticos, caminhos e alianças são continuamente refeitos, e novas gerações surgem ao longo do tempo. A encenação de um passado sofrido, embora extremamente importante para alguns, pode não ter significado para muitos outros que não tiveram ligações pessoais com aquele passado, e dele sentem-se distanciados. Os lugares da memória, quando bem preservados, têm um papel importante na luta contra o esquecimento, pois há imagens e sentimentos associados ao local que perduram. O impacto causado por alguns locais pode ser associado à sensação de inacessibilidade à dor que foi outrora lá vivenciada. O desejo de voltar ao local que remete às barbáries do passado, para quem não vivenciou o trauma, surge da procura de uma resposta ao que não se faz compreensível (cf. Assmann, 2011, pp. 348-366).

Memorial da Resistência e Núcleo de Preservação da Memória Política

Museus, se bem construídos e direcionados, são capazes de captar a atenção dos visitantes e criar novas experiências a partir de suas exposições. A materialidade de sítios históricos e dos acervos que os compõem tem o potencial de sensibilizar o público sobre os seus múltiplos significados. Museus que lidam com histórias traumáticas não se restringem a serem informativos: procuram proporcionar um encontro sensorial com o passado, a fim de aumentar a intensidade e a qualidade da compreensão sobre ele. Técnicas são utilizadas pela Museologia com o intuito de veicular a História através dos sentidos, através do que chamam memória experiencial. Os processos comunicativos multiplicam-se para alcançar públicos diferentes, sendo capazes de sensibilizar crianças, jovens, adultos, velhos, bem como curiosos, políticos, famílias, grupos de amigos, vizinhos, especialistas e também os que tiveram relações próximas com o sofrimento perpetrado (cf. Sodaro, 2019; Assman, 2011, pp. 348-366). O conhecimento afetivo visa a aproximar passado e presente e proporcionar a construção de juízos de valor. Os museus contam ainda a seu favor com as práticas educativas junto ao público mais jovem, fortalecendo a memória procedural, que envolve o hábito e as práticas não reflexivas.

Nesse contexto, o Memorial da Resistência, instalado no prédio que foi sede do Deops/SP, representa uma grande conquista, pois é o único museu aberto ao público no país a se voltar para a denúncia de violações de direitos humanos durante a ditadura. Até chegar à responsabilidade da Pinacoteca, o projeto percorreu um longo caminho. Em 2002, foram propostos para ocupação do prédio um museu de arte popular e um museu do cárcere, este último substituído pelo “Memorial da Liberdade” e administrado pelo Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo. O Memorial ocupou as antigas celas do andar térreo, foi responsável por exposições e disponibilizou computadores para a consulta da documentação do Deops, que fora digitalizada a partir do Projeto Integrado (Proin), atividade desenvolvida pela parceria entre o Arquivo do Estado e a Universidade de São Paulo¹⁸. Em 2006, a exposição *Vozes Silenciadas – Fragmentos da Memória* ocupou o Memorial da Liberdade, apresentando dez anos de pesquisa do Proin (Neves, 2014, p. 178).

O museu de arte popular não foi adiante, e seu espaço foi transferido para a Pinacoteca do Estado (Pina), que é um dos museus de artes visuais mais importantes do país, e que ocupa a antiga sede do Liceu de Artes e Ofícios, edifício este projetado no final do século XIX, e próximo ao prédio centenário do antigo Deops. A Pina, como diversas outras instituições culturais em São Paulo, é gerida por uma organização

18. <http://www.usp.br/proin/home/index.php>, consultado em 26/07/2020.

social (os), ou seja, por uma instituição privada sem fins lucrativos que atua em conjunto com a Secretaria de Cultura do Estado de São Paulo. Com a transferência do Arquivo Público para a Casa Civil, em 2007, também o Memorial da Liberdade passou a ser gerenciado pela Pinacoteca. O diretor, Marcelo Mattos Araújo, formou uma equipe interdisciplinar de trabalho e mostrou-se sensível às demandas de um grupo de ex-presos políticos que se organizava no “Fórum Permanente dos ex-Presos e Perseguidos Políticos do Estado de São Paulo”¹⁹. Esse grupo havia se formado em 2001, com o objetivo de auxiliar presos políticos em suas demandas por reparação econômica junto ao governo. Reivindicava, desde a década anterior, junto com outras entidades, o processo de tombamento e ocupação do prédio do Deops. A possibilidade de trabalho conjunto com os profissionais do museu proporcionou uma nova dinâmica para ambos.

Interessante observar que os membros do Fórum, apesar de serem testemunhas das violações cometidas, defenderam uma abordagem mais distanciada ao passado, procurando dar um caráter informativo ao novo museu, tal como estava sendo proposto pela equipe interdisciplinar²⁰. Uma das demandas do grupo foi a mudança do nome, uma vez que, para eles, a denominação “Memorial da Liberdade” era insólita e distante da realidade. A nova proposta elegeu a palavra “verdade” num novo direcionamento para o memorial. As exposições se afastaram de representações traumáticas – como salas com instrumentos de tortura e evocações ao sofrimento – e também de políticas partidárias. Maurice Politi, um dos membros do Fórum que colaborou com o projeto do novo museu, defendeu que ali fosse o local onde se contasse História, mas que fosse agradável de ser visitado (cf. Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo, 2018, pp. 70-103). Podemos entender a proposta como sendo fruto do desejo de construção de narrativas capazes de se comunicar com um público mais amplo e diferenciado, que, embora não apresentasse identidade com o tema, pudesse por ele ser envolvido²¹.

O Memorial da Resistência foi inaugurado em 2009, com a missão de se voltar para as memórias da resistência e da repressão política do período republicano, de contribuir para a reflexão crítica da História contemporânea e para a valorização dos princípios democráticos, do exercício da cidadania e da conscientização sobre

19. Para a história de criação do Memorial, ver Araújo & Bruno 2009; Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo, 2018; e a página na internet, disponível em <http://www.memorialdaresistencia.org.br/memorial/>, consultado em 26/07/2020.

20. Depoimentos sobre a criação do projeto podem ser encontrados em *Memorial da Resistência, 10 anos: Presente! (Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo 2018)*. Sobre a criação do projeto museográfico, ver depoimento de Cristina Bruno na mesma publicação (63-71).

21. Cf. entrevista realizada com Oswaldo Santos Jr. e Maurice Politi, diretores do Núcleo Memória, em 15/07/2019.

os direitos humanos (Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo, 2018, pp. 152-153).

A exposição de longa duração é composta por módulos que apresentam uma narrativa de eventos da repressão e da resistência, ao longo da República, através de uma linha do tempo; antigas celas e espaços com equipamentos multimídia, disponibilizando documentos provenientes do antigo Deops/SP ao público. A equipe interdisciplinar optou por manter uma narrativa informativa e não utilizar o potencial de sensibilização que os atuais museus têm em mãos. Mesmo assim, as antigas celas continuam a ser os locais mais procurados. O programa museológico envolve também encontros regulares entre ex-presos políticos e público, e pesquisa na identificação, inventário e musealização dos lugares da memória da resistência e da repressão política do estado de São Paulo. Há, ainda, as ações educativas e culturais. A instituição, que ocupa uma área pequena do complexo Pinacoteca, encontra-se atualmente em décimo segundo lugar no *ranking* de visitação do Estado, recebendo cerca de 80 mil visitantes por ano, e superando a visitação das demais exposições do museu de artes.

Após participação no projeto de criação do Memorial da Resistência, alguns membros do Fórum fundaram o Núcleo de Preservação da Memória Política (Núcleo Memória) em 2008, tendo como um de seus diretores Maurice Politi, ex-presos político. Os objetivos do Núcleo são próximos ao do Memorial, ou seja, promover ações de preservação da memória das violações de direitos humanos ocorridas no Brasil. Em 2010, o Núcleo Memória, em mais uma atividade, solicitou o tombamento do DOI-Codi/SP. O prédio da rua Tutoia, nº 921, é sinônimo de terror para uma geração. Lá o Exército estabeleceu um centro que operava clandestinamente, Operação Bandeirantes (Oban), e que foi institucionalizado. Militares e civis atuaram em interrogatórios violentos, nos quais morreram dezenas de militantes submetidos a torturas físicas e psicológicas. Falsos laudos e certidões de óbito ocultavam a forma pela qual os presos eram executados (cf. Politi, Santos Junior & Salles, 2017, p. 35). O prédio foi tombado em 2014, mas ainda é ocupado por uma delegacia de polícia. Como não conseguiram tornar o antigo lugar da repressão em sítio histórico, o Núcleo promove atividades no local. Diversas entidades lá realizam todo 1º de abril, dia do golpe militar, o ato “Ditadura Nunca Mais”, procurando sensibilizar autoridades e população para a importância de construção de um memorial no local. Outra frente de trabalho do Núcleo é a de transformar o prédio da Auditoria Militar em lugar de memória. A edificação foi cedida para a construção do Memorial da Luta pela Justiça (MLPJ), projeto que ainda não foi implementado. Desde 2013, o Núcleo Memória e a OAB/SP promovem uma atividade no local. O Núcleo realiza também cursos e debates regulares sobre lugares da memória e direitos humanos no Brasil, alguns deles alcançando aproximadamente quinhentas visualizações por

apresentação²². É um trabalho constante, fundamental, mas ainda com um público limitado. O curso sobre ditadura militar promovido recentemente pelo jornal *Folha de S.Paulo*, por exemplo, teve, em média, 130 mil acessos²³.

As memórias são falhas, influenciáveis e subjetivas, e, ainda assim, são cada vez mais importantes porque trazem do passado eventos e significados suscetíveis à reinterpretação, mesmo na época em que novas tecnologias tornaram quase infinitas as possibilidades de formação de arquivos. Em seu depoimento sobre a passagem no antigo prédio do Deops/SP, Politi observa que a única lembrança que tem do prédio é a da sala de interrogatórios, embora lá houvesse inúmeras salas (cf. Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo, 2018, p. 105). Entretanto, através de sua memória, é capaz de reconstituir a *via crucis* dos presos políticos, que, nos anos de chumbo, passava por quatro locais: DOI-Codi, Deops, Presídio Tiradentes e Auditoria Militar. Os presos eram torturados inicialmente no DOI-Codi, espaço invisível pois não admitia oficialmente a detenção. Em seguida, os presos – já reconhecidos oficialmente – eram levados para o Deops, onde novos interrogatórios eram realizados com tortura. De lá, passavam ao Presídio Tiradentes e aguardavam o julgamento. Por último eram julgados pelas auditorias militares, que condenavam todos aqueles que eram considerados uma ameaça à ordem política, procurando dar legitimidade às prisões arbitrárias daqueles que sobreviviam aos interrogatórios.

Conclusão

Ao longo deste artigo analisamos a formação de arquivos, a preservação de sítios da memória e a criação de museus relacionados às disputas e conflitos na construção da memória das perseguições, torturas e assassinatos do período da ditadura civil-militar. O arquivo é um suporte da memória de grande complexidade, pois, apesar de ser resultado de processos seletivos e de ser um instrumento de poder, ele guarda excesso de resíduos do passado que poderão ser ou não disputados enquanto fontes de legitimação (cf. Assman, 2008). Sítios históricos são lugares associados a acontecimentos do passado que têm a capacidade de provocar a lembrança, tornando-se um forte obstáculo ao esquecimento (cf. Nora, 1984). O terceiro suporte da memória analisado são os museus, instituições diretamente ligadas à cultura de entretenimento, mas também ao sistema educacional. Muitas das novas instituições têm se voltado para as memórias de eventos traumáticos, formando redes, associando-se a movi-

22. NÚCLEO MEMÓRIA. Curso *Lugares de Memória e Direitos Humanos no Brasil*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keF235YZxfA>, consultado em 26/07/2020.

23. Curso *O Que Foi a Ditadura*: <https://oquefoiaditadura.folha.uol.com.br>, consultado em 26/07/2020.

mentos sociais e promovendo valores ligados à cidadania e ao direito à diferença²⁴. Esta é uma nova forma de memória pública cultural, que procura proporcionar experiências que estreitem o distanciamento histórico e permitam aprendizados políticos (cf. Landsberg, 2004; Sodaro, 2019).

Como vimos, ainda durante o período ditatorial, organizações civis se organizaram denunciando as torturas, assassinatos e ocultamento de corpos. Essas denúncias foram veiculadas por documentos e publicações que se encontram organizadas em arquivos. No período subsequente, governos civis foram responsáveis por diversas iniciativas no sentido de aprofundar as investigações sobre as violações ocorridas, e também de formar um aparato institucional em prol da memória, verdade e justiça. Os desafios e obstáculos foram expressivos, apesar da volumosa documentação obtida comprovando violações de direitos de todos os tipos. Entretanto, as forças militares não só mantiveram sua própria versão do passado²⁵, como não disponibilizaram documentos da repressão política, o que obstruiu investigações e, conseqüentemente, a atribuição de responsabilidade ao Estado, o que indica fragilidade das instituições democráticas (cf. Jelin, 1994, pp. 48-51).

Um fato ocorrido em 2018 merece ser mencionado. Um pesquisador brasileiro encontrou, quase por acaso, pois não procurava pelo documento em questão, um memorando da Agência Central de Inteligência (CIA) dos Estados Unidos, disponível em *site* público, no qual se lê o aval dos generais Ernesto Geisel e João Baptista Figueiredo ao cumprimento de execuções sumárias de presos políticos. O documento obteve imensa repercussão no Brasil, pois a “descoberta” evidenciou os limites inerentes à pesquisa do período a partir de fontes internas (Gurovitz, 2018).

Os arquivos são formados por especialistas e, embora estejam abertos à pesquisa, não são acessados pelo grande público, pois requerem um conhecimento especializado. Outros suportes da memória, contudo, fazem essa mediação. Celas, aparatos de tortura, prédios, monumentos e mesmo as lápides em cemitérios nos fazem lembrar que indivíduos foram presos sem processo, torturados, assassinados e que seus corpos foram ocultados ou destruídos. Esses locais, pontos de referência do vivido, conseguem dar legitimidade a uma narrativa, tarefa cada vez mais difícil no mundo da pluralização de vozes. Eles têm sido reivindicados prioritariamente por familiares

24. Ver, por exemplo, a Coalização Internacional de Sítios de Consciência, uma rede mundial formada em 1999 que conecta sítios históricos, museus, e memoriais que trabalham com memória em consonância com as lutas atuais em defesa dos direitos humanos. *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*. Disponível em: <https://www.sitesofconscience.org/en/who-we-are/about-us/>, consultado em 15/07/2020.

25. Ver, por exemplo, as denúncias realizadas no Seminário Direito à Memória e à Verdade da Câmara dos Deputados, em 2012, sobre a publicação de nome Orvil (COMISSÃO DE DIREITOS HUMANOS E MINORIAS DA CÂMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2012).

dos mortos e desaparecidos e por ex-presos políticos, grupo social cuja luta contra o esquecimento é incessante. Reivindicam o direito milenar de sepultar seus entes queridos. O fato de terem sentido o peso da repressão diretamente faz com que sejam testemunhos diretos e indiretos do passado e que sejam reconhecidos como comunidade política e moral (Cf. Azevedo, 2018). Dentre os prédios utilizados pela repressão política, apenas o Deops/SP foi tombado; entretanto, não o foi pelas marcas da dor, ou pelo desejo de superação de traumas passados, e sim por ser um prédio centenário e estar vinculado a um projeto de revitalização urbana.

Museus têm procurado um público maior e diversificado a partir de dispositivos, que se estendem desde encenações, passando por expressões artísticas, imagéticas e sensoriais, até o uso mais recente das novas tecnologias de informação. Diferentemente de outros países da América Latina, temos um único museu vinculado ao tema “memória, verdade e justiça”, o Memorial da Resistência²⁶. Diversas iniciativas importantes não conseguiram o apoio necessário, como os projetos do Memorial da Anistia, em Belo Horizonte, e do Memorial da Luta pela Justiça, em São Paulo. No Brasil, apenas duas instituições brasileiras estão voltadas diretamente para a denúncia da violência do Estado no período militar: o Memorial da Resistência e o Núcleo Memória. Os museus de História de caráter nacional, como o Museu da República ou o Museu Histórico Nacional, pouca ou nenhuma informação proporcionam sobre o período.

Além de terem sido implementadas com limites, temos ainda a considerar o alcance de políticas públicas em um país em que a desigualdade social e econômica é imensa, sendo o acesso à educação e a bens culturais seletivo e diferenciado. Mesmo no ensino fundamental, obrigatório, se estudantes não são portadores de aptidões socialmente requeridas pelo sistema escolar, eles enfrentam o fracasso e a exclusão (Bourdieu, 2010). Outra questão a ser considerada é que memórias traumáticas devido às violações de direitos humanos fazem parte da vida cotidiana de uma parcela considerável da população brasileira. Não é necessário levantarmos as denúncias de maus-tratos, tortura e morte sofridos por jovens negros que habitam periferias. Prisões estão associadas à barbárie. As taxas de agressões e assassinato de mulheres e da população LGBTs são enormes. O desrespeito às leis que garantem condições de sobrevivência aos povos indígenas e a preservação do meio ambiente só aumenta. A exposição de uma situação de dor e sentimento tem recepções muito diversas, depende de como as pessoas irão associar suas experiências pessoais ao que estão

26. Sobre instituições que trabalham na recuperação e construção da memória de violações aos direitos humanos em países da América Latina e do Caribe, ver <http://sitiosdememoria.org/pt/>, consultado em 15/07/2019.

assistindo. Para os que não têm ligação pessoal com o que está sendo apresentado, as exposições serão informativas; mas, para aqueles que são violentados cotidianamente, a exposição da violência como coisa do passado pode soar como ironia, provocação ou mesmo como uma nova forma de violência. Para dificultar ainda mais o trabalho da memória, há de ser considerada a falta de controle sobre novas tecnologias de comunicação, as quais, apesar de todo o potencial de disseminação de informações, têm provocado sectarismo e intolerância a partir das redes sociais e das chamadas *fake news*.

Procuramos mostrar neste artigo a dinâmica entre movimentos sociais, avanços da agenda “Memória, Verdade e Justiça” e a formação de suportes desta memória. Neste campo, os testemunhos têm sido essenciais, a produção acadêmica sobre o tema é extensa e incisiva, e a arte tem propiciado novas experiências sobre temas de difícil narrativa. Certamente esta é uma pauta que precisa enfrentar desafios e obter o apoio de um público maior para alcançar maior estabilidade social. Sítios históricos e instituições estão ameaçados, apesar de serem capazes de armazenar informações que ultrapassam o uso imediato e que podem ser disponibilizadas e reinterpretadas por várias gerações. A integridade dos sítios, prédios, documentos, objetos e imagens que guardam informações sobre a ditadura militar precisa ser defendida como parte de políticas mais amplas, pois o dever da memória pode trazer aprendizados e evitar repetições.

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Resumo*Memória e ditadura militar: Lembrando as violações de direitos humanos*

Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar a formação de arquivos, a preservação de sítios da memória e a criação de museus relacionados com a construção da memória das violações de direitos humanos no período da ditadura civil-militar. Em sociedades contemporâneas, em que o ritmo da vida e as novas tecnologias dificultam os encontros e permanências, já não falamos tanto de memória comunitária ou do grupo, mas, sim, de memórias culturais, que são exteriorizadas e armazenadas a partir de meios ou suportes. Embora o trabalho da memória nem sempre tenha a capacidade de evitar a repetição de atrocidades, a necessidade que temos dele se impõe quando ameaças de negacionismo e falsificações históricas se fortalecem. As fontes de dados utilizadas estão presentes em documentos produzidos por organizações governamentais e da sociedade civil, meios de comunicação, sítios eletrônicos, instituições visitadas, bem como em algumas entrevistas realizadas. Palavras-chave: Memória; Ditadura militar; Arquivo; Lugar de memória; Museu.

Abstract*Memory and military dictatorship: Remembering human rights violations*

This article aims to analyze the formation of archives, the preservation of memory sites and the creation of museums related to the construction of the memory of human rights violations during the period of the civil-military dictatorship. In contemporary societies, where the rhythm of life and new technologies make meetings and traditions difficult, we no longer speak so much about community or group memory, but rather about cultural memory, which are externalized and stored through media. Although memory work does not always have the capacity to prevent the repetition of atrocities, the need for it is imposed when threats of denials and historical falsifications are strengthened. The data sources used are present in documents produced by government and civil society organizations, media, websites, institutions visited, as well as in some interviews. Keywords: Memory; Military dictatorship; Archive; Place of memory; Museum.

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O fim da velha divisão? Público e privado na era da internet

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Central para o entendimento do mundo social, a separação entre uma esfera pública e outra privada é pressuposta em muitas de nossas instituições e em nosso ordenamento jurídico. Mas a localização da fronteira entre as duas esferas é disputada: é uma localização culturalmente formada, sensível ao contexto histórico e que se transforma de acordo com o discurso que é mobilizado. A distinção, por vezes, é entre o que é político e o que não é político; por outras, entre o que é do governo e o que é do mercado ou até mesmo o que está dentro ou fora das portas de casa. Sistematizando diferentes entendimentos da dicotomia, Jeff Weintraub destaca dois critérios principais: “o que está escondido *versus* o que se encontra aberto, revelado ou acessível” e “o que é individual *versus* o que é coletivo, ou afeta o interesse de uma coletividade de indivíduos” (Weintraub, 1997, p. 5). A publicidade, assim, é uma questão de visibilidade ou de abrangência do interesse. Os dois critérios não são estanques entre si; a visibilidade do que é público é condição para que todos possam ao menos acompanhar aquilo que lhes diz respeito, constatação que funda o “princípio transcendental da publicidade” de Kant ([1786] 1995, p. 165). Mas os critérios tampouco se sobrepõem perfeitamente. Estabelecimentos comerciais privados precisam atender ao público; decisões privadas de investimento têm impacto coletivo, isto é, público; interações pessoais que ocorrem em ruas, praças ou outros espaços públicos podem só dizer respeito aos participantes, isto é, são privadas, ao

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passo que as violências que ocorrem em espaços privados exigem a intervenção do poder público.

A despeito dessa zona cinzenta, a tradição liberal vê a separação entre público e privado como uma garantia fundamental contra a tirania. Ela seria a precondição para o estabelecimento de uma zona de liberdade pessoal, invulnerável ao arbítrio estatal. Outras correntes de pensamento a denunciam como nociva, como fizeram e ainda fazem, de diferentes maneiras, o movimento operário, o movimento feminista e o movimento ambientalista. O “privado” aparece, então, como uma esfera em que as desigualdades se reproduzem sem questionamento e abusos de poder podem ser cometidos, ao abrigo do controle da coletividade. Isso não leva necessariamente à ideia de abolição da fronteira (cf. Cohen, 1997), mas a uma perspectiva mais crítica e a maior sensibilidade a seus problemas.

Longe de convergir para um consenso, a compreensão de como a divisão público/privado se configura e qual o valor a ser atribuído a ela parece cada vez mais imersa em polêmica. Ainda assim, ela é atuante, no mundo e nas representações que fazemos dele.

A internet e outras tecnologias, cujo uso ela potencializa, estão impondo desafios crescentes à possibilidade de operar com um modelo de duas esferas separadas. Saudada pela literatura como uma nova e potente esfera pública, a internet foi apropriada pela maior parte das pessoas como um anexo de seus espaços privados. Diante de um contexto de ambiguidade e de baixa congruência entre promessas iniciais e usos efetivos socialmente referendados, “as pesquisas acadêmicas sobre a internet como uma esfera pública apontam para a conclusão de que as tecnologias digitais criam um espaço público, mas não necessariamente conformam uma esfera pública” (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 236). A diferença, explica a autora, é que o espaço público amplia a discussão, ao passo que a esfera pública deve ampliar a democracia (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 236).

A resposta é pouco convincente, ancorada em uma divisão conceitual obscura e que remonta a uma normatividade implícita e questionável. Ela serve, sobretudo, para demonstrar como o encontro do público e privado nos ambientes virtuais não permite adaptação fácil aos modelos preexistentes. Entre as muitas questões que surgem desse encontro inesperado, cinco são importantes para a investigação proposta neste *paper*.

(1) A homologia entre localização espacial e acesso a uma ou outra esfera, que nunca foi perfeita, está cada vez menos sustentável. A interação com o “público” se dá a partir de espaços “privados”, que portanto funcionam menos como espaços de efetiva privacidade. É a partir da tela individual que ocorrem as principais trocas na rede, seja em espaços considerados como públicos, isto é, potencialmente acessíveis

a todos, como *blogs* ou redes sociais, seja em comunicações supostamente privadas, como troca de e-mails. Com isso a separação das esferas se torna opaca. O fator territorial se dissolve, dado que, com a internet, cada pessoa pode estar em sua casa e, a partir dela, falar para um público amplo e desconhecido. Na realidade, a localização espacial pouco importa, desde que haja conexão à rede.

(2) A familiaridade com o espaço físico “privado” e com as pessoas do círculo próximo, com quem se dá a interlocução cotidiana, leva a que as pessoas muitas vezes não se deem conta do alcance potencial de suas mensagens. Conversas em redes sociais, entendidas como privadas, podem vir a público, causam constrangimentos pessoais e profissionais e por vezes têm consequências importantes. Soma-se a isso a “cultura do compartilhamento” (Lyon, 2017) promovida pelas redes, que leva as pessoas a divulgarem suas opiniões, interesses, posições políticas, orientação sexual, hábitos de consumo e relações afetivas como forma de afirmação da própria identidade. Intimidade e identidade, assim, configuram-se como antitéticas; a identidade se estabelece por meio da exposição. Uma exposição, na verdade, performativa, em que a identidade apenas potencial é simulada e, no mesmo movimento, efetivada por sua presença na rede (cf. Bruno, 2008).

(3) Há uma transição sem solução de continuidade da comunicação privada para a exposição pública. Da divulgação de imagens íntimas sem consentimento às gravações ocultas de políticos e funcionários públicos, o risco de publicização indesejada está presente para todos. O instrumento para registro audiovisual se encontra no bolso das pessoas, em aparelhos celulares cada vez mais potentes. Comentários privados que, caso não fossem gravados, cairiam no esquecimento podem ser resgatados a qualquer momento e gerar graves repercussões. Aparentemente ninguém mais está imune a uma exposição indesejada na internet, e o fato de que o compartilhamento das informações ocorre em uma velocidade “viral” possibilita que a exposição se dê de forma descoordenada e fora de controle.

(4) A própria exposição pública perde seu contexto: ela pode ser reproduzida para outra audiência, em outro momento. É uma experiência à qual hoje todos são suscetíveis, dos particulares flagrados pelas câmaras do *Google Street View* aos políticos cujos discursos veiculados no *YouTube* atingem plateias inesperadas. São duas desconexões sobrepostas. Primeiro, o alcance potencial imediato das mensagens ultrapassa, e muito, a proximidade física, isto é, a presença e a fala podem alcançar quem não está lá. Além disso, como todas as informações são registradas e guardadas em dispositivos digitais com capacidade de armazenamento cada vez maior, não se trata apenas desse alcance imediato. A informação armazenada é resgatável em algum momento indeterminado do futuro; logo, o descompasso entre o ambiente imaginado da ação e aquele em que ocorre da exposição não é apenas espacial, mas também temporal.

(5) Por fim, mas não menos importante, a noção de privacidade fica em suspenso diante das técnicas de vigilância onipresentes. Estados e corporações rastreiam uma grande parcela das trocas comunicativas *on-line*, incluindo aquelas que seriam privadas (e-mails, *chats*, ligações de voz), o que, no limite, torna obsoleta a ideia de “privado” como aquilo que está imune à supervisão de terceiros. O acesso aos dados privados promove um conhecimento amplo e detalhado sobre o comportamento do público em geral, de segmentos deles e de cada indivíduo isoladamente. Por vezes, a inteligência artificial por trás das sugestões *on-line* parece conhecer as preferências das pessoas melhor do que elas próprias. As consequências políticas diretas desse fenômeno foram expostas no escândalo gerado pela atuação da *Cambridge Analytica*, consultoria de *big data*, nas eleições presidenciais estadunidenses de 2016. Mas as consequências políticas de um direcionamento cada vez maior da ação das pessoas em sociedade para o consumo e para a satisfação das necessidades geradas pela publicidade comercial, embora talvez menos evidentes, não são menos profundas.

Internet, público e privado

Se a internet um dia já foi um vasto campo aberto à exploração, ou uma esfera pública interconectada (Benkler, 2006), com o passar do tempo as grandes corporações adquiriram os principais terrenos disponíveis, centralizaram todo o tráfego, passando a controlar o fluxo de informações, criando verdadeiros “jardins murados” (Dantas, 2010). Na última década observou-se a passagem do acesso à internet dos computadores pessoais aos dispositivos móveis, primeiramente com os *smartphones* e mais recentemente com objetos inteligentes e a internet das coisas. Somada a isso, multiplicou-se a capacidade de armazenamento de informações. Equipamentos relativamente pequenos e baratos são hoje capazes de guardar quantidades espantosas de informação, o que possibilitou o surgimento do fenômeno da *big data*, termo que se refere ao volume, processamento e cruzamento de dados gerados por dispositivos digitais.

A internet é pública no sentido de que tudo é registrado, mas as pessoas conduzem nesse ambiente atividades de caráter privado, como, por exemplo, a troca de correio eletrônico e conversas particulares, entre outras atividades sociais. Enquanto o correio convencional evoluiu sob a égide do princípio do sigilo postal, a correspondência eletrônica é monitorada pelas empresas, ostensivamente para gerar publicidade comercial personalizada para as pessoas. A despeito da diferença de meios – papel, envelope e carteiro de um lado, teclado, tela e fibra óptica do outro –, correio convencional e correio eletrônico cumprem exatamente o mesmo propósito. O fato de que o sigilo das mensagens, que no ordenamento liberal é imprescindível para o

primeiro, seja dispensado quase sem debate no caso do segundo revela o declínio da noção até agora dominante de privacidade.

A crescente opacidade dos limites entre o que é público e o que é privado ocorre não apenas devido ao *design* das tecnologias e de seus algoritmos, feitos para registrar as informações, como também pela própria cultura do compartilhamento que se conforma com a eclosão do fenômeno das redes sociais. A autoexposição não se dá apenas em fotografias pessoais (*selfies*), mas também na divulgação de informações sobre o local em que se está (geolocalização) e, sobretudo, na exposição de preferências.

Em outras palavras, na internet são realizadas atividades políticas, econômicas, culturais, pessoais, dentre outras, que se caracterizam por “um espaço híbrido que ofusca o que é público e o que é privado, o que é cívico ou baseado em consumo, o que é coletivo e o que é pessoal” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 23). Essa esfera virtual é caracterizada pelo acesso à informação, reciprocidade de comunicação e a comercialização de espaço *on-line* (Papacharissi, 2009). Além desses atributos, a forma de expressão em mídias digitais tem uma natureza calcada na “personalização, ou seja, a capacidade de organizar informações com base em uma ordem subjetiva de importância determinada pelos sujeitos” (*Idem*, p. 237).

É importante, aqui, marcar a diferença entre os usos potenciais da internet, abertos por suas características técnicas, e o uso historicamente construído, que seleciona algumas das potencialidades e adormece outras. Nas primeiras décadas do século passado, Bertolt Brecht ([1927-32] 2003) julgava que o rádio seria um instrumento de debate livre e amplo de ideias, já que cada pessoa disporia de um transmissor em sua própria casa e por meio dele falaria para o mundo. Mas o radioamadorismo nunca passou de um *hobby* de poucos, e o rádio tornou-se um meio de massa em que a separação entre emissores e receptores é estrita. Com as novas tecnologias, o resultado é menos inequívoco, mas ainda assim é possível perceber, com clareza, que a efetivação de suas virtualidades emancipatórias não é a prioridade da indústria.

No momento em que a internet emergiu, gerou uma onda de esperança em utopistas de diferentes matizes – anarcocapitalistas, radicais de esquerda, deliberacionistas. Para uns, ela seria o “vírus assassino do Estado” (Frezza, 1995); para outros, a promessa de uma auto-organização tecnologicamente mediada (Lévy, 1994). Mas o plano dos desenvolvedores da tecnologia, nos laboratórios das grandes universidades da América do Norte e nas empresas do Vale do Silício, sempre foi outro. Tratava-se de gerar não uma ágora, mas um grande mercado virtual. Muito mais do que um instrumento de autoexpressão, que dirá de organização coletiva autônoma, a internet deveria ser um instrumento de consumo. Já nos anos 1990, livros destinados ao grande público, escritos por alguns dos principais nomes da “revolução” da microinformática, apontavam sem rodeios essa direção (Gates, 1995; Negroponte,

[1995] 1997; Dertouzos, 1997). E, para recuperar a velha expressão de Maquiavel, eles eram, ao contrário dos utopistas, os “profetas armados”, aqueles que dispunham dos meios para implementar suas previsões na realidade (cf. Miguel, 2000).

É fácil perceber hoje que as características da esfera virtual listadas por Papacharissi, citadas acima, são realizadas muito desigualmente. O acesso à informação é estratificado já a partir da posse diferenciada das ferramentas básicas, tanto cognitivas quanto materiais – grau de alfabetização e domínio da *língua franca* que concentra boa parte do conteúdo da internet (o inglês), velocidade da conexão disponível. E a reciprocidade da comunicação é limitada pela desigualdade de visibilidade dos diferentes espaços na *web*, já que um *blog* obscuro ou um perfil pessoal pouco frequentado não se comparam a um portal de notícias da mídia corporativa ou a uma página turbinada por publicidade. A internet abre a possibilidade de uma eventual subversão dessas hierarquias, nem sempre desejada pelos emissores, o que gera vários dos desdobramentos discutidos neste artigo. Mas isso é a exceção, não a regra. Para a esmagadora maioria das trocas comunicacionais – e, sobretudo, no que se refere à capacidade de influenciar no debate público – permanece uma situação em que a assimetria vigora. Alguns dos *gatekeepers* tradicionais, em particular o jornalismo, enfrentam problemas para se adaptarem à nova situação e reclamam dos novos competidores. Mas isso não indica o fim da desigualdade, e sim novas maneiras pelas quais ela se efetiva. Indivíduos e grupos carentes de poder econômico largam em severa desvantagem em relação àqueles que podem alavancar suas mensagens por meio de publicidade ou robôs. Um simples exemplo da assimetria do acesso é a prática do *zero rating* – em que as operadoras de telefonia móvel liberam o uso “gratuito” e “ilimitado” de determinados aplicativos em detrimento de outros. A franquia gratuita do *Facebook* e do *WhatsApp* para os mais de 60 milhões de usuários da operadora Claro, apenas no Brasil, cria a ilusão de que a internet se resume a esses aplicativos.

Assim, a experiência dominante dos usuários da internet é a de uma interação que ocorre a partir de espaços privados, mas em um ambiente que é ao mesmo tempo público e dominado pela lógica do capitalismo. Sem entrar na discussão sobre a vigência ou não de uma nova fase, “informacional”, da economia capitalista, é possível apontar que os dados pessoais se tornam um bem valioso, na medida em que quem os controla ganha vantagem na concorrência pelo acesso aos consumidores – de mercadorias, de serviços ou de discursos políticos. A extração desses dados torna-se, assim, fundamental para a lucratividade das empresas de tecnologia, ao mesmo tempo que mantém, para seus usuários, a ilusão de que fornece serviços de forma “gratuita”.

Um ponto adicional precisa ser incluído no cenário. A internet surgiu como um território aberto, tendendo para o caótico, em que uma miríade de páginas e portais disputavam a atenção dos usuários. Hoje, o grosso do fluxo é controlado pelos

mecanismos de busca (um mercado quase monopolizado pelo *Google*) e pelas redes sociais, que medeiam as interações entre as pessoas, enquadram-nas em modelos predeterminados e estabelecem os limites do que é ou não permitido: os “jardins murados” de que fala a literatura sobre o tema.

Essa breve descrição deixa claro que a *world wide web* não é apenas uma nova ferramenta para viabilizar antigas práticas sociais, mas as reconfigura, já a partir da própria produção das identidades. Nela, mesclam-se informações públicas e privadas – e surge um mercado informacional de dados pessoais, que rapidamente se torna central na reprodução da economia capitalista e coloca em risco o entendimento liberal sobre privacidade. A internet também possibilita novas formas de articulação política e de manifestação de opinião; a fronteira entre expressão privada e declaração pública se desvanece.

Um exemplo, ocorrido na campanha eleitoral brasileira de 2010, é significativo. A questão do aborto tornou-se um tema importante, com o PSDB mirando o eleitorado conservador e acusando o PT de ser favorável à sua legalização. Essa estratégia precisou ser deixada de lado, porém, quando foi revelado que a mulher do candidato José Serra já teria interrompido voluntariamente uma gravidez. A revelação foi feita (por uma ex-aluna dela) em uma página pessoal no *Facebook*, aparentemente sem intenção de alcançar maior audiência, mas repercutiu graças às “replicações” de outros internautas, acabando por chegar aos meios de comunicação tradicionais. Um comentário privado ganhou alcance público e incidiu nas estratégias políticas de um candidato presidencial.

O caso envolvendo Mônica Serra e sua ex-aluna tomou maior dimensão, mas essa incerteza quanto à visibilidade tornou-se parte do cotidiano. Adolescentes se surpreendem ao descobrir que suas conversas são monitoradas por pais ou professores; funcionários de empresas são punidos por comentários ou fotografias consideradas impróprias. O alcance da informação é indeterminado e, para todos os efeitos, aleatório. Outro exemplo é esclarecedor: em 2013, uma jovem executiva desconhecida chamada Justine Sacco lançou um “tuíte” considerado racista em sua conta pessoal, com poucos seguidores, antes de embarcar num voo para a África do Sul. Quando chegou a seu destino, horas depois, tornara-se líder dos *trendings topics* do *Twitter* e perdera o emprego. No livro em que narra este e outros casos similares, Jon Ronson (2015) está preocupado com o caráter desmedido do julgamento das redes, incapaz de promover uma gradação entre diferentes tipos de faltas, e com os mecanismos psicológicos que levam tantos de nós a se engajarem na produção da humilhação pública de outros. A punição não depende da gravidade do erro, mas da dimensão de sua exposição. Este, portanto, é o ponto de partida: as pessoas não atentam para a possibilidade de uma exposição alargada daquilo que falam ou fazem, exatamente

porque as interações ocorrem em condições que projetam intimidade (dentro de casa ou por meio de aparelhos eletrônicos pessoais que se tornam verdadeiras extensões do *self*), esperando atingir um círculo íntimo de amigos e familiares.

No caso de Sacco, coube a ela a iniciativa de “tuitar”, sem que esperasse que seu comentário preconceituoso fosse alcançar alguém além de seus escassos contatos pessoais. Em outros casos, a publicização é inesperada e promovida por terceiros. Por um lado, os equipamentos de gravação de áudio e vídeo se tornaram menores, portáteis e – o que é mais importante – sempre disponíveis, já que estão acoplados aos telefones celulares. Com um *smartphone* na mão, somos todos *paparazzi* em potencial. Por outro lado, muitas conversas que antes ocorreriam por telefone e sem registro se dão agora por meio de mensagens de texto, ficando armazenadas nos dispositivos dos participantes e podendo ser resgatadas a qualquer momento. Há um permanente registro de interações que continua disponível para outros usos mesmo quando a natureza da relação entre os envolvidos se alterou. É o que ocorre no fenômeno da divulgação de imagens sem consentimento, conhecido como *revenge porn*, amplamente disseminado e com consequências muitas vezes graves para os envolvidos. As imagens que foram produzidas e compartilhadas num contexto de intimidade e confiança não desaparecem quando estes sentimentos dão lugar a outros, como raiva e ressentimento.

Um episódio que ocorreu com o jornalista William Waack, então na Rede Globo de Televisão, permite um paralelo com a história de Justine Sacco. Waack fez um comentário racista, no estúdio, antes de iniciar uma entrevista. Mais de um ano depois, em dezembro de 2017, o comentário foi postado na internet, por alguém que o gravara sigilosamente; diante da reação pública, a emissora optou por demitir o jornalista. Nos dois casos, declarações que dificilmente teriam qualquer repercussão se tivessem permanecido restritas a um círculo privado geraram comoção e culminaram na demissão dos responsáveis por elas. Mas, além das posições diversas dos envolvidos (Waack já era uma personalidade pública), salta aos olhos uma diferença essencial: enquanto Sacco não se deu conta do alcance potencial de seu “tuíte”, Waack não sabia que seu comentário seria gravado e reproduzido. A permanente possibilidade de gravação e posterior publicização coloca a todos, mas sobretudo políticos e celebridades, em condições de *privacidade incerta*: nunca se sabe quando algo que deveria permanecer privado pode aparecer diante do público.

É necessário adicionar um novo elemento ao quadro. O potencial de replicação das mensagens pelos indivíduos privados não depende apenas de lançar suas garrafas ao mar, como nos *blogs* pessoais ou perfis em redes sociais, na incerteza de se e quando alguém vai recolhê-las. É possível direcioná-las para um grupo selecionado de receptores por meio das “listas”, que inicialmente foram de correio eletrônico e

agora são sobretudo de aplicativos de mensagens instantâneas, como *WhatsApp*, cujos grupos se tornaram muito populares no Brasil. O que se discute nesses meios é privado, pois inclui pessoas que se relacionam no círculo de intimidade (família, vizinhos, colegas de trabalho ou de estudo etc.). Entretanto, pode tornar-se público, uma vez que qualquer participante tem as ferramentas disponíveis para expor as mensagens. O participante pode replicar os conteúdos mesmo sem a autorização do emissor inicial, que assim perde qualquer controle sobre a disseminação da informação. Mais do que qualquer dinâmica na *web*, são os aplicativos de mensagens instantâneas que evocam a imagem de uma teia de interações comunicativas, virtualmente infinita e incontrollável. A greve dos caminhoneiros no Brasil, em maio de 2018, mostrou o poder das correntes de *WhatsApp*, que expuseram o caráter meramente protocolar das lideranças oficiais e sustentaram a mobilização de uma categoria espacialmente dispersa (além de dividida por uma multiplicidade de relações laborais diversas entre si).

O caráter “privado” desse tipo de comunicação dificulta o controle da circulação de informações. O *Facebook* e o *Twitter* podem impor códigos de conduta e suspender usuários que os violem, dado que as mensagens têm estatuto de comunicação em público, mesmo quando se dirigem a um círculo restrito de contatos pessoais. Já as mensagens de *WhatsApp* tomam o caráter de trocas interpessoais privadas, ainda quando as mensagens são pensadas para atingir, por meio das replicações, o público mais amplo possível. É impraticável que uma mensagem considerada nociva (notícia falsa, discurso de ódio, exposição não autorizada da intimidade de terceiros) seja extirpada do *WhatsApp* – até porque elas não têm um ponto fixo de origem, como ocorre nos compartilhamentos de *Twitter* ou *Facebook*.

A justificativa padrão, para pessoas atingidas por escândalos como o que alvejou Waack, é que a exposição nas redes descontextualiza e, portanto, distorce palavras e ações. É possível discutir, caso a caso, o quanto essa justificativa é forte. Mas o fato é que o afastamento entre evento e contexto, próprio de toda comunicação tecnologicamente mediada, em que emissor e receptor estão separados no tempo e/ou no espaço, é agravado pelas novas tecnologias. Um caso particularmente relevante é o do *Google Street View*, serviço lançado em 2007 pelo qual a gigante da tecnologia fornece imagens *on-line* de ruas de várias cidades do planeta. Mas, ao fixar as imagens, o sistema também fotografou automóveis e pessoas passando na rua ou mesmo dentro de suas casas. Qual a implicação disso? Se uma pessoa está em dado momento em uma determinada rua da cidade, ela está num espaço público, mas sabendo que essa informação – sua presença naquele local – é acessível apenas aos poucos que também estão ali. No momento em que a foto é colocada no *Google Street View*, qualquer pessoa pode saber quem esteve, naquele momento, naquele lugar e com

aquelas companhias. É a diferença entre falar na rua, para os passantes, e ter sua fala transmitida pela internet. A transmissão gera uma quebra de privacidade, ainda que o espaço onde ocorre seja público.

Inicialmente o *Google* se negou a retirar da ferramenta imagens identificáveis (especialmente de pessoas), alegando que elas haviam sido capturadas no espaço público (Nissenbaum, 2009, p. 216). Porém, cerca de um ano após o lançamento do serviço, a empresa cedeu às críticas e desenvolveu um algoritmo que transforma rostos e outras informações consideradas sensíveis em borrões (Shankland, 2008). Foi o reconhecimento de que o entendimento estritamente espacial da distinção entre público e privado, no qual a empresa se escorava antes, não tem como ser sustentado. É o que garante o princípio do sigilo das imagens captadas por câmeras de segurança, mesmo quando elas estão voltadas para vias públicas. Por tudo isso, hoje o debate sobre sistemas de vigilância destaca a necessidade de se discutir a relevância de uma privacidade em público (Nissenbaum, 1997).

Nesse contexto, seria possível compreender esse espaço virtual como um terceiro espaço, uma terceira esfera ou um “*electronic elsewhere*” (Papacharissi, 2015)? Essa terceira esfera é *nem pública nem privada*, é *a um só tempo pública e privada*, ou é *intermediária entre o público e o privado*? E como ela afeta as democracias contemporâneas? Um impacto que ocorre em múltiplas dimensões: maior possibilidade de expressão e exposição públicas, maior vigilância por parte de poderes tanto estatais quanto privados, ampliação do peso da desigualdade informacional na estratificação social, uma crescente parcela da sociabilidade pública ocorrendo em ambientes geridos por corporações privadas (as redes sociais e seus “códigos de conduta”). São questões que permanecem em aberto.

Existe privacidade *on-line*?

Diante de tantos desafios, parte da literatura acadêmica já fala em “fim da privacidade” (Rubinfeld, 2009). Trata-se, afinal, de um valor historicamente datado. Ainda que a ideia de espaços público e privado venha da Roma antiga e que, antes ainda, o pensamento grego trabalhasse com a oposição entre *pólis* e *oikos*, a percepção da privacidade que temos hoje é tributária do pensamento liberal e da ascensão da burguesia. É a tradição liberal que faz a liberdade individual repousar na esfera privada, contrapondo-se à perspectiva clássica, que via a liberdade como sendo exercida no ambiente público. A privacidade passa a ser entendida como necessária para a emergência do indivíduo e, portanto, do cidadão. Sem a manutenção de uma esfera individual de autonomia, nenhuma resistência ao despotismo é possível. Com a ampliação dos direitos individuais e o reconhecimento da pluralidade das socieda-

des contemporâneas, o direito à privacidade “desempenha um papel importante na proteção das capacidades dos indivíduos para formar, manter e apresentar aos outros uma autoconcepção coerente, autêntica e distinta” (Cohen, 1997, p. 142). *Formar, manter e apresentar*: a privacidade é condição de existência do individualismo ético que está no coração do liberalismo – e, por influência dele, de quase todas as principais correntes políticas e filosóficas contemporâneas, mesmo as que são críticas às insuficiências da abordagem liberal.

Como ocorre com outras características fundantes do homem liberal, a privacidade é sensível às posições de classe, de gênero e de raça. Quando o “direito à privacidade” começa a ser codificado, no século XIX, os burgueses reivindicavam ser deixados em paz pela nascente imprensa de fofocas, enquanto a população pobre dificilmente teria acesso a tal luxo – não por algum interesse do jornalismo marrom, mas pelo simples fato de ter que dividir a moradia, em espaços que não permitiam qualquer isolamento e intimidade. As mulheres, por sua vez, sofriam o controle público de seus corpos, mesmo aquelas das classes sociais privilegiadas.

Não se trata apenas das condições materiais. A garantia oferecida pelo Estado para a privacidade é diversa, conforme o grupo atingido, como mostram cotidianamente operações policiais em regiões pobres – invasões de casas e revistas pessoais são rotina, ao contrário do que ocorre com os mais ricos. Juízes, no Brasil, expedem mandados de busca e apreensão coletivos para favelas, o que significa a suspensão localizada do preceito constitucional da inviolabilidade do domicílio¹. No ambiente de trabalho, são frequentes denúncias de revistas íntimas, às quais são submetidas sobretudo funcionárias do sexo feminino².

Ao mesmo tempo, é importante não negligenciar o caráter relacional e contextual do que é privado (Cohen, 1997; Nissenbaum, 2009). Nesse sentido, a privacidade se refere à intimidade e às trocas entre o eu e o outro. Não se trata de algo que se defina primariamente pela metáfora espacial das esferas, mas que remete à manutenção da autonomia pessoal na relação com o mundo exterior.

Assim, a possibilidade de deciframento do *self* por meio do processamento computadorizado de informações, com a conseqüente abertura para estratégias de indução de comportamentos, representa uma quebra da privacidade. Como diz Nissenbaum sobre os desafios à privacidade em contextos em que a mediação computacional se torna onipresente, “impulsionados por um alto poder de processamento, técnicas matemáticas e estatísticas cada vez mais sofisticadas tornaram possível extrair signifi-

1. A legalidade de tais autorizações é contestada; no entanto, elas continuam sendo emitidas.

2. Fábricas de *lingerie*, em especial, adotam a prática, sob a justificativa de impedir o furto de peças. Vedada por lei e considerada abusiva por diversas decisões da Justiça do Trabalho, ela ainda assim continua ocorrendo (Roesler, 2018).

cados descritivos e preditivos de informações” (Nissenbaum, 2009, p. 42). A autora se refere a fenômenos como a *big data*, o *machine learning* e a inteligência artificial dos algoritmos, todos baseados na exposição “espontânea” que somos levados a estabelecer nas redes.

São informações coletadas durante a navegação na *web* ou então pelo simples fato de se portar um dispositivo móvel – que envia incessantemente informações sobre os usuários, a ponto de que, como escreveu Mc Chesney (2013, p. 150), não deveriam ser chamados de *smartphones* e sim de “rastreadores”. Juntam-se a isso os cadastros de lojas e operadoras de crédito, que formam o registro detalhado do cidadão como consumidor. A conta da farmácia revela de que enfermidade padeço, a do *pet shop* qual é meu bichinho de estimação, a da loja de brinquedos quantos anos têm meus filhos – e assim por diante. Na medida em que, sob a alegação de “praticidade”, o cadastro, sobretudo no comércio informatizado e *on-line*, é feito muitas vezes por meio das contas em redes sociais, a interconexão das bases de dados torna-se quase total. Cada *bit* de informação é insignificante em si mesmo. Mas, quando combinados, tratados e cruzados, os dados produzem um enorme conhecimento sobre hábitos, comportamentos, valores e padrões de interação social de cada indivíduo. O resultado é que, cada vez mais vulneráveis à ação de máquinas que parecem saber mais de nós do que nós mesmos, estamos perdendo nosso próprio espaço interior como espaço de privacidade.

Os algoritmos foram escritos inicialmente para impulsionar anúncios. A “propaganda personalizada”, que exhibe a cada potencial consumidor aquilo que se imagina que mais possa sensibilizá-lo, amplia o poder predatório da publicidade comercial, que busca colonizar não apenas o espaço público, mas todo o universo mental de seus receptores, orientando suas aspirações e seu sentido de realização pessoal para o consumo de determinados produtos. A segmentação do público, que permite a publicidade direcionada, não é novidade para o mercado, mas agora alcança precisão milimétrica. Quando mais ajustada é a propaganda, atingindo as predisposições pessoais mais profundas, menor é a capacidade de defesa contra ela.

Hoje, além dessa função inicial, os algoritmos cumprem muitos outros fins, notadamente o direcionamento das inclinações políticas. Quanto mais nossas escolhas são dirigidas a partir de uma publicidade individualizada, gerada por meio de uma massa de dados coletados previamente, menor é o espaço para o exercício da autonomia (Meireles, 2016). Todo o modelo da democracia liberal, que coloca na base das decisões políticas a escolha autônoma de cada decisão, fica em xeque.

Nissenbaum destaca que há uma “mudança na natureza da coleta de dados, realizada de forma automatizada e indiscriminada” (2009, p. 21). Não se trata mais de uma exposição aos dispositivos eletrônicos, mas de máquinas “aprendendo o

que podem sobre as pessoas, seus atributos e ações passadas, em um esforço para entender suas predisposições e prever ações futuras” (Nissenbaum, 2009, p. 42). A atuação dessas empresas tem como gesto inaugural, então, a reivindicação unilateral de toda “experiência humana como matéria-prima grátis para tradução em dados comportamentais” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 8).

O conhecimento daí advindo é usado para estimular o consumo, para orientar a direção da ação social e também para reter a atenção das pessoas, fazendo com que uma parcela cada vez maior do tempo seja despendida dentro dos “jardins murados” da internet. Isso implica a submissão a uma dinâmica de relações que é própria da vida dentro desses condomínios virtuais, como a busca incessante pela aprovação expressa de quem nos cerca (a “cultura do *like*”), e também a regras de convivência determinadas pelas empresas, que não são necessariamente aquelas dos Estados ou de uma ética comum – a censura do *Facebook* a fotos de mulheres amamentando é um simples exemplo disso. Em suma, os algoritmos estão transformando o conjunto das relações sociais, dentro e fora da rede de computadores.

Nesse contexto, a expansão das tecnologias digitais fez com que a privacidade perdesse valor para as pessoas e ganhasse para o mercado, em um fenômeno definido como “capitalismo de vigilância” (Zuboff, 2019). Os dados pessoais são obtidos por um crescente número de corporações e governos. A vigilância dos serviços estatais de inteligência sobre as comunicações digitais é onicompreensiva. A ampla capacidade de armazenamento hoje existente permite que grande parcela do tráfego de informações *on-line* seja gravada mesmo sem haver interesse específico em relação a elas; as ameaças da criminalidade, alimentadas por uma mitologia incessante sobre os horrores da *deep web* – os “quatro cavaleiros do infoapocalipse”, isto é, lavagem de dinheiro, drogas, terrorismo e pornografia infantil (Assange, [2012] 2013) – justificam toda e qualquer intrusão.

A defesa liberal de uma esfera privada imune à supervisão pública ligava-se também à ideia de que cabia ao Estado apresentar os indícios de transgressão da lei antes de investigar qualquer cidadão. A internet não é o único fator, mas concorre no processo de reversão desse entendimento, em que as garantias antes vigentes são suspensas e o princípio da presunção de inocência refluí; a característica de ser um ambiente que mantém registro de todas as interações torna-a particularmente favorável ao exercício da vigilância estatal distendida. E os procedimentos de criptografia que poderiam dar alguma proteção aos cidadãos tendem a ser pouco acessíveis e trabalhosos, o que limita seu uso.

No caso das corporações, embora não seja infrequente o uso não autorizado de informações, vigora em geral a cessão “voluntária” de dados pessoais, que se dá por meio do contrato de acesso ao serviço, ferramenta ou aplicativo. Conhecidos como

termos de uso, esses contratos se assemelham a bulas de remédios; extensos, com letras pequenas e por vezes incompreensíveis. Ou seja, são feitos para não serem lidos. As políticas de privacidade de *sites* e aplicativos defendem que os dados são coletados para melhorar a “experiência de uso” das pessoas, que seriam beneficiadas com indicações personalizadas. No entanto, as pessoas raras vezes são capazes de compreender as implicações das autorizações que estão concedendo. Permitir que uma máquina registre sua localização ou rastreie suas mensagens parece um preço pequeno a pagar, se o que se obtém em troca são informações atualizadas sobre trânsito e clima, um programa gratuito de correio eletrônico ou a possibilidade de ditar textos.

Mesmo que as pessoas compreendam, eles têm poucas alternativas. Não há margem de negociação. Ou se adere ao contrato padrão determinado pelas empresas ou não há acesso ao serviço. É possível cancelar alguns serviços do computador ou do *smartphone*, mas o custo de recusar todas as tecnologias invasivas tende a ser alto, tanto em termos profissionais quanto pessoais. No mundo urbano contemporâneo, exceto para os muitíssimo pobres e para as crianças muito pequenas, a expectativa é que todos estejam conectados. Para a maior parte das pessoas, a recusa a ter um cartão de crédito, a usar serviços de telefonia móvel, a acessar a internet ou mesmo a participar de mídias sociais possui consequências que não são banais, com a exclusão de grupos de pertencimento, perda de oportunidades de trabalho e alienação em relação ao “chão comum” de atividades e de interesses que é fundamental para o exercício da sociabilidade. No limite, o risco é o insulamento na condição de “pária” social.

Parte – mas não a totalidade – dos problemas poderia ser contornada com a busca de alternativas fora das grandes empresas da informática. Mas isso exige uma pessoa explicitamente preocupada com o problema, em condições de romper a inércia que o ambiente dominado pelas megacorporações impõe. Sistemas operacionais como o *Windows* são conhecidos por suas falhas de segurança e também pela permanente supervisão e registro da atividade dos usuários. No entanto, o sistema da Microsoft é o dominante, graça às facilidades de uso – pré-instalação nas máquinas dos maiores fabricantes, uniformidade de interface dos *softwares* mais populares, compatibilidade imediata com a maior parte dos serviços fornecidos pela internet, inclusive serviços do poder público, sensíveis ao *lobby* das grandes corporações da informática. O uso dos derivados do Linux fica restrito a “nerds” ou “paranoicos”.

Essa coleta de dados pessoais, realizada de forma sem precedentes, impõe riscos à intimidade e à privacidade, pois a tela que conecta as pessoas a essas tecnologias se encontra na esfera privada. Pode-se dizer que “o paradoxo da experiência *on-line* é que ela possibilita às pessoas se comunicarem umas com outras na privacidade de suas casas, ao mesmo tempo que as expõe ao monitoramento e rastreamento” (Nis-

senbaum, 2009, p. 27). Em outras palavras, o acesso à tela – seja do computador ou *smartphone* – ocorre na maioria das vezes de forma individualizada e privada, mas ao mesmo tempo é tudo registrado, até mesmo a movimentação do cursor.

Fica evidente que um grande desafio à privacidade na era digital se refere ao controle sobre as próprias informações – a “privacidade informacional”, que permite que eu decida quais fatos da minha vida particular serão expostos ao público e quais não. Trata-se de proteger uma esfera de intimidade que é mais restrita até do que a percepção corrente do privado como doméstico e que se confunde com o próprio eu (Cohen, 1997).

A autoridade política tem dificuldade de garantir a vigência dos direitos de privacidade, por um conjunto entrelaçado de motivos, entre os quais destacamos três: (1) A evolução tecnológica é muito acelerada, em descompasso com o ritmo lento da formulação, negociação e adoção de normas legais. (2) O mercado dos dados *on-line* é dominado por corporações gigantescas com enorme capacidade de resistência e de pressão, sobretudo diante de Estados aparentemente debilitados pela chamada “globalização”. (3) Não há nenhum interesse econômico que se mobilize em defesa da privacidade de dados.

Até o momento, o maior passo para reduzir a capacidade de absorção de dados pelas empresas de tecnologia é a Regulação Geral de Dados Pessoais (RGDP) da União Europeia, que passou a vigorar em maio de 2018. Trata-se de um regulamento que tem como objetivo a proteção da privacidade e dos dados pessoais dos cidadãos do bloco. Cada pessoa deve ter o direito de escolher o que vai ser coletado e por quem, colocando ênfase na necessidade de consentimento esclarecido, entre outros direitos. A vigência da RGDP é recente e seu impacto não está totalmente claro, mas as empresas reagiram – a começar pela redistribuição dos usuários em suas filiais, para que o menor número possível deles ficasse sob a jurisdição da nova lei (Untersinger, 2018). Ao mesmo tempo, o escândalo sobre a influência russa nas eleições americanas de 2016 colocou em pauta a necessidade de regular a coleta de dados também nos Estados Unidos, em geral avesso a controles estatais mais rígidos.

Conclusão: um espaço intermediário?

Diante deste quadro, será possível concluir que a internet forma um espaço intermediário entre o público e o privado? A resposta mais plausível parece ser outra. Ao embaralhar a distinção entre as duas esferas, a internet nos ajuda a lembrar que elas não são uma descrição imediata da realidade, mas conceitos, isto é, construtos com finalidade heurística e cujo sentido é também contextual. O que a internet produz é um novo conjunto de práticas sociais, que não se enquadra facilmente no modelo

mental sedimentado que organiza nossa compreensão do público e do privado.

Ao mesmo tempo, a reflexão sobre as transformações em curso revela com clareza o duplo movimento, aparentemente (mas só aparentemente) paradoxal, em que a *privatização* das relações humanas se combina com o *fim da privacidade*. As novas tecnologias permitem a emergência de formas de economia colaborativa, o que leva alguns a vaticinarem, uma vez mais, sua incompatibilidade com a permanência do capitalismo (Mason, [2015] 2017). Mas esse potencial é contrabalançado pelo primado do mercado como mediador das próprias relações em rede, dada a arquitetura dos ambientes virtuais, e pelo estímulo ideológico reforçado ao individualismo e ao consumismo. O fato é que, na internet, nossas ações públicas (por estarem expostas) são inseridas em engrenagens privadas de corporações em busca de lucro e que usam o trabalho não remunerado de seus usuários – o que ocorre cada vez que curtimos algo ou postamos no *Instagram*, no *Facebook* ou no *Blogger* – para fugar fatias crescentes do tempo, da atenção e da energia... das próprias pessoas.

O reverso necessário da moeda é a permanente captura e tratamento das informações pessoais, que é tanto um dos negócios centrais das grandes corporações da internet quanto um dos instrumentos que permitem a modulação do espaço virtual para que as pessoas não escapem dele. Nossa experiência em rede torna-se, em grande medida, a experiência de viver num mundo privatizado sem privacidade.

A reivindicação pelo direito à privacidade *on-line*, com o controle sobre os próprios dados pessoais, é a busca da restauração de uma velha bandeira liberal, adaptada à situação em que vivemos, de sociabilidade tecnologicamente mediada. Ao mesmo tempo, cresce a preocupação com aquilo que alguns filósofos políticos estão chamando de “o comum” (Hardt & Negri, [2009] 2016), que se liga ao desconforto com a expansão do caráter mercantil das relações humanas, na atual fase do capitalismo, e à necessidade de reconstrução do espaço público – e de um espaço público orientado por valores societários diversos ou, mais ainda, opostos aos que regem a lógica da competição capitalista. “Público” e “privado”, portanto, não parecem ferramentas analíticas obsoletas para informar um olhar crítico sobre o mundo social. Mas precisam, cada vez mais, ser entendidas de forma contextual e desvinculadas da metáfora espacial que as fixa como esferas predeterminadas.

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Resumo

O fim da velha divisão? Público e privado na era da internet

A emergência da internet impôs desafios à distinção público/privado – que é estruturadora de muitos modelos que pensam o mundo social, de instituições e de normas jurídicas. (1) A homologia entre localização espacial e acesso a uma ou outra esfera é cada vez menos sustentável. (2) Há uma transição sem solução de continuidade da comunicação privada para a exposição pública. (3) A exposição pública perde seu contexto, já que pode ser reproduzível para qualquer outra audiência. (4) A privacidade fica em suspenso diante da vigilância sobre as trocas comunicativas *on-line*, incluindo aquelas que seriam privadas. O artigo analisa os efeitos da disparidade entre os pressupostos da normatização jurídica vigente e a experiência socialmente estruturada. Palavras-chave: Internet; Distinção público-privado; Privacidade; Democracia; Vigilância.

Abstract

The end of the old division? Public and private in the internet age

The emergence of the internet posed substantial challenges to the public/private distinction, that is structuring in many models that think about the social world, the institutions and legal norms. (1) The homology between spatial location and access to one or another sphere is increasingly less sustainable. (2) There is a transition without solution from private communication to public exposure. (3) The public exposure loses its context, since it can be reproduced to any other audience. (4) Privacy remains on hold before the vigilance on the *online* communicative exchanges, including the ones that would be private. The text analyses the effects of the disparity between the assumptions of the current legal norm and the socially structured experience. Keywords: Internet; Public-private distinction; Privacy; Democracy; Vigilance.

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As mulheres na economia social

No centro da ação, longe da decisão

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Introdução

Quantas mulheres lideram ou pertencem à direção de topo das organizações da Economia Social? A resposta é que são poucas, quando comparadas com o número de homens. Será necessário escrever mais um texto expondo essa desigualdade? Nosso entendimento é o de que sim, particularmente quando novos dados estatísticos denotam/denunciam que a situação não se está a alterar significativamente, mantendo-se uma “segregação vertical” que urge continuar a debater e a combater.

“Segregação horizontal” e “segregação vertical” são as duas faces/expressões de uma realidade que persiste nas organizações atuais, do setor público e privado, “[...] e que explica por que é que as mulheres estão sub-representadas nas áreas mais estratégicas e lucrativas da gestão e dos negócios” (ILO, 2019a, p. 4). A segregação horizontal produz-se ao concentrar-se a participação das mulheres no setor dos serviços (ensino, saúde, ação social, comércio...) e a ser claramente minoritária na indústria e na construção. A segregação vertical produz-se através da menor presença de mulheres nos lugares de topo da estrutura profissional/laboral (cargos de direção e categorias profissionais mais bem remuneradas), assim como da estrutura orgânica (membros dos órgãos de administração e de outros órgãos sociais) (cf. Vidal, 2011). Tanto uma

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como outra incorrem na desigualdade de oportunidades proporcionadas a mulheres e a homens para que possam exercer as suas competências, progredam nas suas carreiras profissionais e vejam reconhecido o valor do seu trabalho. De igual modo, significa uma disparidade em relação aos princípios da igualdade de gênero e da representação equilibrada, legalmente reconhecidos num cada vez maior número de países.

Sobre a presença nos cargos de liderança, sendo esta a perspectiva que iremos desenvolver no presente texto, ao longo do tempo e olhando para distintas geografias, vários estudos têm dado expressão numérica ao fosso entre homens e mulheres (cf. Proni & Proni, 2018; ILO, 2019b). Perante as estatísticas, debate-se se “o copo está meio cheio” ou continua “meio vazio”. Enquanto algumas análises e organizações advogam que nos últimos anos se deram passos importantes no sentido de um maior equilíbrio de poder entre mulheres e homens, outras há que consideram os avanços ainda como incipientes e muito distantes da meta desejável. Mas, sobretudo, interessa saber se já foi feito o suficiente para quebrar o “teto de cristal” e ultrapassar a segregação ainda vigente.

Nesta matéria, a cada setor da sociedade cabe uma responsabilidade distinta. Ao Estado, exige-se que implemente medidas legislativas e incentivos à adoção de práticas promotoras da igualdade de gênero, desde logo no quadro do próprio setor público. Por sua vez, as empresas são desafiadas a conciliar a atividade econômica com uma responsabilidade social acrescida, em que novamente a igualdade de gênero deve ser assumida como prioridade. Já no que concerne ao setor da Economia Social, entendemos que o mesmo deve assumir uma responsabilidade acrescida, por duas ordens de razões: por um lado, pela importância econômica e social desse setor que, por exemplo, em Portugal representa 3,0% do VAB e 6,1% do emprego remunerado da economia nacional; por outro, porque esse é um setor que assume o combate às desigualdades como uma das suas principais causas e, ao mesmo tempo, se rege legalmente pelos princípios da participação livre, da igualdade formal e da gestão democrática. Interessa agora saber até que ponto tais princípios têm uma concretização ao nível interno, das próprias entidades que compõem o setor.

Assim, estabelecemos um triplo objetivo para este artigo. Primeiramente, o de conferir expressão numérica e factual à desproporção entre homens e mulheres nos cargos de liderança das entidades da Economia Social. Para o efeito, olhamos para a realidade portuguesa sobre a qual, pela primeira vez, dispomos de dados atualizados e a nível nacional, recolhidos pelo INE – Instituto Nacional de Estatística. Paralelamente, renova-se o debate sobre a persistência dessas desigualdades, e as causas que lhes subjazem. Por fim, propomo-nos abordar as vias para ultrapassar a segregação de gênero na liderança das organizações da Economia Social. Neste ponto, partimos de uma constatação importante, a de que existe no seio das mencionadas organizações

um bloqueio à mudança decorrente da invisibilidade das questões de gênero e de uma negação do problema, para advogar que uma parte da dinâmica de mudança em favor da igualdade de poder exige atuação interna, ao nível da consciencialização, do empoderamento e de uma abordagem transformadora.

Os contornos do debate

“A sociedade civil ganhou o debate sobre a desigualdade, mas ainda precisa de ganhar a verdadeira luta contra ela.” (Civicus, 2018). As desigualdades sociais manifestam-se de múltiplas formas (nos recursos, na educação, no emprego, na habitação, na saúde, e decorrentes da idade, do gênero, da orientação sexual ou da classe social de pertença...), e em muitas delas a sociedade civil, em geral, e a Economia Social, em particular, têm empreendido iniciativas visando a combater as suas manifestações e consequências.

Dentro do campo mais amplo da sociedade civil, as entidades da Economia Social formam um setor plural, com realidades orgânicas muito diferentes, na forma, na dimensão, no objeto e na lógica de funcionamento. Nesta “arca institucional” existem cooperativas, mutualidades, misericórdias, associações, fundações e entidades autogestionárias e comunitárias, que têm como denominador comum serem organizações de pessoas que desenvolvem atividades para satisfazer as necessidades de pessoas, de forma sustentável e sem a finalidade de remunerar investidores capitalistas, (cf. Pitacas & Sá, 2018), regidas pelos princípios da livre adesão, da gestão democrática e da participação alargada. A Economia Social é tradicionalmente um território profissional animado por mulheres, gerido por mulheres e cuja atenção se dirige, amiúde, às mulheres e aos problemas por elas enfrentados. As atividades ligadas ao cuidado, à assistência, à solidariedade e à missão social foram desde o seu aparecimento desempenhadas maioritariamente por mulheres. Uma realidade que se verifica até o momento presente, em que se estima que, em Portugal, o emprego feminino na economia social possa oscilar entre os 77% (cf. Parente & Martinho, 2018) e os 88% (cf. Paiva *et al.*, 2015).

Todas as circunstâncias acima descritas reforçam a perplexidade com que se observa a denúncia recorrente de que, seguindo as tendências de segmentação de gênero que atravessam a economia capitalista, as organizações da Economia Social tendem a reproduzir estruturas orgânicas e modelos de governança que mantêm as mulheres em posição de desvantagem (Civicus, 2016; EWL, s/d; Wolf, 2020). Naturalmente, essa diminuição da proporção de mulheres à medida que se sobe na hierarquia piramidal significa perda de oportunidades e, sobretudo, perda de poder. Acresce ainda que a feminização do setor tem sido interpretada como consequência

da desvalorização e diminuição do reconhecimento social a que o setor é votado, ao mesmo tempo que contribui para a tolerância de certas discriminações: “[...] porque estamos perante um setor residual, estamos perante um setor feminizado e com tendência crescente para o ser”, e essa marca distintiva justifica em parte a prevalência de baixos salários, do trabalho a tempo parcial, da elevada temporalidade e rotação, ou de tarefas desqualificadas (Piñón, 2011, p. 21).

Na busca de teorias explicativas para a persistência e generalização de fenômenos de segregação laboral entre os sexos, deparamo-nos com um conjunto de explicações que estabelecem um nexo de causalidade entre a sua ocorrência e o modelo de funcionamento da economia capitalista e neoliberal. Concretamente, e como lembram Anne Ross-Smith e Martin Kornberger (2004), a racionalidade capitalista tem sido associada a valores com conotação masculina, como os de pensamento abstrato, julgamento objetivo, calculismo, ação agressiva ou visão instrumental. O que poderá justificar uma certa inadaptação das mulheres às tendências dominantes da moderna economia competitiva. Ou, dito de outra forma, abre caminho às teses da “apetência” ou “preferência” das mulheres por certas profissões (marginais) que requerem outro quadro de valores e *skills*, quer sejam os de intuição, de criatividade ou de capacidade relacional (cf. Monteiro & Oliveira, 2014).

Assim, a teoria do capital humano (cf. England, 1982; Anker, 1997) tende a explicar a segregação profissional entre os sexos pelo fato de as mulheres estarem menos qualificadas que os homens para certas profissões, por causa das diferenças de instrução, dos anos de experiência e do menor investimento na carreira profissional. Esse argumento baseia-se na suposta prioridade outorgada pelas mulheres ao contexto familiar, em detrimento de uma carreira profissional (cf. Bonet & Moreno, 2004). Por sua vez, as teorias do mercado dual e da segmentação do mercado de trabalho apontam para a compartimentação desse mercado de trabalho em dois setores (primário e secundário) que se diferenciam no que toca a condições de trabalho, aos níveis salariais, às oportunidades de promoção e à estabilidade no emprego. As necessidades decorrentes do uso da tecnologia e da maior capacidade laboral originam um setor principal, masculinizado, que remunera melhor, exige e confere estabilidade, oferece mais oportunidades de promoção e melhores condições de trabalho (cf. Casaca, 2006). As mulheres, juntamente com as minorias étnicas e os emigrantes, tenderão a situar-se mais no mercado “secundário”, em que os salários são mais baixos, a flexibilidade é maior e as oportunidades de promoção são relativamente mais baixas.

Não descuroamos o potencial explicativo de tais teorias, ainda que seja de reconhecer que os contextos que lhes deram origem se alteraram profundamente. Nomeadamente, no que concerne à inversão da tendência para que as mulheres detivessem menores níveis de qualificação e menos capital humano, ao aumento da

sua experiência laboral, assim como ao tipo de conjunção entre a posição na família e o investimento numa carreira profissional. Todavia, julgamos mais adequado um quadro analítico que invoca os fatores socioculturais como justificativos da persistência das diferenças de gênero. Ou seja, numa abordagem próxima das teorias sociossexuais (cf. Passos & Nogueira, 2018), a percepção de que persistência de desigualdades de gênero no mercado de trabalho decorre de determinados estereótipos dominantes na sociedade, sustentados pela convicção de que existem aptidões e tarefas próprias de mulheres, sucedendo o mesmo no caso dos homens. A divisão entre ocupações “masculinas” e “femininas” obedece em grande medida a ideias e valores que tem a sociedade em cada momento quanto ao que são as “preferências” e atributos de cada uma das partes, tanto do prisma da oferta (que trabalhos preferem desempenhar as mulheres/os homens) como da procura (quem os empregadores preferem contratar) (cf. Anker, 1997; Bonet & Moreno, 2004).

Esta última explicação adquire força quando percebemos que a Economia Social se move em dois territórios que a tornam particular: por um lado, ser um setor fortemente marcado por princípios, que por sua vez se opõem aos da economia capitalista concorrencial; por outro, ser um terreno propício à cristalização de estereótipos no que concerne ao retrato das mulheres, e dos seus papéis sociais e profissionais.

Ao contrário de outros setores, na Economia Social a questão dos princípios é central e determinante para a sua identidade e para a sua sobrevivência enquanto setor autónomo. A Economia Social não se distingue do setor empresarial ou do setor público pela atividade que desenvolve, ou pelos serviços que presta e bens que produz. A sua diferenciação decorre de um conjunto de princípios de funcionamento e organização, que em Portugal estão determinados pela Lei nº 30/2013, ou Lei de Bases da Economia Social: sem fins lucrativos, orientadas para a satisfação de necessidades sociais, livre adesão, gestão democrática, uma pessoa um voto, o respeito pelos valores da solidariedade, da igualdade e não discriminação, da coesão social, da justiça e da equidade, da transparência, da responsabilidade individual e social partilhada e da subsidiariedade. *Stricto sensu*, os princípios enunciados não reportam nem exigem o respeito pela igualdade de gênero. Mas não é difícil vislumbrar no seu conteúdo que esse pressuposto se insere no elenco de valores a defender pelas organizações da Economia Social (Meira, Martinho & Castro, 2020). Os valores da “igualdade e não discriminação”, assim como o da “equidade” são expressamente apontados. De igual modo a enunciação do princípio da gestão democrática implica que todos os seus membros, homens ou mulheres, participam na tomada de decisões e é-lhes reconhecido poder para tal. Assim como o controle democrático dos seus órgãos não pode ser devidamente respeitado quando dele é excluída uma parte dos membros, pelo simples fato de serem mulheres.

Observando agora pela outra perspectiva, é igualmente importante perceber que este também é um setor em que certos estereótipos facilmente florescem. Como já antes foi sublinhado, a Economia Social caracteriza-se globalmente pela elevada feminização dos seus recursos humanos. Na economia do cuidado dominam as mulheres, e uma das convicções mais fortemente arraigadas é a de que as mulheres estão naturalmente vocacionadas e adaptadas à prestação de cuidados pessoais. Essa não será uma visão que apenas vem de fora, de uma ordem social capitalista e masculinizada que impele as mulheres para tais tarefas, mas igualmente decorre da prevalência de uma ética do *care* (cf. Piñón, 2011; Macedo, 2019), que compõe a própria identidade das mulheres e as leva a assumirem que são naturalmente sensíveis para o desempenho de certos cuidados e profissões.

Assim, e de acordo com o que têm revelado certas análises empíricas, não é apenas de “fora para dentro” que o bloqueio à mudança é exercido e se criam condições para a perenização da segregação de gênero. O impacto dessas concepções não será apenas intersetorial, mas também intrasetorial, na medida em que as próprias organizações acabam por refletir internamente, e de certa forma naturalizam, essa discriminação. À semelhança do constatado por outros estudos (cf. Tiessen, 2004; Moreno, 2008; Piñón, 2011), também nós, no contexto de um autodiagnóstico organizacional de gênero desenvolvido com 32 instituições particulares de solidariedade social (IPSS) portuguesas (Monteiro & Oliveira, 2014), registamos a prevalência de um discurso interno marcado por estereótipos e marcas de segregação quanto aos papéis e funções de gênero. Questionadas sobre a conveniência de ter mulheres em certos postos de trabalho, a resposta foi afirmativa por parte de 61% das organizações, justificada de três formas: uma maior capacitação da mulher para o tipo de tarefas desempenhadas (exemplificando: limpezas, higiene pessoal, confecção de alimentos, cuidados a dependentes); a dificuldade em encontrar homens para tais funções; a insatisfação da população beneficiária quando certas tarefas são desempenhadas por homens.

Perante esta realidade, a explicação que encontramos é a de que a força e o caráter arraigado dos estereótipos obnubilam a flagrante incongruência entre os princípios advogados e as práticas empreendidas, nomeadamente em matéria de igualdade de oportunidades entre homens e mulheres. O respeito pelos princípios acomoda uma tolerância à desigualdade de gênero. Que, em boa verdade, não é entendida como tal, mas como uma natural separação de funções no interior das organizações. E tão mais complexo se torna este cenário, quando falta o mecanismo da prova, ou seja, para contrariar as convicções não existe evidência empírica (estatística) que mostre que a realidade é potencialmente essa, a da desigualdade e da segregação de gênero, tanto ao nível horizontal como vertical (cf. Vidal, 2011).

Portugal: segregação vertical nas organizações da Economia Social

Apontamentos metodológicos

Do mesmo modo que globalmente se carece de informação extensa e atualizada sobre a realidade da liderança feminina nas organizações da Economia Social, até muito recentemente em Portugal não havia disponibilidade de dados que permitissem caracterizar a situação a nível nacional. Ao longo dos últimos anos foram apresentados alguns estudos setoriais (cf. Franco, 2015; Parente & Martinho, 2018; Meira *et al.*, 2020) que permitiram identificar tendências mas facultavam um retrato parcelar da realidade. A situação inverte-se em 2019, quando o organismo coordenador da informação estatística nacional, o INE, Instituto Nacional de Estatística, divulga os primeiros resultados de um Inquérito ao Setor da Economia Social (Ises, 2018), dirigido aos membros da direção de topo das entidades e procurando respostas para a seguinte questão: “como e por quem são geridas as entidades que compõem a Economia Social?”.

O instrumento de inquirição foi dirigido aos membros da direção de topo das entidades, pretendendo caracterizar o setor da Economia Social, subdividindo-se em três módulos principais: 1) caracterização da entidade; 2) práticas de gestão da entidade; 3) informação sobre o membro da direção de topo responsável pela informação.

O Ises foi realizado entre 17 de junho e 18 de setembro de 2019, tendo o ano 2018 como período de referência dos dados, abrangendo 6019 entidades da Economia Social, e foram obtidas 3550 respostas válidas (59,0% da amostra). Por grupo de entidades, a maior taxa de resposta observou-se nas Misericórdias (76,7%), seguida das Associações Mutualistas (75,8%). Em novembro de 2019 foi feita a primeira apresentação pública de uma parcela do inquérito, de onde se extrai a informação específica agora descrita e analisada neste artigo.

Principais resultados

À semelhança do que acontece em vários outros países, o setor da Economia Social (ES) tem hoje em Portugal uma importante expressão econômica e social. De acordo com os dados da Conta Satélite da Economia Social, em 2016, esse setor era composto por 71.885 entidades, que geravam 3,0% do Valor Acrescentado Bruto (VAB) e representavam 5,3% do emprego total e 6,1% do emprego remunerado (INE/Cases, 2019). Ao longo das últimas décadas, o setor da ES tem crescido consistentemente em termos do seu peso na produção de riqueza e na criação de emprego. Apenas entre

2010 e 2013 a ES continuou a crescer em número de unidades, mas viu decrescer a sua importância na economia nacional, tanto no que diz respeito ao VAB gerado como em matéria de emprego. Esse fato ocorre numa conjuntura de forte crise financeira e social enfrentada por Portugal, particularmente sentida entre 2011 e 2014, no decurso de um processo em que o governo nacional se viu obrigado a pedir ajuda à Troika (União Europeia, Fundo Monetário Internacional e Banco Central Europeu) para evitar a bancarrota e recuperar a credibilidade internacional. A diminuição do financiamento público, associada à crise no investimento e no consumo, poderá constituir uma parte importante da explicação para a diminuição da capacidade econômica do setor da ES durante esse período. Entre 2013 e 2016 o cenário inverte-se, e a ES regista novamente um crescimento positivo em todos os níveis.

Uma das características da ES é a sua composição diversificada e a multiplicidade de áreas em que desenvolve a sua atividade. Em 2016, a Saúde e os Serviços Sociais foram as áreas de atividade mais relevantes, e em conjunto elas significavam aproximadamente 61,9% do emprego remunerado e 48,9% do VAB gerado pelo setor: a Saúde foi responsável por 24,6% do VAB e 32,1% do emprego remunerado da ES, enquanto os Serviços Sociais geraram 24,3% do VAB e 29,8% do emprego remunerado. A área da Cultura, Comunicação e Atividades de Recreio é a que congrega maior número de entidades (33.722), mas representa apenas 5,0% do VAB e do emprego remunerado do setor.

Numa análise por grupos de entidades, ou “famílias”, da ES, as Associações com Fins Altruísticos são o grupo mais numeroso (66 761 ou 92,9% do total, e 64,6% do emprego remunerado). As Cooperativas constituem a segunda família com maior peso relativo (23434 unidades e 10,4% do emprego) e as Misericórdias, não sendo muito numerosas (387 entidades), surgem como a segunda maior empregadora (16,8% do emprego remunerado do setor). As Fundações (6,0%) e as Associações Mutualistas (2,1%) estão presentes em menor número, se bem que algumas dessas entidades são das maiores em termos de peso econômico e de postos de trabalho criados.

Concluindo a breve visão global sobre o setor, importa ainda mencionar que, numa óptica territorial, as entidades da ES se disseminam por todo o país. Tal como acontece em termos populacionais, as Áreas Metropolitanas de Lisboa e do Porto concentram mais de um terço do total das unidades (34,9%). Mas a presença em todos os municípios e na maioria das freguesias de Portugal contribui para o crescimento da importância econômica e social da ES, nomeadamente no que toca à sua influência sobre a organização do tecido social.

TABELA 1
Taxas de resposta do Ises (2018)

GRUPOS DE ENTIDADES	TOTAL DE RESPOSTAS VÁLIDAS	TOTAL DA AMOSTRA	TAXA DE RESPOSTA
	Nº	Nº	%
Cooperativas	1223	2012	60,8%
Associações mutualistas	69	91	75,8%
Misericórdias	289	377	76,7%
Fundações	341	574	59,4%
Associações com fins altruísticos	1625	2961	54,9%
Entidades abrangidas pelos subsectores comunitário e autogestionário	3	4	75,0%
TOTAL DAS ENTIDADES	3 550	6 019	59,0%

Fonte: INE/Cases, 2019.

Sobre dimensões mais específicas, como a composição dos órgãos sociais dessas entidades, já havíamos mencionado a carência de informação estatística alargada. É precisamente essa amplitude que o Ises aporta, na medida em que a sua referência é de âmbito nacional e os dados obtidos resultam de 3550 respostas válidas (taxa de resposta de 59,0%) (Quadro 1). As entidades inquiridas foram agrupadas em seis grandes famílias – cooperativas; associações mutualistas; misericórdias; fundações; associações com fins altruísticos; entidades abrangidas pelos subsectores comunitário e autogestionário – respeitando a divisão consignada na Lei de Bases da Economia Social quanto à composição do setor. Mas apenas os cinco primeiros grupos foram considerados para efeitos de análise estatística mais fina, dada a baixa representatividade do último.

Observando especificamente os dois níveis superiores da sua estrutura hierárquica, ou seja, os membros da direção de topo (entendida como órgão social da entidade com funções executivas) e o/a dirigente de topo (o/a dirigente que ocupa a posição hierarquicamente mais elevada sem subordinação a nenhuma outra), resulta flagrante o modo como em ambos os níveis domina a masculinização (ver Tabela 2).

A presença de homens nos órgãos de direção é sempre superior a 70%, oscilando entre os 70,2% nas Associações com fins altruísticos, e os 79,3% nas Associações mutualistas. No que concerne ao posto de Direção de topo, o desequilíbrio é ainda mais flagrante. Dos 73,7% nas Fundações aos 93,3% nas Associações mutualistas, passando por valores de 78,0% nas Associações com fins altruísticos, de 80,9% nas Cooperativas e de 87,0% nas Misericórdias, nenhuma das famílias da ES portuguesa

TABELA 2

Caracterização dos membros da direção de topo e dirigente de topo, por sexo

	COOPERATIVAS	ASSOCIAÇÕES MUTUALISTAS	MISERICÓRDIAS	FUNDAÇÕES	ASSOCIAÇÕES COM FINS ALTR.
MEMBROS DE TOPO					
Masculino	76,6%	79,3%	72,0%	71,2%	70,2%
Feminino	23,4%	27,0%	28,0%	28,8%	29,8%
DIRIGENTE DE TOPO					
Masculino	80,9%	93,3%	87,0%	73,7%	78,0%
Feminino	19,1%	6,7%	13,0%	26,3%	22,0%

Fonte: INE/Cases, 2019.

diverge da tendência para a segregação de gênero no preenchimento dos lugares de topo, e de poder, das entidades.

Ainda que a partir de análises mais setoriais, idêntica tendência já havia sido detectada por outros estudos. No âmbito do projeto por nós coordenado (auto-diagnóstico de gênero, feito por 32 IPSS, no contexto da elaboração de um Plano Municipal de Intervenção para a Igualdade de Gênero), foi-nos dado observar o modo como as estruturas de emprego e governação refletem o caráter masculinizado dos principais órgãos de gestão. Com efeito, a governação dessas organizações é conduzida sobretudo por homens e, apesar de a direção técnica ser maioritariamente assumida por uma mulher (em 87% das organizações com direção técnica), todos os cargos dos órgãos sociais (Presidências da Direção, da Assembleia-Geral e do Conselho Fiscal, bem como de Tesoureiro/a) tendem a ser ocupados por homens (Monteiro & Oliveira, 2014).

No caso da investigação conduzida por Parente e Martinho (2018) junto de onze organizações representativas do setor, a informação coletada apontou para que em apenas uma delas a presidência era assumida por uma mulher. Apenas duas organizações tinham mais mulheres do que homens nos seus órgãos de decisão, e nas restantes esses órgãos eram maioritariamente formados por homens (74,3%). Por sua vez, Meira *et al.* (2020) analisaram a taxa de feminização nos órgãos das cooperativas portuguesas, tendo concluído que o valor médio de representatividade feminina na Mesa da Assembleia é de 26,13%, 23,17% no Órgão de administração e 24,03% no Órgão de fiscalização.

Expandindo a análise a outras dimensões, como as habilitações académicas, a idade e a antiguidade nos postos de liderança, constata-se que em quase todas as

famílias de entidades os membros da direção de topo não tinham licenciatura ou grau acadêmico superior, com exceção das Fundações (76,4%).

TABELA 3
Habilitações acadêmicas dos membros da direção de topo e dirigente de topo

	COOPERATIVAS	ASSOCIAÇÕES MUTUALISTAS	MISERICÓRDIAS	FUNDAÇÕES	ASSOCIAÇÕES COM FINS ALTR.
MEMBROS DE TOPO					
Sem nível de escolaridade	0,1%	0,0%	0,1%	0,0%	0,9%
Ens. básico	22,9%	16,2%	18,6%	4,0%	16,6%
Ens. secundário	27,8%	36,9%	27,7%	11,9%	23,2%
Ens. pós-secundário	8,7%	7,9%	9,6%	7,7%	9,6%
Licenciatura ou superior	40,5%	39,0%	44,0%	76,4%	49,7%
DIRIGENTE DE TOPO					
Licenciatura ou superior	49,2%	61,1%	57,8%	78,1%	59,2%

Fonte: INE/Cases, 2019.

No oposto (ver Tabela 3), apenas no caso das Cooperativas a maioria dos/das dirigentes de topo não detinha grau acadêmico de licenciatura ou superior. Nos restantes grupos de entidades a situação prevalecente era essa, estando em linha com o verificado no universo das empresas portuguesas (53,1% detinham essa habilitação, dados de 2016) (INE, 2016).

Sobre a idade e antiguidade nas funções (ver Quadro 4), o principal destaque vai para a idade elevada de quem assume a direção das organizações: nas Associações mutualistas, Misericórdias e Fundações, a maioria tinha mais de 64 anos de idade. Tendência semelhante é a que se verifica entre os membros da direção de topo, em que domina o escalão etário dos 55 aos 64 anos. As Associações com fins altruísticos são aquelas cujas funções dirigentes são assumidas por pessoas mais jovens (concentração dos membros de topo no escalão 45 a 54 anos e do/a dirigente de topo no escalão 35 a 44 anos de idade). Por sua vez, as Misericórdias agregam à elevada idade dos/as ocupantes dessas funções um tempo mais longo de permanência nos cargos.

Por fim, julga-se pertinente partilhar uma informação adicional ainda no quadro da composição e práticas de gestão das entidades da ES, e que reporta às estratégias de gestão e de desenvolvimento das entidades. Para o efeito, foram neste inquérito consideradas quatro estratégias alternativas: a) Sobrevivência, o que abarca a redução de custos e o desinvestimento; b) Manutenção, que inclui a estabilidade e a sustentabilidade; c) Crescimento, que envolve a diversificação, expansão e internacionalização;

TABELA 4

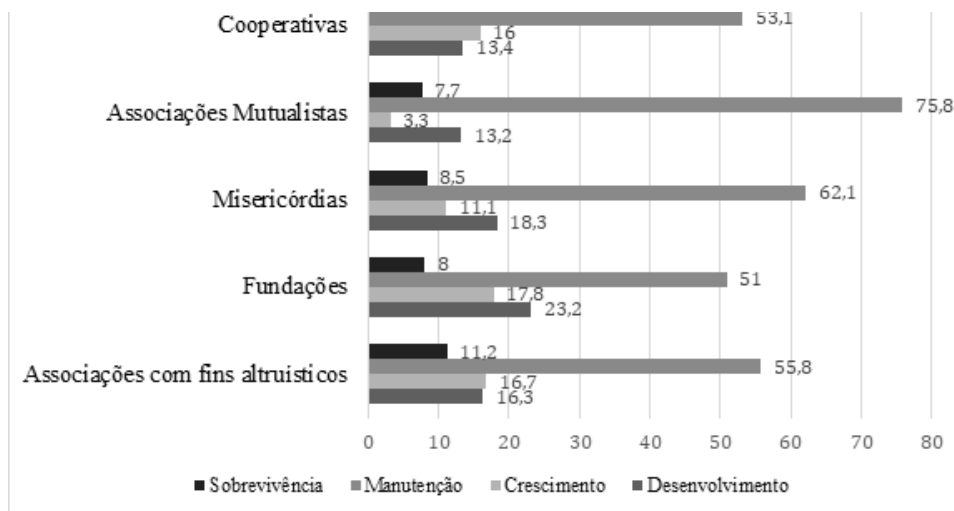
Idade e antiguidade nas funções, dos membros da direção de topo e dirigente de topo

	COOPERATIVAS	ASSOCIAÇÕES MUTUALISTAS	MISERICÓRDIAS	FUNDAÇÕES	ASSOCIAÇÕES COM FINS ALTR.
MEMBROS DE TOPO					
Idade	55 a 64 anos (34,0%)	55 a 64 anos (47,8%)	55 a 64 anos (52,2%)	55 a 64 anos (41,1%)	45 a 54 anos (33,9%)
Antiguidade	1 a 4 anos (28,3%)	5 a 9 anos (46,7%)	10 a 14 anos (30,0%)	5 a 9 anos (30,2%)	1 a 4 anos (39,8%)
DIRIGENTE DE TOPO					
Idade	55 ou mais (57,3%)	Mais de 64 (41,1%)	Mais de 64 (52,2%)	Mais de 64 (54,5%)	35 a 44 (24,4%)
Antiguidade	1 a 4 anos (28,4%)	5 a 9 anos (40,0%)	5 a 9 anos (26,%)	1 a 4 anos (27,0%)	1 a 4 anos (38,5%)

Fonte: INE/Cases, 2019.

GRÁFICO 1

Estratégias da entidade (%)



Fonte: INE/Cases, 2019.

d) Desenvolvimento, que implica a inovação social, cooperação, parceria, ou fusão com outras entidades.

Face aos quatro cenários possíveis, em todas as famílias da ES a maior proporção das entidades indicou uma estratégia de manutenção da sua atividade, com maior preponderância nas Associações Mutualistas (75,8%) e menor nas Fundações (51,0%) (Gráfico 1). Tendo em consideração o tipo de respostas obtidas, extraem-se daqui algumas ilações relevantes no que concerne ao estilo de liderança e à ambição para o futuro dessas organizações da Economia Social.

Conclusões e discussão

“Penso que é absolutamente necessário encontrar a possibilidade de construir um espaço público alternativo que não seja o espaço público oficial masculinizado. A este respeito, parece-me que as iniciativas ESS [Economia Social e Solidária] podem, muito bem, ser espaços públicos alternativos aptos a tornar possível o desenvolvimento das competências ditas femininas.” (Fraser, 2015, p. 256). Os dados observados sobre a realidade portuguesa revelam que, pelo menos neste país e no que respeita à ocupação dos cargos de liderança, as organizações sociais estão distantes do desígnio que Nancy Fraser lhes atribui. Na sequência da análise estatística feita a partir de um inquérito nacional ao setor da Economia Social, é-nos dado constatar que, tanto no que toca à composição dos órgãos de direção como a quem ocupa a Direção de topo, todo o setor é pautado por uma destacada segregação vertical. E, por outro lado, revela que a sub-representação feminina é comum a todas as grandes famílias que o compõem.

Essa masculinização da estrutura de governação, aliada a uma feminização do emprego nas funções mais técnicas e administrativas, espelha aquilo que a literatura nos indicou ser estrutural: o trabalho social é maioritariamente feminino e as funções de maior representatividade e poder são tendencialmente ocupadas por homens. Mas os resultados apresentados não só revelam imutabilidade como, ao observar outras duas características, deixam indiciar uma potencial resistência à mudança. Falamos concretamente da elevada idade que caracteriza em média quem assume a liderança dessas entidades e, ainda, do modo como é expressamente privilegiada uma estratégia de “manutenção” no que concerne às práticas de gestão e de desenvolvimento das entidades. Acresce ainda a constatação feita a partir de outros estudos, a de que existe no seio dessas organizações uma certa naturalização e desvalorização da segregação de gênero.

É perante este cenário, de imutabilidade e de potencial resistência à mudança, que cabe interrogar sobre como é possível desafiar a Economia Social a ser um bom

exemplo e a assumir a luta contra a segregação vertical e outras formas de discriminação de gênero.

Entre outras possibilidades, a integração sistêmica da perspectiva de gênero e a sua institucionalização por via legal ou deliberativa têm sido defendidas em distintos contextos, sejam eles de análises acadêmicas (cf. Vidal, 2011; Adjamagbo & Calvès, 2012; Parken, 2018), como de plataformas reivindicativas (Civicus, 2016; EWL, s/d; Wolf, 2020). Sinteticamente, a via escolhida é a de que, através da advocacia e do lobismo, da reivindicação no espaço público ou da intervenção legislativa, se consigam acelerar as dinâmicas de mudança. Outras medidas mais concretas, como a divulgação de estatísticas (tais como as que aqui se apresentam), estratégias de *mainstreaming* a partir de exemplos de sucesso, a introdução de cotas ou de vantagens fiscais, a limitação do número de mandatos ou a criação de parcerias para a ação, também se inscrevem no esforço para alterar a ordem vigente, nesta e em outras matérias que também dizem respeito à igualdade de gênero. Uma das vantagens que vemos nesta abordagem é a de que ela potencia a sensibilização coletiva e a adoção de uma agenda política que vise à alteração dos paradigmas a um nível mais global (Medina-Vincent, 2020). Como limitação principal, observa-se como em variadas circunstâncias a *law in books* não se transforma em *law in action*. Só por si, a determinação legislativa ou a aceitação de certos princípios não são suficientes para alterar as práticas. Nessa matéria, como temos citado, as entidades da Economia Social podem ser apontadas como exemplo de uma particular dissociação entre os princípios sociais que defendem e as práticas intramuros.

Todavia, o setor também apresenta essa outra particularidade de ser altamente feminizado, o que poderá funcionar como suporte para uma ação transformativa. Nesse sentido, e tendo em atenção todo o contexto de resistência que está instalado dentro das próprias organizações, julgamos que uma parte da dinâmica de mudança em favor da igualdade de poder exige atuação interna, ao nível da consciencialização e do empoderamento das mulheres. Sem essa energia propulsora, estima-se que se possa permanecer por mais um longo período entre avanços legislativos que institucionalizam o debate e definem orientações programáticas no sentido da alteração do *statu quo*, mas tardam em gerar a necessária mudança a nível da realidade concreta.

De acordo com esta perspectiva, que se inspira no pensamento de Paulo Freire, Jacques Mezirow ou Jürgen Habermas, a ação afirmativa em prol da mudança começa na pessoa e no esforço de “conscientização” (Freire) ou “aprendizagem transformadora” (Mezirow). A insistência sobre o peso da ação pessoal baseia-se na convicção de que um ganho de poder e de controle sobre a própria vida exige uma prévia consciência crítica sobre as fontes e a natureza das desigualdades e exploração. Paulo Freire (1979) define-a como uma experiência de conscientização, ou seja, de

ação reflexiva da pessoa sobre si mesma e o mundo que, na circunstância, conduz a uma interpretação mais esclarecida sobre a natureza e as dimensões das desigualdades vividas. E Jacques Mezirow reforça a ideia:

Muitas vezes os aprendentes não têm consciência de serem oprimidos; eles internalizam os valores dos opressores. Freire demonstrou como é possível ajudá-los a entender que tradicionalmente têm interpretado erradamente a sua situação, para que algum tipo de ação adequada se torne possível. Esta “desconstrução” de quadros reificados de referência deve frequentemente preceder a ação em prol de interesses próprios (Mezirow, 1997, p. 62).

A valorização de uma aprendizagem transformadora, ou seja, aquela que se inicia com uma reflexão crítica ou autorreflexão crítica sobre os pressupostos pessoais e os dos outros, é tanto mais importante quanto a realidade de discriminação e de segregação vivida não é apenas determinada por barreiras estruturais e institucionais, mas se esconde por detrás de barreiras culturais, que estão ligadas à difusão (ou não) de certos valores tradicionais concernentes ao lugar da mulher na sociedade, na família ou nas organizações. No caso das entidades da sociedade civil, a imputação às mulheres do papel principal de cuidadoras e, no oposto, a masculinização das características e atributos da liderança contribuem seguramente para manter aquelas afastadas dos cargos de direção. É ao mesmo tempo uma ordem que prima pela invisibilidade e pela sua naturalização, e que induz à inércia face aos desafios da mudança.

Mas a “transgressão dos interditos” não pode apenas cingir-se à consciência individual. Sob pena de estimular a percepção das desigualdades e, ao mesmo tempo, um sentimento de impotência perante a força dos sistemas instituídos. Este é apenas o primeiro passo de um caminho mais longo, que conduz da inquietação individual à vontade e à dinâmica coletivas. O restante desse caminho implicará uma disponibilidade para refletir e agir em conjunto. No processo de demarcação das identidades atribuídas e de reivindicação do direito a novas identidades e a novos papéis, constrói-se uma continuidade entre a construção da individualidade, a ação comunicativa e a organização coletiva (cf. Habermas, 2010).

No contexto particular de cada entidade, dada a especificidade de cada caso, e no quadro de parcerias interorganizacionais, a construção de uma dinâmica coletiva de mudança poderá ser concretizável através de processos de (auto)aprendizagem orientados para a interpretação crítica da realidade vivida, sucedendo-lhe uma revisão dos mecanismos internos de governação. Entre outros, o domínio da aprendizagem deverá contemplar um autodiagnóstico sobre a situação vigente, a procura da racionalidade subjacente à escolha das lideranças, assim como a mútua interpelação quanto ao futuro desejável. A concretização de novas modalidades de governação implicará,

por sua vez, o esbatimento da verticalidade nos organogramas das entidades, a introdução de mecanismos de alternância, assim como a valorização da diversidade e da participação alargada nos processos de decisão.

Face ao imobilismo da realidade, é crucial que as organizações da Economia Social assumam para dentro o que têm defendido para fora, nomeadamente no que concerne à promoção da igualdade e da equidade, na luta contra a discriminação e a desigualdade. Urge um processo de transformação multidimensional, com origem nas mulheres mas igualmente mobilizador e comprometedor dos homens, que lhes permita tomar consciência, individual e coletivamente, das relações de dominação que as marginalizam, e de desenvolver a sua capacidade para as transformar.

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Resumo

As mulheres na Economia Social: no centro da ação, longe da decisão

Com este texto, pretende-se alertar para a persistente desproporção entre homens e mulheres nos cargos de liderança das entidades da Economia Social. Para o efeito, observa-se a realidade portuguesa sobre a qual, pela primeira vez, estão disponíveis dados atualizados e a nível nacional, recolhidos pelo INE – Instituto Nacional de Estatística. Refletindo sobre as causas que lhe subjazem, propomo-nos ainda abordar as vias para ultrapassar a segregação de gênero. Neste ponto, partimos de uma constatação importante, a de que existe no seio das mencionadas organizações um bloqueio à mudança decorrente da invisibilidade das questões de gênero e de uma negação do problema, para advogar que uma parte da dinâmica de mudança em favor da igualdade de poder exige atuação interna, ao nível da consciencialização, do empoderamento e de uma abordagem transformadora.

Palavras-chave: Liderança; Economia social; Organizações; Segregação vertical; Estatísticas.

Abstract

Women in the Social Economy: at the heart of action, far from the decision

With this text, it is intended to alert to the persistent disproportion between men and women in the leadership positions of social economy entities. To this end, we observe the Portuguese reality on which, for the first time, updated data are available at the national level, collected by INE – National Institute of Statistics. Reflecting on the underlying causes, we also propose to address the ways to overcome gender segregation. At this point, we start from an important observation, that there is a blockage to change within the aforementioned organisations due to the invisibility of gender issues and a denial of the problem, to advocate that part of the dynamics of change in favour of equality of power requires internal action, at the level of awareness, empowerment and a transformative approach.

Keywords: Leadership; Social economy; Organizations; Vertical segregation; Statistics.

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Para “descolonizar” o comum

Um ensaio crítico sobre a obra de Dardot e Laval

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Introdução

Dardot e Laval (2017) têm se destacado por introduzir aportes originais para o debate sobre o comum. Sem negar a relevância da contribuição dos autores, sustento que sua proposta de refundação conceitual do comum deve passar ainda pelo crivo crítico do pensamento descolonizador.

Em sentido oposto à tendência de guetização intelectual, que gera fronteiras artificiais entre correntes de pensamento, ao mesmo tempo que invisibiliza suas diferenças internas, valho-me do termo *pensamento descolonizador* para abranger um território vasto e incongruente de correntes e autores que: 1) valorizam a multiplicidade ontológica (ou dos modos de ser no mundo) e a diversidade epistemológica do mundo e 2) buscam promover formas de descolonizar o conhecimento e suas práticas e de produzir pluralismos articulados “na linha de uma mestiçagem descolonizada cuja mistura de conhecimentos, culturas, subjetividades e práticas subverte a linha abissal em que se baseiam as epistemologias do Norte” (Santos, 2019, p. 161).

Argumento que há, na conceituação do comum por Dardot e Laval, elementos que podem ser incorporados como recursos conceituais para descolonizar os pensamentos e as práticas do comum. Por outro lado, essas potencialidades “decoloniais” tendem a ser limitadas por dispositivos epistêmicos que repõem “a linha abissal em

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que se baseiam as epistemologias do Norte”. A crítica a esses dispositivos conduz à (meta)norma da *inapropriabilidade epistêmica* como premissa (decolonial) da política do comum.

Potências “decoloniais” do comum em Dardot e Laval

Uma das vantagens da abordagem do comum em Dardot e Laval (2017) é o modo como eles vinculam sua efetivação à prática dos próprios coletivos, demandando o deslocamento de conteúdos prescritivos, fundados em tentativas de estabelecer aprioristicamente o que deve ser posto em comum, os contornos normativos do comum ou os seus sujeitos.

Em uma elaboração que parece retomar a perspectiva de Linebaugh (2013, p. 285) do comum “como verbo, como atividade”, como *commoning* (fazer-comum), eles localizam o fundamento do comum no *agir comum*. Este designa “o fato de que os homens se engajam juntos em uma mesma tarefa e, agindo desse modo, produzem normas morais e jurídicas que regulam a ação” ou “a ação que institui o comum e dele se encarrega” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 25). Desse modo, o comum não é legenda reservada a um conjunto predefinido de “bens”. Comum é uma qualidade que deriva da ação e não das coisas, descrevendo “ao mesmo tempo uma qualidade do agir e aquilo que é instituído por esse mesmo agir” (*Idem*, p. 297).

Analogamente, o comum não é atividade reservada a um conjunto predefinido de sujeitos, como acontecia, por exemplo, em certas linhagens marxistas que atribuíam ao proletariado o estatuto de agente privilegiado da revolução social. A discussão dos dois intelectuais franceses recorda o modo como Linebaugh (2013) identifica o fundamento da articulação entre *commoners* (comuneiros) e *commons* (recursos comuns) no *commoning* (fazer-comum), projetando as três categorias como “tríade indissociável” (Tonucci Filho, 2019, p. 162). Com efeito, o duplo referente do comum – como “qualidade do agir” e como “aquilo que é instituído por esse mesmo agir” – articula-se a um sujeito coletivo concebido como contemporâneo da própria instituição do comum como regime de práticas: “[...] somente a atividade prática pode produzir um novo sujeito coletivo, em vez de afirmar que tal sujeito preexista a essa atividade” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 53). É na e pela participação na mesma atividade e em seu governo que se autoproduz o sujeito coletivo do comum.

A partir da centralidade do agir comum, Dardot e Laval argumentam que o que distingue seu regime de práticas é a coimplicação de *coparticipação*, *codecisão* e *coobrigação* políticas. O termo “comum”, pela própria raiz etimológica latina da palavra (*cum* + *munus*, obrigação), parece apto a reivindicar o princípio político da *coobrigação*. O essencial, no entanto, seria a natureza derivada da coobrigação,

que resultaria da participação em uma mesma atividade e da codificação relativa às regras que a governam: “A obrigação política procede inteiramente do *agir comum*, extrai sua força do compromisso prático que une todos os que elaboram juntos as regras de sua atividade, e vale apenas para os participantes de uma mesma atividade” (*Idem*, p. 616).

Subjacente à noção dessa tríade, encontra-se a noção de *instituição*. O comum é instituído por uma prática e mantém-se nela e por ela, ou seja, não preexiste à sua instituição e não sobrevive a ela. Em um diálogo crítico com a noção de “poder instituinte”, de Castoriadis, e de “práxis”, de Marx, Dardot e Laval propõem o conceito de *práxis instituinte* como “a atividade que estabelece um novo sistema de regras e a atividade que tenta reiniciar permanentemente esse estabelecimento para evitar a paralisação do instituinte no instituído” (*Idem*, 471). O comum deve ser compreendido como práxis instituinte que estabelece “as regras do uso comum e de seu prolongamento em um uso instituinte que proceda à revisão regular dessas mesmas regras” (*Idem*, p. 504).

À centralidade da noção de instituição corresponde a proposição de uma *lógica federativa* na relação entre comuns. Entre os múltiplos comuns e sujeitos coletivos autoproduzidos na sua instituição, não pode haver senão federações ou comuns de comuns, que têm como base os mesmos fundamentos que definem o comum como princípio político. Essa política de comuns de comuns, estendida tanto à esfera socioeconômica como à esfera política pública, é o fundamento de “uma *democracia dos comuns*” (*Idem*, p. 619).

Para fechar o círculo da elaboração conceitual dos autores, falta dizer que a *inapropriabilidade* é a norma transversal do comum como princípio político. O comum não é o fundamento de um direito de propriedade sobre uma coisa, mas sua negação em todas as formas, pois o que ele visa é o governo de sua *apropriação-destinação*, devendo, assim, ser subtraído de toda *apropriação-pertencimento*. A instituição do comum é a coinstituição contínua das regras do uso comum, da *apropriação-destinação* de algo que se torna, por esse uso, *inapropriável* ou indisponível para sua *apropriação-pertencimento* (*Idem*, p. 620).

Ao estabelecer tais premissas, Dardot e Laval criam um espaço analítico e político que apresenta muitas afinidades com o pensamento descolonizador, na medida em que recusa um monopólio normativo para o comum na forma de uma plataforma epistemológica e política que defina aprioristicamente os sujeitos, os objetos, as formas ou modalidades do comum. O que dá forma ao comum é “a *prática de governo dos comuns* pelos coletivos que lhe dão vida” (*Idem*, p. 618). Essa perspectiva implica o deslocamento da possibilidade de um “ponto zero” (Castro-Gomez, 2004) para o comum, quer dizer, de qualquer referência normativa representada como externa às

práticas de instituição do comum ou como um dispositivo situante (social e culturalmente) não situado. Esse deslocamento é um pressuposto para assegurar o lugar da multiplicidade ontológica ou cosmopolítica e da diversidade epistemológica do mundo na política do comum.

A aptidão “decolonial” dessas elaborações é reforçada por um conjunto de críticas que diz respeito a usos correntes do comum. Gostaria de destacar as críticas à concepção naturalista do comum, à identificação do comum ao universal e aos modelos teleológicos da emergência do comum.

Federici (2014) observa que a revalorização dos comuns não é tendência exclusiva de pessoas e grupos comprometidos com valores solidários ou com uma perspectiva anticapitalista. Mesmo economistas ortodoxos do livre mercado reconhecem que a mercantilização de todas as esferas da vida pode ser contraproducente para o capital e estão “aprendendo quais são as virtudes dos ‘bens comuns’” (*Idem*, p. 148) e como reorientá-las em benefício dos interesses da acumulação de capital. A apropriação da linguagem dos comuns pelo Banco Mundial e pela ONU e a atribuição do Prêmio Nobel de Economia de 2009 a Elinor Ostrom, por sua obra sobre o “*governing the commons*”, são expressões dessa tendência.

Dardot e Laval salientam que, na base dos discursos que procuram reviver os comuns dentro de um apelo pragmático relativo às suas virtudes racionais para a gestão de certos bens específicos, encontra-se uma concepção *naturalista* do comum. O sucesso de Ostrom, por exemplo, repousaria na defesa de uma distribuição naturalizada de bens de acordo com o regime institucional (privado, estatal ou comum) mais apropriado à sua gestão. A escolha institucional pelo comum ou pelo privado ou público decorreria do caráter intrínseco (natural) do bem, impondo-se aos cálculos dos indivíduos (naturalmente racionais) graças à sua racionalidade superior para a gestão desse bem específico.

Essa concepção impede a construção do comum como “princípio geral de reorganização da sociedade”, definindo um regime de diversidade institucional em que é reservado para os comuns o lugar de uma economia especial de certo tipo de recursos, uma espécie de “arquipélago” no oceano de uma economia maior dominada pelo mercado (Dardot & Laval, 2017, pp. 164-165). Além disso, esse esquema ancora-se em um tipo antidemocrático de autoridade, na medida em que caberia a economistas, juristas ou outros especialistas, à revelia de coletivos e movimentos, a tarefa de alocar os bens, por sua suposta natureza, nos regimes institucionais apropriados. A naturalização do comum alinha-se, assim, com uma forma de *naturalização da autoridade*.

A refundação conceitual do comum por Dardot e Laval contrapõe-se radicalmente a essa captura (colonial) do comum. Pode-se dizer que ela opõe ao discurso da *diversidade institucional naturalizada*, baseada nos interesses do mercado, o dis-

curso da *diversidade da práxis instituinte do comum*, baseada nas práticas coletivas e nas lutas políticas, como fundamento *não naturalista* da política do comum como “princípio geral de reorganização da sociedade”.

Concorre com a perspectiva da diversidade da práxis instituinte do comum a perspectiva que identifica o comum com o *universal*. Trata-se daquelas tradições que definem o comum pelo “humano”, quer dizer, pelo que é comum ao gênero humano e, portanto, universal, reconduzindo a conceituação do comum a um essencialismo em que, “ao contrário do anterior, a identidade interna do gênero substitui a identidade material das coisas” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 45). O discurso dos direitos humanos universais pertence a esse conjunto de tradições, assumindo a especificação abstrata de um “homem universal” ou “cidadão universal” prototípico como seu destinatário genérico ou a “comunidade” prototípica como sujeito de uma titularidade universal.

Não é difícil imaginar que esse essencialismo da “identidade interna do gênero” não funcione sem algum tipo de “razão legisladora” (Bauman, 1999) que, a partir de uma ontologia do gênero humano, seja capaz de indicar o que é universal e, assim, de demonstrar a necessidade de *universalizar* certo conjunto de significados, de objetos, de instituições, de modos de ser concebidos como comuns, universais, racionais. A universalidade abstrata dessa ontologia é evidentemente ancorada em pressupostos ocidentocêntricos. Como afirma Mignolo (2008, p. 300), “a defesa da similaridade humana sobre as diferenças humanas é sempre uma reivindicação feita pela posição privilegiada da política de identidade no poder”.

A oposição de Dardot e Laval a tal concepção reitera motivos importantes do pensamento descolonizador, designadamente, a crítica da imperialidade ou colonialidade embutida na visão dominante da universalidade e a ideia de um “projeto global [...] que seria – ao contrário de Kant – pluriversal em vez de universal” (Mignolo, 2017, p. 14). Em oposição à universalidade abstrata do gênero humano, Dardot e Laval (2017, pp. 52-53) enfatizam que “o comum deve ser pensado como coatividade”, o que demanda “provincianizar” a noção de universalidade: “Se existe ‘universalidade’, só pode tratar-se de uma universalidade *prática*, ou seja, a de todos os indivíduos que, em dado momento e em dadas condições, se encontram engajados numa mesma tarefa”.

Por fim, a crítica aos modelos *teleológicos* da emergência do comum: os modelos da *emergência espontânea do comum a partir do social* e da *produção histórica do comum pelo capital*. O primeiro explica a emergência do comum a partir da própria natureza da vida social, que conteria, em si mesma, um dinamismo conducente à cooperação e à reciprocidade, de modo que o desenvolvimento do comum dependeria somente da supressão de instituições consideradas antissociais ou artificiais, como a propriedade privada, em Proudhon, ou as instituições do capital financeiro,

na literatura mais otimista em relação às virtudes das redes e do trabalho imaterial no contexto do capitalismo contemporâneo. O segundo refere-se à noção (que remontaria a Marx) de que as formas da cooperação produtiva desenvolvidas pelo capital, as formas de “socialização” gestadas no processo de acumulação do capital, constituem a condição material da gestão coletiva da produção pelos trabalhadores, o fundamento da produção consciente de outro regime (comum) de propriedade e de relações de produção.

A cumplicidade de certos discursos teleológicos com a produção e a reprodução da relação colonial/imperial foi denunciada por autores do pensamento descolonizador. São discursos que participam do que Santos (2008) designa como “monocultura do tempo linear”. A ideia do tempo linear localiza na “frente do tempo” instituições, formas de sociabilidade e conhecimentos da metropolitanidade, convertendo-os na norma temporal de uma assimetria de corte colonial/imperial.

É essa a lógica que Dardot e Laval criticam nos modelos teóricos acima, denunciando a neutralização social das formas existentes de cooperação ou, de maneira mais específica, a subestimação dos dispositivos de poder por meio das quais o capital molda as formas de cooperação, seja na grande indústria do século XIX, seja na atual economia do conhecimento. Embora concebam de modo muito distinto a produção do comum, ambos os modelos têm como consequência desativar a práxis instituinte do comum, em benefício das formas (instituídas) de subsunção do trabalho ao capital. Para escapar a esses modelos, Dardot e Laval propõem recusar os seus postulados e aderir a um modelo teórico que tenha como ponto de partida as “práticas coletivas e as lutas políticas” como “fontes de instituição e de direito” (*Idem*, p. 240).

Esse conjunto de críticas tende a endossar e a fundamentar um lugar para uma política *pluriversal* (decolonial) do comum, contrapondo-se à captura (colonial) do comum pelos mecanismos da diversidade institucional naturalista, alinhada ao mercado, da universalidade monocêntrica, típica da imperialidade/colonialidade, e da norma temporal das teleologias capitalocêntricas do Norte. É a perspectiva radicalmente *construcionista* do comum desenhada pelos autores – a qual pode ser sintetizada na ideia de que não há outra medida do comum senão as regras estabelecidas pelos coletivos que se autoproduzem na instituição do comum – que lhes permite descartar essas medidas/normas da imperialidade/colonialidade.

Armadilhas “coloniais” do comum em Dardot e Laval

Defendo que os aspectos da obra de Dardot e Laval acima apresentados podem ser incorporados como importantes recursos conceituais em benefício da descoloniza-

ção da política do comum. Para isso, é necessário, contudo, aprender a manejá-los para além dos limites coloniais que Dardot e Laval tendem a reinstalar em sua obra.

Refiro-me, em primeiro lugar, a uma “arqueologia do comum” que repõe armadilhas epistemológicas ou cosmopolíticas de matriz colonial/imperial. Ao falar de arqueologia do comum, não aludo apenas ao primeiro capítulo da obra de Dardot e Laval (2017), assim intitulado, mas à arqueologia de saberes e práticas ou ao estudo da “história longa” do comum que atravessa todo o livro, explorando possibilidades e limites de experiências sociais e teorias ou paradigmas do comum. Considerando que essa arqueologia incide sobre o significado, a justificação e a orientação das lutas em torno do comum, não se pode subestimar a relevância de desenvolver crítica atenta de seus pressupostos.

Ao passar em revista os capítulos do livro, torna-se claro que a arqueologia do comum de Dardot e Laval permanece dentro dos limites do cânone ocidental. Podemos começar observando que o estudo da “longa história” do comum começa, como de praxe nas metanarrativas eurocêntricas, com antigos gregos e latinos. A essas “raízes” é atribuído um sentido especial, prototípico ou matricial, para a política do comum. No contexto das proposições políticas do livro, reafirma-se essa precedência, quando se diz que a política do comum “tem raízes na tradição política da democracia, em especial na experiência grega” (*Idem*, p. 485). Esse enunciado não é destituído de implicações, determinando o privilégio da experiência grega e, assim, a política de “raízes” típica do “racismo epistêmico” (Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

É verdade que Dardot e Laval (2017, p. 116) reconhecem que foram movimentos latino-americanos, como dos piqueteiros e das fábricas recuperadas na Argentina, da “guerra do gás” e da “guerra da água” na Bolívia, das comunidades indígenas de Chiapas no México etc. que começaram, a partir da década de 1990, a “popularizar o ‘retorno dos comuns’”. Esse reconhecimento, no entanto, não se desdobra na investigação de suas instituições, de seus regimes de práticas, discursos e conceitos.

Embora registrem, de passagem, a inspiração ameríndia dos movimentos do retorno dos comuns na América Latina e a reativação de “antigas formas deliberativas comunitárias” (*Idem*, pp. 116-117), o capítulo sobre a arqueologia do comum nada diz a respeito dessas “raízes”, ao passo que não deixa de citar Aristóteles, Cícero, Virgílio, Santo Agostinho e Kant. Para essa arqueologia, parece importante retomar a concepção aristotélica da instituição do comum (*koinón*) e do pôr em comum (*koinónein*), mas não a concepção de colaboração ou trabalho mútuo (*minga*), de compromisso recíproco (*mita*) e de complementaridade/participação (*pacta-pacta*) como fórmula de governo do repertório da tradição comunal andina dos Ayllu, por exemplo.

Ao examinar o retorno dos comuns, nossos autores estão mais interessados em subsumir sua heterogeneidade sob um rótulo genérico do que “nos sentidos diferentes

que o termo ‘comuns’ pode assumir no novo léxico político” (*Idem*, p. 103). Assim é que as experiências e os “sentidos diferentes” do retorno dos comuns podem ser reduzidos a uma porção pequena de enunciados acerca de sua oposição a “aspectos perniciosos e intoleráveis das políticas neoliberais” ou às dinâmicas pervasivas do “cosmocapital” (neoliberal) e acerca de sua “exigência de uma nova forma, mais responsável, duradoura e justa, de gestão ‘comunitária’ e democrática dos recursos comuns” (*Idem*, p. 115; 105). Com isso, extingue-se o interesse de Dardot e Laval por esses movimentos, e eles podem passar à crítica aos limites dos paradigmas dominantes na análise dos comuns.

Mais problemático, porém, é o tratamento da África na discussão do livro. Ao tratar da “ilusão da propriedade coletiva arcaica”, os autores se referem à “situação da África, onde ainda existem partidários da ideia de propriedade coletiva da terra” (*Idem*, p. 262). Além de uma breve menção à concessão estatal de terras a multinacionais na Etiópia, na introdução do livro (*Idem*, p. 19), essa é a única referência à África. O objetivo da seção a que pertence essa referência é refutar a tese de que alguma vez houve algo que autorize a sustentar o conceito de “propriedade comum” como base para o comum. Não interessa considerar aqui a questão, mas o modo como a África aparece nesse contexto.

A principal referência para a construção do argumento dessa seção é a obra do antropólogo neoevolucionista francês Alain Testart. São as tipologias que ele estabelece na captura do “sentido da evolução social” que interessam a Dardot e Laval, particularmente duas: uma que se refere ao sentido da evolução da propriedade (exposta em três “mundos”) e outra que compreende o sentido da evolução do sistema político nas “sociedades com riqueza e propriedade usufundada” (“mundo II” da primeira tipologia). Trata-se de tipologias triádicas, como costumam ser as tipologias ocidentais “clássicas”, com sua obsessão simétrica, tipologias que se apresentam como grades de interpretação da diversidade a partir de referenciais cuja “neutralidade” não é questionada. A partir dessas duas tipologias, a África emerge como lugar de “sociedades com riqueza e propriedade usufundada”, provavelmente com desigualdades e hierarquias pronunciadas, e como lugar de sociedades em que a “democracia primitiva” deu lugar à “organização em linhagens”. Com efeito, em relação à terceira categoria de sociedade da segunda tipologia, caracterizada pela “organização em linhagens”, lemos que é “típica da África” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 259).

Dardot e Laval não questionam a ideia de um “sentido da evolução social”, que está na base das tipologias de Testart. Não questionam também suas outras premissas. A oposição entre democracia e organização em linhagens, por exemplo, não é colocada em questão. Além disso, o interesse em afirmar que as formas de propriedade usufundada (em que se basearia a “ilusão da propriedade coletiva arcaica”) não

excluem desigualdades e hierarquias é maior do que o de ocupar-se com os regimes de prática de possíveis culturas comunais que existiram ou existem fora das premissas dos “mundos I, II e III” de Testart.

Para mais, importa registrar a utilização acrítica de uma ideia de África homogênea. Ao tratar da “situação da África”, após descartar a “aldeia” como candidata a detentora de uma suposta propriedade coletiva da terra, Dardot e Laval (2017, p. 262) concluem, com uma citação de Testart, que “os homens e suas famílias é que são os verdadeiros proprietários da terra na África”. Esse modo de considerar a questão da propriedade na África contrasta com o modo como os autores abordam, nesse mesmo capítulo, a “herança normativa ocidental”, que, segundo eles, não pode ser examinada como “um maciço homogêneo” (*Idem*, p. 290). É a colonialidade representacional que orienta esse discurso, que apresenta a “herança normativa ocidental” como diversificada e os dispositivos comunitários de uso/distribuição da terra na África como “um maciço homogêneo”.

É importante observar que, no contexto das lutas pela terra no continente africano, o enunciado dos “verdadeiros proprietários” tem sido manipulado em oposição às instituições das diversas culturas comunais e em benefício do açambarcamento de terras pelas estruturas de poder transnacionais. Isso ocorre tanto quando o enunciado é interpretado no sentido da formalização jurídica de títulos individuais de propriedade dos homens e de suas famílias, como quando orientado para o reconhecimento da propriedade coletiva, dentro de arranjos que garantem o direito de alienação da terra e favorecem o desenvolvimento de mercados fundiários (Federici, 2011). O que esse tipo de enunciado omite, como alerta Segato (2014), é que normas comunitárias, como as que regulam o uso e a distribuição da terra, não podem ser compreendidas fora da “forma holística” em que são concebidas e funcionam, quer dizer, fora da sua conexão indissociável com outras normas, relacionadas com outros aspectos da vida comunitária. Para usar os termos de Dardot e Laval, podemos dizer que as formas de “apropriação-destinação” da terra não podem ser inferidas de regras de “apropriação-pertencimento” isoladas. O isolamento e a juridicização dessas regras pertencem ao contexto pós-intrusão colonial moderna e participam do movimento de eliminação das culturas comunais na África.

Como sublinha Federici (2011, p. 42), “os comuns não podem ser vistos como realidades não problemáticas”. No continente africano, os comuns referem-se não somente a uma diversidade de comunidades e instituições comunitárias, mas constituem realidades em mutação. Em primeiro lugar, a intrusão colonial desfigurou e desfigura suas instituições, introduzindo elementos de ruptura do tecido coletivo (Segato, 2014). Em segundo lugar, emergem movimentos diversos, alguns orientados para a erradicação das regras costumeiras, tornadas opressivas ou mais opressivas

no contexto pós-intrusão (a exemplo do que acontece com regras “masculinas” de posse da terra sem o contrapeso de outras instituições comunitárias), outros, para sua reconstituição e sua revisão sob princípios de um igualitarismo comunal desgenerizado e radicalizado (Federici, 2011). Por fim, outros comuns aparecem no cenário, revivendo e transformando culturas comunais “tradicionais”, como nas hortas urbanas de mulheres (*Idem*). Penso que um livro sobre o comum, ao falar da África, deveria ocupar-se dessa complexidade e estudar seriamente as instituições do fazer-comum pré-intrusão, reconstruídas através das histórias orais, e as instituições do fazer-comum atuais e emergentes, consideradas no contexto específico dos efeitos da intrusão colonial moderna e da atuação de agentes do “anticomum”, como o Banco Mundial, o FMI e as frentes estatais-empresariais-midiáticas-evangélicas.

A arqueologia do comum de Dardot e Laval ressent-se da “ignorância ignorante do Norte Global”, repondo o mecanismo “do des-pensamento e da desaprendizagem de saberes não ocidentais ou não imperiais” (Santos, 2008, p. 39) ou a “razão etnológica” de uma “biblioteca colonial”, com seus “regimes de verdade” (Mudimbe, 2013). Enquanto reafirma o valor da língua grega como “língua política por excelência” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 25), por exemplo, ela ignora sistematicamente os discursos, os léxicos, as “línguas políticas” do Sul. Entre a discussão da concepção aristotélica do pôr em comum, no primeiro capítulo, e das tradições do “comum dos operários”, no capítulo 9, são experiências europeias (e autores europeus e estadunidenses) que ocupam um lugar central na arqueologia de Dardot e Laval.

Uma arqueologia é, claro, sempre limitada, mas, do ponto de vista do pensamento descolonizador, é importante interrogar o campo de possibilidades que a “razão imperial/colonial” alijou para fora dos limites do que é considerado compreensível ou relevante, as possibilidades inscritas nas línguas e formas de pensar e nas experiências sociais marginalizadas pelo pensamento ocidental hegemônico. Como diz Mignolo (2008, p. 292), interessa inaugurar “uma genealogia de pensamento que não é fundamentada no grego e no latim, mas no quechua e no aymara, nos nahuatl e tojolabal, nas línguas dos povos africanos escravizados [...] que reemergiram no pensamento e no fazer decolonial verdadeiro: Candomblés, Santería, Vudú, Rastafarianismo, Capoeira etc.”. Nesse sentido, uma arqueologia do comum deve dirigir-se ao “idioma” (cosmopolítica) de outras experiências situadas para além das europeias, não somente para *pensá-las a partir do comum*, mas para *pensar o comum a partir delas*, compondo, assim, múltiplos sentidos para o comum, a partir de diversas economias ontológicas, de diversos mapas de possibilidades. Plagiando Santos (2019, p. 33), podemos dizer que, com essa perspectiva, o que se visa é instaurar, no contexto do comum, “uma concepção ‘polilectal’, mais do que idiolectal, de imaginação cultural e política”.

Uma implicação dos limites “coloniais” da arqueologia do comum de Dardot e Laval é a subestimação da heterogeneidade das relações de poder e da importância da pluralização de frentes políticas relacionadas a elas para a política do comum.

Podemos começar essa discussão registrando que as palavras *racismo*, *etnicismo*, *sexismo*, *patriarcado* ou *colonialismo* não aparecem no livro de Dardot e Laval sobre o comum. Enquanto o comum é apresentado como “o princípio das lutas atuais contra o capitalismo” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 23), nada se diz acerca das lutas contra outras relações de poder e suas imbricações com as “lutas atuais contra o capitalismo” no contexto do atual retorno dos comuns.

Uma arqueologia do comum que considerasse seriamente suas emergências atuais no Sul global permitiria apreender que o retorno dos comuns é indissociável das lutas políticas contra relações de poder coloniais, racistas e patriarcais. A retomada (reinstituição) de antigas “genealogias” do pensar e do fazer-comum, destituídas ou marginalizadas pelo epistemicídio colonial-moderno, demonstra a importância da descolonização epistêmica/cosmopolítica na construção dos “comuns” emergentes. Essa retomada é bastante evidente justamente no contexto, destacado por Dardot e Laval, do retorno dos comuns na América Latina. Aqui movimentos indígenas têm instituído “enlaces” em diferentes escalas e manejado a “cosmovisão”, isto é, as figuras emergentes da recuperação da memória histórica dos povos originários do continente, como ferramenta política dentro de uma agenda descolonizadora concêntrica à luta contra o racismo. Os movimentos de mulheres indígenas são igualmente centrais na definição do horizonte normativo e da agenda política do retorno dos comuns na América Latina, denunciando as desigualdades de gênero presentes nas comunidades como uma “deterioração” da cosmovisão sob “a influência das culturas invasoras”, de “um modelo baseado em culturas ocidentais”, como lemos nas atas da Primera Cumbre de Mujeres Indígenas de América, realizada em Oaxaca, em 2002 (Castillo, 2018, p. 320). É no bojo dessas lutas e na dinâmica conflitiva da pluralização e da coordenação dessas frentes políticas que se tem produzido o retorno dos comuns na América Latina.

Devemos considerar o retorno dos comuns como um produto dos “enlaces” multiescalares instituídos entre frentes e agentes plurais que lutam contra políticas neoliberais e seus efeitos, tanto quanto contra relações coloniais, racistas e patriarcais de dominação, que, aliás, não são exteriores, mas compõem os modos de emergência do neoliberalismo no continente. A ausência de uma análise dessas dimensões no livro de Dardot e Laval sobre o comum é igualmente expressão “do des-pensamento e da desaprendizagem de saberes não ocidentais ou não imperiais”.

No que concerne a essa questão em específico, esse “despensamento” ancora-se em uma equação complexa. De um lado, temos a representação do capitalismo contemporâneo a partir da coerência de uma racionalidade governamental única e abrangente, a racionalidade neoliberal, caracterizada pela penetração da lógica normativa da concorrência e do modelo da empresa em todos os contextos de atividades e relações sociais, incluindo os dispositivos de subjetivação. “O neoliberalismo”, escrevem Dardot e Laval (2016, p. 17), “é a *razão do capitalismo contemporâneo* [...]”. De outro, temos a concepção de que a “comunização” das lutas dos comuns deriva, em alguma medida, da própria unicidade da “razão do capitalismo contemporâneo”.

Como Foucault, Dardot e Laval (2016, pp. 25-26) se apropriam *subversivamente* da perspectiva ordoliberal segundo a qual o capitalismo é um complexo “econômico-institucional” e não somente encarna a lógica de uma figura “econômica”, em sentido estrito, e, por isso, admite “uma multiplicidade de figuras singulares”. Em entrevista a Andrade e Ota (2015, p. 285), sublinham que “as relações sociais próprias do capitalismo não se estendem por meio de uma dinâmica econômica passível de ser isolada das relações de poder, das construções institucionais, das formas jurídicas”. Poderíamos supor que tal asserção daria lugar a uma reflexão aberta à perspectiva da “interseccionalidade” ou da “consustancialidade” das relações de poder. Essa linha de reflexão demandaria considerar a “multiplicidade de figuras singulares” do capitalismo em termos sincrônicos. No entanto, Dardot e Laval reencontram essa multiplicidade apenas na história de suas transformações “epocais”, enquanto buscam conceituar o neoliberalismo, compreendido como “a *razão do capitalismo contemporâneo*”, a partir de sua coerência como sistema normativo ou regime de governamentalidade.

Considero a análise do neoliberalismo como um sistema normativo, nos termos de Dardot e Laval, como uma *verständige Abstraktion*, abstração razoável, como diria Marx (2011), ou, como prefiro, uma abstração estrategicamente útil. Mas ela coloca em xeque sua “razoabilidade” teórica ou, do ponto de vista da “reinvenção das formas de luta” (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 34), sua “utilidade”, quando leva a desconsiderar as “linhas abissais” (Santos, 2010) que distinguem as dinâmicas normativas e construções institucionais dos espaços metropolitanos (do Norte e do Norte do Sul) e coloniais (do Sul e do Sul do Norte) ou quando não aprofunda sua “razoabilidade” em face das “razões” emergentes da complexidade de sistemas dinâmicos que enredam múltiplas e heterogêneas relações de poder nos distintos contextos situados.

Em entrevista a Andrade e Ota (2015, p. 281), Dardot e Laval se referem às suas próprias investigações como “menos relacionadas à ‘especificidade’ dos problemas e saberes do que à coerência da racionalidade do poder e ao ‘tornar comum’ saberes e práticas que podem se lhe opor” e rematam dizendo que:

Estamos em uma época em que não convém acentuar tanto a especificidade das lutas, mas a coordenação delas, até mesmo, sua “comunização” (*communisation*). Não que seja necessário construir uma espécie de grande teoria geral, um novo “ismo” que apague as particularidades das lutas parciais [...]. Precisamos, no entanto, de ideias claras sobre a lógica geral do poder, condição necessária para permitir tornar comuns as lutas parciais e as resistências locais.

Segundo essa perspectiva, enquanto o poder se inscreve em uma “lógica geral”, as “lutas parciais” – e sua parcialidade decorre precisamente da suposição de um “geral” – apenas podem produzir os princípios de sua coordenação ou “comunização” a partir de “ideias claras” sobre aquela. Nesse sentido, a coordenação das lutas parece depender mais da unicidade da “lógica geral do poder” do que da práxis instituinte dos próprios movimentos na produção dos dispositivos de sua coordenação. Traduzindo o argumento nos termos da análise de Dardot e Laval sobre a “sociedade neoliberal”, é a própria unicidade ou coerência da “razão do capitalismo contemporâneo” que parece destinada a produzir a unidade das “lutas parciais” e “resistências locais”. Em outras palavras, voltamos ao modelo da “produção do comum pelo capital”, mas, no lugar da “socialização” capitalista da produção ou da “livre cooperação dos cérebros” engendrada pelo “capitalismo cognitivo”, o que temos é a lógica normativa una e totalizante do regime de governamentalidade neoliberal.

Essa abordagem ancora-se em um modelo que é o oposto da perspectiva da diversidade da práxis instituinte do comum e dos “enlaces” federativos baseados na produção de comuns de comuns. Ao passo que, para esta perspectiva, os motivos, os dispositivos institucionais, saberes e práticas (incluindo qualquer corpo de “ideias claras”) para a coordenação dos movimentos e lutas devem ser instituídos na instituição dos comuns e dos comuns de comuns, a linguagem da “lógica geral do poder” conduz à reiteração da política de autoridade epistêmica que se pretendia eliminar junto com a concepção “naturalista” do comum, reinstalando uma assimetria que atribui vantagem epistemológica ao “trabalho teórico”. A este caberia o dever de reconduzir os “sentidos diferentes” emergentes das lutas políticas a um “sentido” unificado, aquele de uma coerência política pensada (instituída) a partir do desvendamento da “coerência da racionalidade do poder”. Enquanto se decreta que “não convém acentuar tanto a especificidade das lutas” ou ainda que não se deve mais investir na pluralização de frentes políticas e identidades políticas sob o risco de “fragmentação das lutas sem um horizonte comum”, nossos autores concluem que “cabe ao trabalho teórico identificar o que nele [no retorno dos comuns] é portador tanto da invenção conceitual quanto do projeto político” (Andrade & Ota, 2015, p. 312). No jogo de explicar, interpretar, traduzir e contextualizar, as instituições do “trabalho teórico” tendem, assim, a substituir aquelas das práticas coletivas e lutas políticas.

Para ficar claro, trata-se não de negar o caráter mundial do capitalismo ou a hegemonia do neoliberalismo em sua configuração atual, mas de reconhecer que o “devir-mundo” do capital e a hegemonia do neoliberalismo não são instituídas sob a regência de uma “lógica geral de poder”, mas sob processos “consustanciais” às dinâmicas situadas “das relações de poder, das construções institucionais, das formas jurídicas” etc. Por isso, a pluralização das lutas ou “a especificidade das lutas” é tão essencial quanto sua coordenação ou “comunização”. A luta “geral” contra o capitalismo não pode desenvolver-se senão por meio da pluralização das lutas (frentes e agentes) contra suas configurações situadas – constituídas como um “pacote enredado” de múltiplas e heterogêneas hierarquias (Grosfoguel, 2008) – e por meio da instituição de dispositivos multiescalares de coordenação entre elas. É dessa forma, por exemplo, que se tem produzido o “enlace continental” de movimentos indígenas latino-americanos, que, como vimos, têm se voltado para suas especificidades culturais e para as constelações específicas de relações de poder (coloniais, racistas, capitalistas, patriarcais, cristianocêntricas etc.) que afetam suas comunidades na construção dos dispositivos epistêmicos e prático-políticos de sua coordenação.

O pensamento descolonizador tem argumentado, de modo geral, a favor da valorização da pluralização de frentes políticas e mesmo das “identidades na política”, como formas de oposição à “política da identidade”, isto é, à política das identidades essencializadas produzidas por “razões imperiais” (Mignolo, 2008). Não se trata de congelar possibilidades ou sustentar a “fragmentação das lutas sem um horizonte comum”, mas de assumir a necessidade de *instituir* os dispositivos políticos e epistêmicos do “tornar comuns as lutas” por dentro de uma “política de intermovimentos sociais” (Santos, 2008) e de uma política epistêmica de interconhecimentos sociais.

Outro efeito dos limites da arqueologia do comum de Dardot e Laval é aprisionar a “imaginação política e cultural” da política do comum a limites “idiolectais” (moderno-ocidentais) não ditos.

A crítica de Dardot e Laval ao neoliberalismo (2016) explicita que este alinha mercado e Estado à sua lógica normativa típica. Nesse contexto, dadas as condições de hibridização crescente entre as lógicas que estruturam as duas formas (privada e pública) de produção ou regulação de “bens”, torna-se cada vez mais insustentável a aposta em uma alternativa derivada do “esquema binário de origem jurídica que opõe o privado e o público” (Dardot & Laval, 2015, p. 262).

Isso não quer dizer que, em algum momento, o Estado tenha se constituído efetivamente como plataforma legítima para a construção do comum. Embora lugares de tensão e luta, Estado e serviços públicos sempre se constituíram predominantemente a partir de um modelo burocrático de gestão, baseado na direção hierárquica e na monopolização dos processos de decisão por elites políticas e quadros burocráticos, um regime de práticas de governo avesso ao comum. O que ocorre, sob o neoliberalismo, é que este “pretende fazer desaparecer tudo aquilo que, no Estado assim como na sociedade, se assemelha a focos de resistência à norma geral da concorrência”, suprimindo qualquer base para “continuar a opor frontalmente o público e o privado, como havíamos nos habituado a fazer no passado” (*Idem*, pp. 267-8).

Toda essa argumentação nos leva a crer que mercado e Estado devem ser suprimidos na revolução social do comum, instaurando outro regime de práticas de governo para as atividades que eles regulam. No entanto, o que Dardot e Laval parecem propor é algo diferente:

- “Como não implica a supressão da propriedade privada, a primazia do comum não exige *a fortiori* a supressão do mercado” (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 619). Considerando que a alternativa à supressão do mercado é a burocratização da economia, eles sustentam que não se trata de “suprimir o mercado’ em proveito de um órgão burocrático de planejamento e divisão”, mas de “reinseri-lo na sociedade”, em uma “nova instituição ‘cívica’ do mercado que una o autogoverno dos produtores e a soberania dos consumidores” (*Idem*, p. 525).
- Ao mesmo tempo que não faltam asserções acerca da incompatibilidade entre a forma estatal e a política do comum, Dardot e Laval (2017, p. 547) elogiam a concepção, forçadamente atribuída a Marx, de que “o Estado poderia ‘desaparecer’ como grande burocracia (a ‘jiboia’), mas não deveria deixar de desempenhar o papel jurídico e simbólico de garantidor da aplicação dos princípios gerais da lei”. Quando se trata da relação do comum com o Estado, o verbo usado por Dardot e Laval é *transformar*, não suprimir ou destruir. A ideia parece ser, assim, de uma *reinstalação*, a partir do eixo do comum, daquela parte do Estado que garante a aplicação das leis e que responde pelos serviços públicos.

Pode-se dizer que, para os dois autores, a questão do mercado e a questão do Estado são pensadas, no contexto da “razão do comum”, simetricamente ao modo como são tratadas pela “razão neoliberal”, como questão de *reinstalação* dentro de um projeto construtivista baseado em uma norma. O que varia é a norma. Tal perspectiva aproxima-se de alguns motes da proposta habermasiana de um modelo que reponha a “mediação do mundo da vida” aos sistemas funcionais regidos pelos

media dinheiro e poder, mas sem contornar, como Habermas, a empresa privada e o mundo do trabalho. Esse modelo de “reinstituição” compreende um conjunto de “não ditos” que precisam ser considerados.

A burocratização da economia não é a única alternativa ao mercado. Embora comprimidas e desfiguradas pela dominância do mercado, as experiências de redes de produção e consumo que visam a substituir os dispositivos mercantis pelo uso de outras tecnologias sociais de gestão da produção e da troca indiciam outras possibilidades. A própria perspectiva de federação de comuns socioeconômicos sugerida por Dardot e Laval (2017) autoriza a pensar em alternativas, baseadas não em “um órgão burocrático de planejamento e divisão”, mas na troca direta de atividades produtivas entre comuns socioeconômicos, de acordo com necessidades, finalidades e regras coproduzidas entre eles e dentro de uma lógica multiescalar acêntrica, e na autogestão do consumo por associações de consumidores igualmente federados em múltiplas escalas.

O mercado é passível de ser instituído de muitas maneiras, mas essa elasticidade é restringida pela mediação da forma mercadoria, baseada em “relações coisas entre pessoas e relações sociais entre coisas” e articulada à disjunção entre produção e consumo e à indiferença mútua e à conexão externa e *post festum* entre unidades produtivas (Marx, 2013). O neoliberalismo busca reinstituir a “ordem-quadro” do mercado e pode fazê-lo porque não pretende destituir, mas reinstituir o capitalismo, alterando o contexto institucional de funcionamento da malha de mediações sociais autonomizadas que o caracteriza. O mercado é, no entanto, incompatível com o comum, que pressupõe “relações diretamente sociais entre pessoas” (Marx, 2013) na instituição das regras do agir comum.

O “papel jurídico e simbólico de garantidor da aplicação dos princípios gerais da lei” que o Estado deveria continuar a desempenhar é necessário porque Dardot e Laval concebem o comum não somente como coprodução de regras ou normas para o agir comum, mas de regras *de direito* ou normas *jurídicas*. O direito é uma forma social historicamente específica (moderno-ocidental) de produção de normas e deve ser analisado a partir do tipo de prática social que ele possibilita ou impede e de seu significado para diferentes emergências do comum. Esse balanço analítico ainda precisa ser feito, mas há mais razões para pensar na aptidão do direito para as *representações de equivalência social*, próprias da forma-mercadoria (Naves, 2014), do que como modo de acolher integralmente a *inequivalência das singularidades* que devem participar da instituição dos comuns. De qualquer modo, é imperativo reconhecer a diversidade de modos de produtividade normativa existente no mundo – a qual frequentemente recai, inclusive entre autores vinculados ao campo decolonial ou das epistemologias do Sul, sob a legenda (inconscientemente colonial) do “pluralismo

jurídico” – e analisar mais profundamente suas possibilidades do ponto de vista da práxis instituinte do comum.

Embora em novas figurações, Estado, direito e mercado são muito rapidamente implicados nas proposições teóricas e práticas de Dardot e Laval. Nisso aparecem como limites *pré-instituídos* da instituição do comum. São instituições previamente estabelecidas pelo “trabalho teórico” como condição prescritiva da instituição dos comuns. Trata-se de um curto-circuito da imaginação política produzido pelo eurocentrismo da arqueologia do comum de Dardot e Laval, que acabam enredados nos limites da “língua política” autorizada pelas instituições moderno-ocidentais.

Considerações finais

A reflexão acerca da pluralidade das experiências sociais dos comuns não deve ser considerada como um ponto de partida a ser ultrapassado por “uma concepção mais abstrata e politicamente mais ambiciosa do comum (no singular)”, como sugerem Dardot e Laval (2017, p. 18). Qualquer concepção do comum (no singular) deve ser vista apenas como um recurso para a produção de comuns epistêmicos (sempre no plural), quer dizer, de plataformas cognitivas produzidas na articulação de e entre movimentos sociais do comum, ou, dito de outro modo, deve ser um recurso para a produção de pluralismos articulados na “linha da mestiçagem descolonizada” de que fala Santos (2019) no trecho citado na introdução deste artigo. Trata-se de um recurso de retaguarda politicamente pouco ambicioso e tanto mais útil quanto mais for capaz de reorientar a reflexão novamente para a pluralidade das experiências sociais dos comuns e sob uma perspectiva subversiva em relação à “linha abissal em que se baseiam as epistemologias do Norte”.

A política epistêmica do comum não pode ser aquela do “trabalho teórico” pensado segundo “a primazia do conhecimento como prática social isolada” (Santos, 2019, p. 22), mas uma política de interconhecimentos sociais imersa em uma política de intermovimentos sociais. Essa perspectiva é coerente com as premissas do comum expostas na primeira seção do artigo. Ela advoga pela primazia do agir comum como práxis instituinte no contexto da política epistêmica do comum. Nesse sentido, penso que o alcance da norma da inapropriabilidade, que, segundo Dardot e Laval, está implicada na noção de comum, deve ser expandido, de modo a compreender também a norma (decolonial) da *inapropriabilidade epistêmica* ou, talvez seria melhor dizer, *cosmopolítica*. Sob tal legenda, aludo às cautelas e aos dispositivos de afirmação da pluralidade/confitualidade dos próprios sentidos, categorias, princípios processuais, princípios formais de convivência ou de produção normativa etc. que compõem a perspectiva do comum, ou ainda às disposições e aos dispositivos que

se contrapõem à apropriação da noção de comum por uma “língua política” ou por um regime cosmopolítico ou de ser/fazer/sentir/pensar-com.

A (meta)norma da inapropriabilidade epistêmica/cosmopolítica, porém, faz sentido apenas se estiver engajada em um movimento orientado para trazer para o centro da discussão do comum as formas de pensamento e experiências sociais não ocidentais ou não imperiais produzidas no Sul global. Nesse engajamento, ela funcionaria como um princípio de cautela contra armadilhas coloniais como aquelas em que resvalam Dardot e Laval ou como ferramenta de uma política do comum desembaraçada da “linha abissal em que se baseiam as epistemologias do Norte”.

A política do comum precisa conduzir à reintrodução de uma corajosa contaminação do “imaginário crítico do ‘anti-’” pelo “imaginário do ‘alter’” (Viveiros de Castro, 2012, p. 155), quer dizer, a uma “invasão bárbara” da perspectiva do comum pelos possíveis do Sul global. Essa contaminação só pode ocorrer por meio de ecologizações entre economias ontológicas distintas. Retomando uma formulação de Viveiros de Castro (2012), podemos dizer que, sem tal contaminação, a política do *anti-* conduzirá a um *como-antes*, repavimentando a autoestrada da colonialidade.

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Resumo

Para “descolonizar” o comum: um ensaio crítico sobre a obra de Dardot e Laval

A obra de Dardot e Laval sobre o comum ainda não foi submetida ao crivo da crítica da colonialidade. Diante dessa lacuna, exploram-se, neste artigo, as potencialidades “decoloniais” dessa obra – localizando-as em sua concepção construtivista do comum –, bem como suas armadilhas “coloniais” – relacionadas com os limites eurocêntricos de sua arqueologia do comum, a subestimação da heterogeneidade das relações de poder e a dificuldade de facear os limites da “língua política” autorizada pelas instituições moderno-ocidentais. Conclui-se com um convite à expansão do imaginário político do comum a partir do repertório de experiências sociais não ocidentais/não imperiais, sob o imperativo da norma da inapropriabilidade epistêmica ou cosmopolítica.

Palavras-chave: Pierre Dardot; Christian Laval; Comum; Colonialidade.

Abstract

To “decolonize” the common: a critical essay on the work of Dardot and Laval

Dardot and Laval’s work on the common has not yet been subjected to criticism of coloniality. Faced with this gap, this article explores the “decolonial” potentialities of this work – locating them in its constructivist conception of the common – as well as its “colonial” traps – related to the Eurocentric limits of its “archeology” of the common, the underestimation of the heterogeneity of power relations and the difficulty of facing the limits of the “political language” authorized by modern-Western institutions. It concludes with an invitation to expand the political imaginary of the common from the repertoire of non-Western/ non-imperial experiences, under the imperative of the norm of epistemic or cosmopolitical inappropriability.

Keywords: Pierre Dardot; Christian Laval; Common; Coloniality.

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O método (auto)biográfico: a perspectiva de um pioneiro

Entrevista com Jean Peneff

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Jean Peneff, nascido em 1939, foi sucessivamente professor de sociologia em Argel, Nantes e Aix-en-Provence. É conhecido por ter sido um teórico e praticante do método biográfico, mas também da observação participante, método que ajudou a popularizar nos anos 1990 entre os sociólogos franceses. Seus livros mais conhecidos se referem à medicina, de que ele foi um dos especialistas mais frequentemente citados na França. Nesta entrevista, realizada nos dias 20 e 30 de novembro de 2020, ele faz um retrospecto de toda a sua trajetória e insiste nas relações entre a vida pessoal e o trabalho sociológico.

Você poderia primeiro falar sobre a sua formação acadêmica e a sua trajetória profissional?

Jean Peneff [JP]: Ah, você sabe, eu me tornei sociólogo por acaso, por ocasião ou por distração, tendo a guerra da Argélia como pano de fundo fundamental. No início, eu sou um aldeão do Sudoeste, um pouco como Bourdieu. Eu cresci no campo, pois o meu pai, um imigrante búlgaro, era veterinário no campo. Crescer nesse universo de aldeia me deu uma curiosidade pelos outros, pelo trabalho, pelas atividades agrícolas e artesanais. Quando saíamos da escola com os meus colegas, nós andávamos

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à vontade, íamos observar os adultos, ouvíamos as fofocas. Mas para os estudos, eu fui para Toulouse. Foi um choque, uma grande descoberta. Eu tomei consciência das classes sociais. Para mim, até então, um burguês era um homem que tinha 30 hectares, e em Toulouse eu vi a verdadeira burguesia urbana.

Então, para os estudos de ensino superior, eu queria estudar ciências e matemática. Depois do BAC¹ científico, fui para as classes preparatórias², mas desisti depois de três meses porque o nível de matemática era muito alto. Comecei então o curso de ciências políticas e direito. Era mais fácil, mais aberto. Descubri um mundo estudantil bastante burguês, às vezes até um pouco esnobe e antifeminista, bastante tradicional. Estudei tranquilamente até os 22 ou 23 anos. Mas nessa época foi a guerra na Argélia (eu nasci em 1939). Quando voltei para a aldeia, vi os meus amigos que tiveram menos sorte do que eu, que lutaram... Eles estavam exaustos, deprimidos. Eles foram obrigados a fazer coisas atroz: torturar crianças nas aldeias para obrigar os pais a falarem...

Assim, nós descobrimos o outro lado da democracia, um reino de terror. Alguns convocados desertaram e fugiram para a Itália e Suíça. Estes foram tempos terríveis, que a geração de hoje mal consegue entender. Nessa época, nós, estudantes, fomos empurrados. Nós não queríamos participar de nada disto, e com um ou dois bons amigos, eu decidi estender os meus estudos, empurrando a prorrogação até ao máximo. Nós escolhemos a sociologia sem realmente saber o que é; isso me parece bom, isso está relacionado com os problemas da sociedade. Então, depois da minha licenciatura em direito público, comecei os meus certificados de sociologia. As aulas eram principalmente teóricas, mas havia um ensino de etnologia com Nougier³ que era bom. Nós costumávamos ir às beiras do rio Garonne, recolhíamos fósseis; enfim, saíamos um pouco das paredes da faculdade. Depois, para atrasar novamente a chamada, eu tinha 24 ou 25 anos, comecei uma tese de doutorado sob a orientação de Paul de Gaudemar⁴. Ele era um homem culto, sério, era apreciado, ele me aceitou para uma tese sobre subdesenvolvimento e relações internacionais. Era um trabalho livresco, sem grande originalidade, mas me deu uma boa cultura sobre esse tema que se tornara fundamental nos anos 1960. No final do ano letivo (eu ainda não havia

1. BAC = baccalauréat: Diploma do sistema educativo francês que encerra o ensino médio, e que dá acesso ao ensino superior.
2. As classes preparatórias correspondem, no sistema educativo francês, a dois anos de estudos superiores para preparar os concursos que permitem o acesso às grandes escolas (especificamente de engenharia ou de comércio).
3. Louis-René Nougier (1912-1995): paleossociólogo das religiões. Ele ocupou a cadeira de Arqueologia Pré-Histórica na Faculdade de Letras de Toulouse.
4. Paul de Gaudemar (1919-1995): professor em Toulouse e depois em Paris 8, era especialista em Sociologia da educação e do ensino em países em desenvolvimento.

defendido a tese), fui chamado para ir à Argélia. Mas isso foi depois dos Acordos de Evian, eu passei a ter então o *status* de soldado que podia ensinar, fazer cooperação. Fui enviado para o colégio El-Djala em Sidi bel Abbès para ensinar literatura. Trouxe a minha esposa, que também conseguiu um cargo de professora. Então, em 1964, eu me encontrei na frente de alunos do ensino médio que tinham que fazer o *bac* de francês. Eu tentei explicar *Phèdre*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Don Juan*. Eles ficaram encantados. Eles tinham 19-20 anos e eu tinha 25 ou 26 anos. Nós nos envolvíamos em discussões apaixonadas. Havia pouca diferença de idade entre nós. Com alguns anos de diferença, nós poderíamos estar na frente um do outro com uma arma na mão para matar um ao outro..., mas, felizmente, nós aprendemos juntos, nos damos bem, eu jogo futebol com eles. Nesta região, a minha esposa e eu vivemos quatro ou cinco anos excepcionais. Nós viajamos pelo país, seguimos uma caravana de tuaregues, visitamos a Cabília, ficamos sob o feitiço do país. Tentando satisfazer a minha curiosidade, eu fiz um pouco de sociologia sem saber. Nós não éramos os únicos; o ambiente cooperativo era estimulante, todos queríamos descobrir esse universo fascinante⁵.

Após três anos, em 1967, decidimos voltar. Minha esposa, Suzanne, queria terminar os estudos. Mas, então, eu recebi uma ligação de Stéphane Hessel, que recentemente ganhou muita notoriedade e que na época estava encarregado da cooperação universitária. Ele me disse que os argelinos queriam relançar um departamento de sociologia em Argel em cooperação com a França. Eles precisavam de professores jovens e motivados. Ele me ofereceu para chefiar o departamento porque eu estava lá e já era doutor (eu havia voltado para Toulouse durante as férias para defender a minha tese). No início eu recusei, porque não conhecia nada, era muito jovem, eu nunca tinha dado aula de sociologia. Ele me disse: “Nós vamos ajudá-lo! Você pode trazer palestrantes da França, eles terão as suas despesas pagas”. Portanto, com a condição de poder trazer pessoas como Bourdieu, Passeron, Robert Castel⁶, Jean Cuisenier⁷, eu aceitei. E aí, um ano depois, Jean-Pierre Briand, que era aluno de Althusser, entrou no departamento e me ajudou fazendo um pesado trabalho de ensino e gestão, com reuniões regulares. Bourdieu teve a ideia de criar uma pós-graduação, e Briand, que era professor de ensino superior com título em filosofia, ficava responsável pela supervisão dos alunos de doutorado. E assim funcionou, nós tínhamos alunos que eram sérios e que nos ouviam, mesmo com o clima político

5. Ver Peneff, 2012.

6. Robert Castel (nascido em 1933): Professor de ensino superior com título em filosofia, ensina sociologia na Universidade de Vincennes (depois Paris 8). Os seus primeiros trabalhos na década de 1970, que terão repercussões significativas, estão centrados na crítica à psiquiatria.

7. Jean Cuisenier (1927-2017): Professor de ensino superior com título em filosofia e depois etnólogo especialista nos Cárpatos, foi, nos anos 1960-70, diretor do Centro de Etnologia Francesa.

piorando na Argélia. Bourdieu estava lá regularmente. Ele dava palestras que atraíam muita gente, mesmo de outros departamentos e do exterior.

Eu achava o ensino um pouco abstrato, então resolvi fazer um trabalho de campo, incentivado por Bourdieu. Tratava-se de sair da faculdade, explorar essa sociedade complexa. Depois de ter explorado o mundo rural e observado os efeitos da guerra, eu procurei um campo de pesquisa na região de Argel. Era um período de crescimento econômico, então, eu escolhi o pequeno capitalismo, ou seja, os pequenos industriais. Inicialmente, planejei fazer um questionário, respeitando o método clássico. Apresentei-me como sociólogo, mas não funcionou bem. As empresas, às vezes, eram semiclandestinas, e os patrões desconfiavam. Então eu me apresentei como representante da Câmara de Comércio e fiz conversas, tipo entrevistas, com eles. Aos poucos, fui entendendo quem eram essas pessoas, como eles trabalhavam. Foi a partir dessa pesquisa e da sua continuação em 1971 e 1972 (eu voltei como turista) que posteriormente publiquei *Industriels algériens*⁸. Mas alguns entrevistados ficavam desconfiados e, acima de tudo, estávamos sob Boumediene... Eu comecei a ser seguido pela polícia política, as minhas conversas telefônicas eram ouvidas (meus amigos me ensinaram a perceber o pequeno clique que indica a escuta ou a gravação). Nas salas de aula, havia agentes à paisana: viam-se homens de quarenta anos, de terno, que anotavam tudo. Finalmente, em 1969, a embaixada me aconselhou a partir o mais rápido possível. Disseram-me: “Vá embora, deixe a sua esposa cuidar da mudança e volte para a França”.

Isso é o que fizemos. Mas então eu cheguei à França sem um ponto de chegada. A administração me deu um posto sem concurso graças ao apoio do sindicato SNESup. Só precisei encontrar uma universidade que me aceitasse. Eu liguei a Passeron, que me aconselhou a ligar a Michel Verret em Nantes⁹. Este último procurava jovens sociólogos que haviam viajado. Eu o encontrei no verão de 1970, e ele aceitou me colocar na sua equipe.

Minha esposa se juntou a mim logo depois. Nós nos instalamos às pressas perto de Pornic na casa de um cooperador. Lá, demos início à adoção de uma criança argelina. Pois lá nós havíamos visto os *Douars* queimados e as crianças abandonadas, que vagueavam quase no estado selvagem. Nós queríamos fazer algo para ajudar pelo menos um deles, mas a minha saída apressada havia complicado as coisas, então conseguimos adotar uma criança de origem argelina na França. Assim, nós construímos uma vida familiar improvisada à beira-mar com um primeiro filho e a

8. Peneff (1981b), *Industriels algériens*. Paris, Ed. du CNRS.

9. Professor de ensino superior com título de uma École Normale Supérieure, Michel Verret (1927-2017) fundou o Lersco em Nantes. Devemos a ele uma trilogia sobre a vida da classe operária: *L'espace ouvrier* (1979), *Le travail ouvrier* (1982), *La culture ouvrière* (1988). Foi membro do PCF de 1944 a 1978.

nossa filha que nasceu logo depois. Foi entre Pornic, Saint Nazaire e Nantes que fiz a segunda parte da minha carreira de sociólogo.

Como eram os estudantes então?

JP: Em Nantes, os alunos também eram bons. Era um público masculino bastante jovem. Boa parte deles era politizada, interessada, atenciosa. Era a época do grande desenvolvimento da sociologia, e havia uma expectativa por parte desses jovens. Eu lhes ensinava sociologia do desenvolvimento, sociologia política, falava sobre a África. Os alunos me pediam para falar sobre a Argélia. E então, nos anos 1970, descobri Daniel Bizeul, que iria fazer uma carreira muito boa depois, começando a trabalhar sobre os viajantes. Na década de 1980, houve também Marc Suteau e Philippe Masson, ambos interessados na sociologia da escola e que hoje são professores em Nantes. Desse ponto de vista, eu tive sorte, conheci alunos brilhantes, franceses e estrangeiros (argelinos, turcos etc.) com quem imediatamente estabeleci laços de amizade. Ao mesmo tempo, eu me dava bem com Verret: eu tinha entrado, como ele, para o Partido Comunista, e ele tinha ambições para a sociologia em Nantes... Enfim, nos anos 1980, nós nos distanciamos um pouco, mas durante muito tempo estivemos muito de acordo.

O ingresso no PCF teve algo a ver com a Argélia?

JP: Sim, claro. Durante a guerra, o Partido trabalhou para criar redes rebeldes e ajudou os jovens a evitar a mobilização. Para mim, foi um dever moral eu juntar-me a ele. Em seguida eu me afastei do PCF no início dos anos 1980, mas nos anos 1970 o ativismo era uma parte importante da minha atividade.

Isso significa que você era um sociólogo marxista?

JP: Sim e não. Eu li Marx. Não li tudo e não necessariamente entendi tudo, especialmente em *O Capital*. Mas me chamou a atenção, porque era necessário explicar como regimes liberais como a França podiam chegar a entrar em guerra na Argélia. O marxismo oferecia respostas. Nesse sentido, eu era um marxista liberal, não filiado. Mas eu nunca fui um marxista no sentido de que teria aplicado um sistema mecânico e preconcebido. Esse aspecto mecânico é um pouco desanimador, assim como o aspecto retórico. Marx está sempre certo com as palavras, é um polemista terrível, mas isso não significa que a descrição da realidade seja perfeitamente correta. Não... O que eu gostava em Marx era a sua vida agitada. Ele renunciou às honras e a uma

carreira burguesa e tranquila. Ele escolheu militar, juntar-se aos operários. Portanto, em vez de se refugiar em uma torre de marfim, ele operou uma real intrusão na vida social e conviveu com meios diferentes. Verret o fazia à sua maneira. O seu pai era veterinário como o meu, o seu avô um açougueiro, creio eu. Bem... infelizmente ele passa pela École Normale Supérieure, torna-se professor, o curso acadêmico por excelência. Portanto, embora ele tenha uma verdadeira vida militante, ele aplica um marxismo um tanto formal ou datado e livresco. Mas ele não era um intelectual comum de escritório e se opôs a uma visão apolítica de como a sociedade funcionava. Ele teve uma influência real sobre mim, especialmente ao me dar confiança e ao me encorajar. Eu acho que as gerações mais novas, que não o leem mais, não percebem que ele foi um homem importante na sociologia das classes populares.

E como você começou a se interessar pelo método biográfico?

JP: Oh, você sabe, isso foi feito um pouco sozinho, não foi programado. Na minha pesquisa sobre os industriais argelinos, eu tinha recolhido muitas biografias. Eu queria saber de onde eles eram, isto me interessava: onde eles tinham crescido, o que os seus pais faziam etc. A sociologia é frequentemente uma biografia implícita. Em todo caso, a sociologia, tal como a vejo, não é, acima de tudo, as grandes estruturas e os fluxos, mas sim pessoas que vivenciam as coisas. Se você quer entender um grupo, é preciso conhecer as biografias. Além disso, quando eu era adolescente na aldeia, era isso o que costumávamos fazer. Nós estávamos interessados na vida das outras pessoas.

Depois, em Pornic, eu frequentava a célula [do PCF] com operários que também pescavam nos fins de semana. Alguns deles estavam no fim da carreira ou aposentados. Eu estava interessado na vida deles, queria estudar os operários militantes da CGT (Confederação Geral do Trabalho)¹⁰. Eles eram operários qualificados altamente politizados. Eu falei sobre isso com Verret, que achou a ideia excelente. Ele me incentivou e, por isso, eu fiz entrevistas formais gravadas. A partir daí, publiquei biografias de operários em vários cadernos *Lersco, Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherches Sociologiques sur la Classe Ouvrière*.

Você seguiu um método específico?

JP: Não, de forma alguma. Foi a circunstância que motivou a investigação. Eu improvisei o método. O objetivo era fazer com que as pessoas falassem sobre a vida, o trabalho e principalmente sobre a politização. Era uma forma de fazer história oral.

10. A Confederação Geral do Trabalho é uma confederação sindical francesa criada em 1895, em Limoges.

Eles evocaram o seu meio familiar, a sua entrada no ativismo. Eu procurava o significado coletivo do que havia acontecido com eles. Mas, é claro, o risco era coletar algum tipo de história oficial. Portanto, esses documentos deveriam ser vistos com um pouco de distância¹¹. Eu sempre fui um leitor atento de biografias históricas e literárias e achava que os operários eram tão interessantes quanto as pessoas famosas. As pessoas que eu conheci eram pessoas de grande rigor moral que acreditavam no que faziam. Eu só li Bertaux mais tarde, quando a entrevista biográfica estava em voga. Eu também o conheci e achei o que ele dizia interessante, mas talvez não o suficiente.

Então você dedicou a sua tese de doutorado (tese de Estado)¹² ao método biográfico?

JP: Sim, na década de 1980, eu peguei esse tema como objeto de estudo. Era a continuação lógica das minhas pesquisas de campo. Eu me apoiei em uma importante literatura anglo-saxã. Os americanos começaram a pensar sobre tudo isso muito antes de nós. A minha ideia era que a entrevista biográfica fosse uma das facetas do que eu chamo de “método biográfico”, ou seja, a restituição dos percursos no seu contexto e, principalmente, a verificação das declarações por meio do cruzamento das entrevistas e das observações. A ideia de que você só precisa perguntar a um entrevistado sobre a sua vida para ter tudo o que precisa é muito ingênua, embora seja compartilhada por muitas pessoas. Por isso, apresentei uma postura muito cautelosa e muito cética aproveitando dos trabalhos americanos, mas também, e acima de tudo, da minha experiência. Em toda a minha vida, eu ouvi diferentes versões das mesmas coisas. Existem diferentes projetores para tudo, isso é óbvio. Da mesma forma, na vida cotidiana, você não acredita na palavra de alguém quando ele fala de si, e não há razão para fazer isso quando você é um sociólogo. Então a minha postura é mais uma sistematização do que ensina a vida normal: nunca acredite na palavra de quem fala de si, mas cruze, verifique, complete.

O livro foi bem recebido?¹³

JP: Você sabe que agora está um pouco longe. A defesa da tese correu bem. Houve Passeron, Mendras e historiadores cujos nomes me escapam hoje. Um dos membros

11. Ver Peneff (1979), “Autobiographies de militants CGTU-CGT”. *Les Cahiers du Lersco*, 1, Nantes, 158 p.; Peneff (1979), “Autobiographies de militants ouvriers”. *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques*, 29: 53-82; Peneff & Fèvre (1982), “Autobiographies de militants nantais de la CFDT”. *Les Cahiers du Lersco*, 4.

12. No antigo sistema educativo francês, a tese de Estado permitia acesso aos cargos de professores de universidade, ou pesquisadores com estatutos particulares.

13. *La méthode biographique. De l'Ecole de Chicago à l'histoire orale*. Paris, Armand Colin, 1990.

da banca me deu um contato na Armand Colin¹⁴, e eu escrevi um texto publicável baseado na tese. Mas não recebi muitos retornos. Não houve críticas francas, nem movimento de adesão. Eu acredito que o livro gradualmente se tornou parte da biografia de referência sobre o assunto.

No entanto, há um tom crítico no livro.

JP: Sim, claro. A ideia subjacente é que a entrevista biográfica não deve ser um ritual. Não é uma solução mágica que resolve tudo. Na verdade, eu apontava, sem realmente dizer, o risco da ingenuidade intelectual entre os sociólogos de escritório, que veem tudo por meio das ideias e dificilmente saem da Universidade. Quando fui para Chicago, descobri pessoas que tinham muita experiência de vida e usavam isso como base para as suas pesquisas. Freidson me contou sobre a guerra, sobre a sua campanha na Itália, Goody sobre combates na Grécia. Então, sim, você precisa de biografias, mas sempre com distanciamento, ceticismo. Quem realmente viveu, parece natural para elas. E então, a minha experiência com os operários pescadores me mostrou que devemos coletar as confissões em pequenos pedaços. É preciso estar com eles, nas suas atividades. Daí nós conversamos e depois anotamos. Em vez disso, a entrevista oficial nos dá a “teoria de si”¹⁵. A conversa em situação é mais rica... Existem contradições, anedotas etc.

Foi por esse interesse pela vivência que você passou ao estudo das escolas privadas no Oeste da França?

JP: Sim, de certa forma. Entre os ativistas com quem eu andava, havia professores. O que eles contavam era fascinante: as relações com os pais, as crianças, a política e a concorrência com as instituições religiosas. Então, também eu gravei biografias de professores (Peneff, 1987). Depois dei um passo adiante, porque Jean Pierre Briand, de quem eu tinha ficado muito próximo, havia iniciado com Jean Michel Chapoulie a grande pesquisa sócio-histórica que dará origem a *Les collèges du peuple*¹⁶. Eles me pediram para fazer duas ou três entrevistas para eles com executivos ou antigos executivos do ensino católico do Oeste da França. Isso estimulou o meu interesse pelas questões de escolaridade. Ao mesmo tempo, a minha família e eu nos mudamos para Vallet, e a escolarização dos filhos nos fez sentir a questão da concorrência entre o

14. Armand Colin é uma editora francesa criada em 1870.

15. Ver Peneff, 1988a.

16. BRIAND, Jean-Pierre & CHAPOULIE, Jean-Michel. (1992), *Les collèges du peuple*. Paris, CNRS/INRP/ENS.

ensino privado e público no Oeste da França. Em alguns lugares, havia quase apenas ensino privado. Essa disputa entre os dois sistemas era bastante fascinante, mas era necessário proceder a uma reconstrução histórica. Comecei em algumas aldeias e lá fui ajudado por estudantes animados que me ofereceram pequenas monografias escolares do seu município. Elas reconstituem os percursos, as escolhas etc. Então fui com eles para visitar as suas aldeias, às vezes em família; eu deixava meus filhos e a minha esposa visitarem o centro e ia trabalhar com os estudantes. Portanto, era uma pesquisa por oportunidade guiada também pela vontade e pelos encontros.

Então, nos anos 1970 e no início dos anos de 1980, você não praticava ainda a observação?

JP: Como eu disse, a ideia de que a sociologia se baseia acima de tudo em coisas que você vivencia e constata por si só sempre me pareceu óbvia. É assim que os meus colegas e eu, quando eu era criança ou adolescente, nos informávamos sobre a vida adulta; por exemplo, sobre os casos extraconjugais na aldeia. Você não encontra isso nos livros, é preciso seguir e observar as pessoas. As biografias eram para mim uma forma de transformar os meus contatos com as pessoas em materiais para entender o ativismo político. Mas a minha própria prática política também alimentou minha pesquisa. Como comunista, eu fui escrutinador durante as eleições e me candidatei às eleições cantonais a pedido da minha célula, embora se soubesse que as minhas chances eram mínimas. E então eu constatei as tentativas de fraude. Nas mesas, os boletins de voto dos comunistas eram colocados sob os dos outros, o que obrigava os eleitores a solicitá-los. Mas é claro que eles não gostavam, eles preferiam pegar vários boletins de diferentes partidos nas suas mãos para esconder as suas opiniões. Havia atas não assinadas e muitas pequenas irregularidades, que, aliás, eram inúteis, porque os comunistas não estavam em posição de vencer. Eu acho que tive 5% dos votos. Isso me intrigava e me irritava; aliás, esse tipo de prática em pleno século XX. Então eu decidi olhar para a abstenção eleitoral e o voto dos operários (Peneff, 1981a). Eu olhei as listas eleitorais e comparei-as com os números da população em idade de votar em bairros que eu conhecia e onde eu havia observado a composição sociológica da população.

Qual foi então a influência da “tradição de Chicago” na sua relação com a observação participante?

JP: O meu encontro com a sociologia de Chicago aconteceu nas décadas de 1970 e 1980 graças aos “três da Paris 8”, ou seja, Briand, Chapoulie e Henri Peretz. São eles que me apontaram os grandes textos dos interacionistas que não eram traduzidos na

França. Mas eu conhecia a cidade de Chicago desde os anos de 1960. Eu havia ido lá quando era estudante. Minha noiva tinha feito uma viagem de estudo de línguas com uma família em Boston, e eu peguei carona no Nordeste até Chicago dormindo em YMCAs. Essas eram coisas que os estudantes faziam naquela época. Eu também havia ido visitar os países do Leste, atrás da Cortina de Ferro, com dois amigos de carro. Nós queríamos saber como as pessoas viviam fora da França e procurávamos exemplos (positivos ou negativos) que pudessem ajudar a lutar contra a ideologia da colonização. Então era preciso ver a América. Chicago também era a cidade do racismo, havia tumultos raciais, havia um gueto. Eu queria ver isso.

Depois, mais tarde, quando eu já estava trabalhando em Nantes, fui entrevistar vários sociólogos cujos textos eu havia lido. Fui ver Everett Hughes na sua casa. Ele já era velho e me recebeu com a sua filha, que o ajudava a lembrar algumas coisas, eu vi Eliot Freidson¹⁷, Howard Becker, Irwin Deutscher¹⁸, Egon Bittner¹⁹ e outros. Guardei as gravações em algum lugar.

E que universo você descobre?

JP: Eu fiquei especialmente surpreso ao ver pessoas tão simples. Eles estavam abertos, acolhedores. Você liga, eles atendem... Você toca a campainha, eles o convidam para ir à casa deles. Eu não teria ousado fazer isso na França com intelectuais famosos. Então eu me integro e compreendo um pouco da vida cotidiana deles, vidas de pessoas de classe média. Mas eu não vinha como historiador da sociologia. Eu não tinha listas de perguntas muito específicas, só queria conversar informalmente.

E depois houve o semestre na Northwestern?

JP: Sim, em 1983, Becker teve a gentileza de me convidar. Eu consegui uma bolsa de estudos e pedi um ano sabático a Verret, mas ele só me deu um semestre com a condição de que eu recuperasse as minhas aulas. Então, partimos com Suzanne e os filhos em julho. Nós nos mudamos para uma casa onde tínhamos alugado um andar

17. Eliot Freidson (1923-2005): Vindo de um meio popular, soldado na Itália durante a guerra, defendeu sua tese de sociologia em Chicago e depois ensinou em Nova York a partir de 1956. Seus trabalhos se concentraram principalmente na medicina e no sistema de profissões (ver: Freidson, 1984).

18. Irwin Deutscher (nascido em 1923): Depois de quatro anos no Corpo de Fuzileiros Navais, estudou na Universidade do Missouri (PhD 1959) e, em seguida, ensinou sociologia na Universidade de Syracuse. É também o autor de *What we say what we do* (1973), que enfoca a discrepância entre afirmações e atos.

19. Egon Bittner (1921-2011): Nascido na Tchecoslováquia, obteve o seu PhD na Universidade de Califórnia (Los Angeles) em 1949 e, em seguida, ensinou na Universidade de Brandeis. É conhecido por seu trabalho sobre a polícia e uma perspectiva próxima à etnometodologia.

e ficamos por sete ou oito meses. Os filhos foram para a escola, de ensino fundamental para um e de ensino médio para outro. Eles adoraram. Eu ainda mais, pois me abriram todas as portas da Universidade. Eu podia assistir às aulas, às defesas, às reuniões de laboratório. Também fui convidado a falar sobre as minhas pesquisas, e pareceu interessá-los; fiquei encantado. Encontrei pessoas descontraídas, engraçadas e espontâneas. Nada a ver com a Universidade francesa. Eu conversava regularmente com Becker, que coordenava a minha estadia, e eu acompanhava as suas aulas. Conte mais tarde: ele tinha uma pequena sala de aula no porão com assentos heteróclitos, e a classe era uma espécie de seminário onde ele pedia aos seus alunos que formulassem perguntas e análises a partir de temas ou de fatos que ele mesmo trazia. Era extremamente original e instrutivo, especialmente para um francês acostumado ao ritual de ensino francês. Portanto, eu não vi o tempo passar. E então nós visitamos Chicago, os belos bairros, as margens do lago. Também levei toda a minha pequena família para o bairro negro. Lá, um dia, nós fomos seguidos por um grupo de jovens. Eu estava um pouco preocupado porque nós éramos os únicos brancos na rua e não muito discretos. Então um dos rapazes se aproxima e pergunta: “Não é inglês que vocês estão falando entre vocês... De onde vocês são?”. Quando eu lhe digo que somos franceses, ele parece encantado: “Ah! francês! Bravo! Vocês têm um presidente [Mitterrand] que está lutando pela libertação de Mandela”.

Então sim, Chicago foi uma grande experiência e não só porque eu pude ler muito boa sociologia em enormes bibliotecas abertas dia e noite... É o contato com intelectuais diferentes, originais, que haviam vivenciado coisas e que eram simples.

Como você começou a estudar a medicina a partir daí?

JP: A medicina é outra coisa. Eu já tinha lido Freidson, claro, mas foi um tema que me ocorreu por acaso, depois de uma oportunidade, mais uma vez. Eu tinha algumas alunas em Nantes que eram um pouco mais velhas do que as outras que eram assalariadas. Elas me disseram que eram enfermeiras no hospital de Saint Nazaire e que gostariam de escrever a sua dissertação sobre a sua atividade. Então isso me interessou ainda mais, porque a minha família e eu acabávamos de nos mudar para a mesma cidade. Então lhes perguntei se eu poderia ir pesquisar com elas. Elas me põem em contato com o diretor das emergências, que estava disposto a me aceitar como maqueiro voluntário. “Sem problema, ele me diz”, e me manda uma bata. Então fiquei dois anos lá, três dias por semana (os fins de semana e dias em que eu não tinha aula). E, claro, lá eu queria fazer observação. Primeiro eu tive que ser aceito pelo grupo de maqueiros. Eles me testaram, queriam saber se eu iria denunciá-los quando eles roubavam um pouco de dinheiro do bolso de um bêbado, ou quando

eles conversavam entre si de assuntos pessoais sobre as pessoas no serviço. Claro que eu guardei tudo para mim e acabei sendo aceito; eles se tornaram bons amigos.

Você sabia que praticava um tipo de sociologia que não era muito usado na época, nos anos de 1980?

JP: Sim, claro. Poucas pessoas faziam observação participante. Havia observadores nas fábricas, como eu disse mais tarde (Peneff, 1996), mas, nesse tipo de instituição, eu acho que ninguém tinha feito isso na França. O método era conhecido e discutido, mas os sociólogos empíricos faziam sobretudo entrevistas, e os meus colegas da Paris 8 inicialmente focavam no arquivo. Henri Peretz, em seguida, trabalhou no método²⁰, mas na época de *L'Hôpital en urgence* (Peneff, 1992), eu estava um pouco sozinho.

Foi isso que tornou o livro tão bem-sucedido?

JP: Sim, acho que sim. Vendi vários milhares de cópias. Eu descrevia cenas reais, as dificuldades do trabalho, as coisas do dia a dia. De repente, houve uma resposta favorável dos jornalistas e etnógrafos e até dos médicos que encontravam no livro aquilo que conheciam.

Foi isso que o levou a continuar trabalhando neste tema?

JP: Não é só isso. A medicina é um assunto imenso e sem fim, com enormes implicações políticas e sociais, como Freidson o descreveu com propriedade. Por isso, na última fase da minha carreira, que se passa em Aix-en-Provence, eu dediquei as minhas pesquisas a estudar outros aspectos do funcionamento da medicina, ou melhor, da sua relação com o resto da sociedade. Analisei primeiro *Les malades des urgences* (Peneff, 2000), em parte por observação e, especialmente, ao estudar o uso crescente desses serviços pelas populações. Então, passei das observações de campo para uma análise mais abrangente. Foi especialmente em *France malade de ses médecins* (Peneff, 2005) que levei a análise mais longe, ao mostrar os efeitos nocivos do poder médico sobre a sociedade e a economia. Aqui, é claro, a recepção foi muito mais fria, até gelada. O livro foi fortemente criticado em *Le Monde* e *Le Nouvel Observateur*²¹: atingia muitos interesses adquiridos. A Ordem dos Médicos fechou

20. Peretz (1992), "Le vendeur, la vendeuse et leur cliente. Ethnographie du prêt-à-porter de luxe". *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 33 (1): 49-72; e Peretz (1998), *Les méthodes en sociologie: L'observation*, Paris, La Découverte.

21. Journaux franceses.

as suas portas para mim, os sindicatos não quiseram mais falar comigo. Isso não surpreenderá ninguém atualmente, em meio à crise da Covid que mostra a profundidade da corrupção produzida pelo dinheiro dos laboratórios, que são capazes de mobilizar os seus interesses, jornalistas, políticos, médicos, escritores etc. Na época, um representante dos laboratórios até quis comprar (por uma grande quantia) o meu manuscrito antes da publicação, para que pudesse ser enterrado.

Este movimento para as generalidades lhe parece indispensável para um sociólogo?

JP: É um movimento bastante lógico. Becker parte do seu cotidiano de músico e, depois, amplia a sua reflexão e analisa os desvios e as drogas. Freidson olhou para o sistema das profissões. A observação, a convivência com as pessoas que queremos compreender é a base, a meu ver, da nossa profissão. Desde a infância, as pessoas curiosas observam, e muitos escritores praticaram a observação. Eu relato isso em *Le goût de l'observation* (2009). Mas depois você tem que conseguir conectar as coisas. A medicina envolve somas gigantescas de dinheiro, é uma questão de sociedade fundamental, por isso nós somos levados a olhar para todo o sistema. Mas, no início, são necessários bons dados, não apenas números. Eu dediquei, aliás, alguns artigos a pensar como são fabricados os números e as informações que os sociólogos usam: os dados sobre a origem social dos alunos (Peneff, 1984), a medida no método da observação (Peneff, 1995), as amostragens (Peneff, 1988b). Na base da minha abordagem está o ceticismo, a desconfiança em relação às ideias convencionadas, aceitas, aos discursos produzidos pela mídia ou pelas autoridades. Eu sempre ensinei os meus alunos a confiarem primeiro no que sabem por experiência própria. E o mais interessante é, portanto, investigar por observação participante para cultivar a sua curiosidade e os contatos com os outros. A observação, na minha opinião, é na verdade um ramo da exploração do mundo. Eu encontro isso no último livro de David Lepoutre (2020), que relaciona ciências sociais e ciências naturais: é preciso navegar, ser curioso, ir ver, ler autores de outras disciplinas. Devemos ter cuidado com os determinismos aparentes, com as leis. Se você quer fazer descobertas, precisa seguir os seus instintos e aproveitar as oportunidades. Foi mais ou menos isso que Clément Ader fez, esse pioneiro da aviação cuja vida eu contei (Peneff, 2020). Aliás, é dessa forma que conduzi minhas pesquisas: sem plano de carreira, de acordo com os encontros e as aberturas. Devemos incentivar os jovens a se lançarem, a fazerem assim... Na França e em outros lugares; no Brasil também, por que não?

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Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *Impressos subversivos: arte, cultura e política no Brasil 1924-1964*. São Paulo, Intermeios, 2020, 212 pp.

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Lembro-me de que em 2015 (estava na direção da Biblioteca Mário de Andrade, em São Paulo) havíamos iniciado uma prospecção em diversas bibliotecas públicas país afora, com vistas a criar um grande repositório digital de periódicos nacionais. Deparei-me, nessa ocasião, com um acervo interessantíssimo depositado na Biblioteca dos Povos da Floresta, em Rio Branco. Tratava-se de folhetos, mimeografados, panfletos e bilhetes escritos, de caráter subversivo, que informavam sobre as ações de Chico Mendes e do grupo de seringueiros contra os altos mandatários locais, políticos e exploradores

dos recursos florestais e dos povos amazônicos. As reuniões desse grupo eram clandestinas e secretas, pois havia uma brutal forma de repressão contra seus integrantes. Somada a isso, a carência de recursos econômicos para manter um jornal, ou algo equivalente, contribuiu para que as mensagens do grupo se dessem em forma de volantes, pequenos cartazes e outras coisas improvisadas. Seria ótimo tê-los dentro do projeto, mas havia um problema conceitual: aquele material não se enquadrava dentro da categoria *periódicos*. Voltando a São Paulo, comuniquei ao BNDES, patrocinador do projeto, que eu faria uma mudança naquela categoria, a fim de que o material achado no Acre pudesse ser compreendido e integrado ao repositório. Então, mudei o verbete. O substantivo *periódico* passou a ter, para a finalidade que pretendíamos, o seguinte significado:

Para efeitos de delimitação do escopo deste projeto – i.e., um repositório digital de periódicos nacionais considerados raros e/ou especiais – define-se periódico como uma publicação (jornal, revista, artigo acadêmico etc.) que aparece ou tenha aparecido em intervalos regulares e cujas coleções físicas constituem-se atualmente como hemerotecas. Diz-se periódico também a documentação primária de relevância incontestada para a história brasileira com vistas a ser publicada sob essa forma, com os meios técnicos disponíveis, em data próxima de seu contexto originário, mas que não o foi por conta de circunstâncias econômicas, sociais, políticas ou ideológicas forçosamente contrárias a essa intenção.

Infelizmente, com o fim de meu mandato à frente da Mário de Andrade e a troca de comando no poder executivo municipal, no início de 2017, esse projeto em torno da constituição de um repositório público digital brasileiro, assim como muitos outros foram sequestrados pela nova administração que chegava,

esposada com o neoliberalismo e a ausência por completo de uma política cultural integradora.

Citando Jorge Luis Borges, essa lembrança veio até mim, como “uma reprovação que era quase um remorso”, ao ler o novo livro de Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *Impressos subversivos: Arte cultural e política no Brasil, 1924-1964*. O livro trata particularmente dos impressos confiscados pelas forças policiais do Estado de São Paulo, bem como da vigilância sobre o aparato cultural tradicional, no período referido, sob a alegação de que esses impressos ou ações artísticas constituíam então ameaças à ordem pública social. O tema da censura é abrangente, compreendendo, no Brasil, desde a época dos tempos coloniais até, principalmente, o momento histórico da ditadura militar, de 1964 a 1983. De certo modo, é possível pensar a vigilância, a censura e a repressão sempre como consequências da manutenção do *status* de poder e de sua influência sobre tudo e sobre todos, qualquer que seja a forma de governo. Justifica-se, assim, como uma estratégia e, ao mesmo tempo, como parte do modo de ser do Estado à medida que este é subsumido na representação de um ente totalitário, tendo na sua autopreservação a sua principal finalidade. Contudo, Maria Luiza opta por fazer um recorte em sua pesquisa, cuja data inicial coincide com a criação do Deops/SP (Departamento Estadual de Ordem Política e Social de São Paulo) em 1924, até o ano de 1964, quando houve o golpe e a intervenção dos militares no processo democrático brasileiro. Segundo a autora, nos cerca de 150 mil prontuários e quase 10 mil dossiês temáticos produzidos pelo Deops, é possível “desenhar uma cartografia dos impressos subversivos que, por sua vez, nos levam aos ativistas, partidos políticos, instituições e movimentos sociais que atuaram no estado de São Paulo entre 1924 e 1964”.

Esses arquivos possuíam “*status* de evidência” para o aparato repressor do Estado, pois supunham que imagens e textos eram veículos cabais de manifestação política subversiva, desagregadora e maliciosa, sendo classificados como contingencialmente sediciosos à ordem moral, social e política vigente. Pensando dialeticamente, Maria Luiza nos propõe que “a radicalização por parte dos regimes saneadores de ideias influenciou a gestação de uma arte, literatura e imprensa alternativas”. Por outro lado, a ação repressora pautada pela burocracia estatal, não se limitando a destruir, mas, principalmente, a colher e a documentar as *evidências* dos atos subversivos por meio da descrição e do arquivamento de impressos, textos e fotografias, permitiu a preservação de uma espécie de *memória da intolerância*. Dito de outro modo, foi graças a esse nefasto serviço de policiamento das ideias por parte do Estado que se tem hoje a possibilidade de se resgatarem as mensagens dos diversos grupos minoritários que compunham a sociedade paulista daquele período e de se compreenderem muitos dos seus anseios, reivindicações e utopias. A sedição e a doutrinação por meio do aparato cultural, de manifestos e da propaganda, oficial ou subversiva, foram instrumentos utilizados por ambos os lados, Estado e ativistas em protesto, fossem esses proletários ou integrantes de uma elite educada formalmente. Para a autora, entre 1924 e 1964, os agentes artistas de esquerda no Brasil tinham em comum “a revisão crítica da teoria da arte desinteressada”, pretendendo uma relação mais estreita entre arte e ativismo político-social, portanto, privilegiando formas de manifestação artística coletivas. Dessa feita, a sua opção foi trazer à pesquisa duas categorias que, embora sejam muito diferentes entre si, vistas de um modo panorâmico, complementam-se quanto ao

seu escopo político: a sublevação por meio de imagens e textos impressos contra a repressão e a censura no Brasil na época estudada. Por essa razão, de um lado, a autora propõe as ações dos “artistas vanguardistas de protesto”, ou seja, daquelas pessoas com formação “acadêmica” ou cultural que se utilizaram das suas produções e das instituições nas quais circulavam, ou apresentavam as suas obras como frentes para propagar as suas ideias. Para Maria Luiza, esse grupo estava comprometido “não apenas para propagar uma ideologia”, mas principalmente com a possibilidade do papel transformador da arte “no interior da sociedade”. Por outro lado, a autora reúne informações da atuação de um grupo de “artesãos panfletários”, pessoas sem “formação acadêmica”, vinculados a associações de classe e sindicatos, ou “treinados” em Liceus de Artes e Ofícios. Eram “artistas-operários brasileiros” que permaneceram “à margem dos principais movimentos culturais e artísticos da arte moderna, sem dispor de um ateliê e sem frequentar os circuitos dos vanguardistas de protesto”. Mas se há uma diferença grande quanto à formação e mesmo quanto à origem social entre os membros desses dois grupos, uma preocupação em comum deve ser observada: “Em comum têm o mundo da dor, da miséria e fome, sintomas da República em agonia, representações ricas em significados”.

Os artistas de vanguarda engajaram-se na produção de um tipo de arte que metaforizava o sofrimento dos excluídos e das classes trabalhadoras por meio de representações contundentes, deformadas e expressionistas, difundida principalmente por meio da gravura, segundo a autora. De Lasar Segall, que veio ao Brasil em 1913, aqui radicando-se depois, em 1923, passando por Käthe Kollwitz, cujas obras causaram uma forte impressão na China e no Brasil, a partir de 1926, até Lívio Abramo,

Di Cavalcanti, Cândido Portinari, Tarsila do Amaral, Renina Katz e outros, o grupo de *artistas vanguardistas de protesto* assemelhou-se quanto à liberação das forças criativas do espírito contra as convenções ou padrões estabelecidos e cultivados pelo Estado.

Um ponto importante a se destacar, embora anacrônico em relação à arte brasileira feita antes da década de 1930, é o entendimento da gravura como um meio artístico por excelência a servir aos anseios revolucionários ou de protestos em prol da democracia. Deve-se provavelmente essa opinião à leitura de Walter Benjamin (1936), mais precisamente à noção da reprodutibilidade da imagem (coisa que a gravura e a fotografia têm como uma premissa técnica) como um critério para se entender a dissolução da *aura* da obra de arte, sucedendo à perda de sua unicidade o ganho para a *práxis política*. Esse entendimento, contudo, não era o de Lovis Corinth, por exemplo, que foi ocasionalmente professor de Anita Malfatti, entre 1910 e 1914, conforme nos lembra Maria Luiza. Malfatti, por sua vez, se estudada fora do que foi convencionado pela recente história da arte brasileira, e, em especial, pela história do modernismo brasileiro, nunca se filiou verticalmente a qualquer vanguarda moderna. Quando muito, tentou se adaptar, entre 1923 e 1928, às convenções *classicistas* da assim chamada Escola de Paris, sem voltar a obter, contudo, o mesmo vigor das pinturas apresentadas em sua segunda exposição individual em São Paulo, em 1917, e que foram feitas em seu período de estudo nos Estados Unidos. Foram essas pinturas os alvos da crítica virulenta de Monteiro Lobato, publicada mais tarde com o título “Paranoia ou mistificação?”, que as entendeu como “futuristas”. Um exame mais detido na crítica de arte exercitada naquela época nos permite entender que futurismo era então

um adjetivo malicioso usado para vilipendiar qualquer produção associada à arte moderna. Aliás, uma outra correção, que em nada retira o brilho do estudo de Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, quando menciona que “o expressionismo, o cubismo e o abstracionismo” chegaram por aqui “com certo atraso”. Por aqui, do início da década de 1910 até finais da década de 1920, o que tivemos foram manifestações diversas associadas ao naturalismo, impressionismo e ao pós-impressionismo, praticados tanto dentro da Escola Nacional de Belas Artes quanto fora dela, assim como de vertentes ligadas ao fim das vanguardas modernas. Essas vertentes tiveram como denominador comum a reapresentação mais amena, ordeira ou palatável ao público, de alguns dos pressupostos estéticos e plásticos formais das vanguardas (como se fossem vacinas carregando o vírus inativado), fazendo parte de uma corrente que se deu entre 1914 e 1925, e que foi denominada genericamente de “Retorno à Ordem”. Esta foi, aliás, a noção de moderno (*o futurismo paulista*) apresentada em 1922 na célebre Semana de Arte Moderna. O expressionismo *raiz*, por assim dizer – em especial, o da *Nova objetividade* berlinense, mais engajado política e socialmente –, teve por aqui a adesão, temporária, apenas de Lasar Segall e de Wilhelm Haarberg.

Há certas afirmações, no entanto, no texto de Maria Luiza, que tendem a simplificar por demais essa questão: “De imediato, alguns artistas modernistas emergentes no Brasil e com formação na Alemanha contribuíram para a produção de gravuras como estratégia de levar arte para o povo. Com gravuras apresentadas em importantes exposições modernistas e/ou reproduzidas em periódicos da esquerda militante, este grupo deixou marcas na arte de protesto veiculada no Brasil e no exterior”. Porém, se de fato essa afirmação faz sentido

para uma determinada fase da obra de Lasar Segall ou de Lívio Abramo, ou mesmo para a obra inicial de Renina Katz, não se pode generalizá-la para todos os artistas citados em sua pesquisa. Por exemplo, as gravuras de Anita Malfatti (que teve parte de sua formação na Alemanha, como referido) presentes nas suas exposições individuais de 1917, 1921 e 1922 não podem ser enquadradas nessa classificação; nunca tiveram intenção alguma de se insurgirem contra o sistema ou de serem vistas como imagens de combate social.

O tipo de militância ao qual a autora se refere é com razão mais perceptível nas produções, diversas, dos artistas brasileiros, ou de artistas estrangeiros vivendo no Brasil, trabalhando durante o primeiro governo de Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), muitos dos quais foram filiados ao Partido Comunista. Algumas associações aproximando artistas e ideologias antifascistas foram formadas nessa época, como o CAM (Clube dos Artistas Modernos), no qual Mário Pedrosa fez a sua famosa conferência sobre a obra de Käthe Kollwitz, em 1933. A partir da década de 1940, sobretudo impactado pelo *Manifesto por uma arte revolucionária*, de Diego Rivera e André Breton, Pedrosa ratificará a sua tese fundamental, de que a arte sempre deva ser produzida sob “a mais plena e absoluta liberdade de expressão pelo seu potencial libertário e revolucionário em si”. A manifestação de revolta e de contestação política não dependeria estritamente da figuração de temas socialistas, mas estaria presente na libertação das forças criativas *per se*, tese que abriu caminho para a implantação e para a defesa da arte abstrata no Brasil.

De outra sorte, os *artesãos* ou *panfletários associativistas*, segundo a autora, eram pessoas provenientes de classes mais humildes; eram autodidatas ou possuíam apenas uma formação

técnico profissional. Provinham dos Liceus de Artes e Ofícios do Rio de Janeiro e de São Paulo, não pertenciam a qualquer vanguarda artística e, no mais das vezes, auxiliavam os seus partidos ou associações produzindo panfletos modestos, sem requinte algum e de maneira clandestina, que circulavam “fora do círculo dos artistas modernos”. Associações como a UTG (União dos Trabalhadores Gráficos) ou a Frente Operária de São Paulo, entre outras, foram policiadas pelo aparato censor do Estado, tendo os seus impressos recolhidos e pautados como mensagens subversivas. Maria Luiza os ordena por categorias, dividindo aqueles impressos que também eram feitos como propaganda de afirmação positivada dos valores do Estado. Procede, por fim, à análise de alguns daqueles panfletos considerados subversivos, elencando o conteúdo em primeiro lugar e, depois, a “razão da apreensão”. Juntos, a descrição do conteúdo e a justificativa por ter sido retirado de circulação respondem àquela necessidade de construção de evidências, como a declarar que ao Estado caberia o monopólio da razão, usada para produzir as provas necessárias à acusação, ao julgamento e à condenação.

O livro perfaz, desse modo, a dupla via da estratégia de saneamento ou de higienização levada a cabo pelo regime totalitário, operando simultaneamente a serviço da propaganda que reafirmava os valores familiares, morais e patrióticos e censurava qualquer tipo de mensagem que pudesse inocular o vírus da desconfiança em relação ao discurso oficial.

Segundo Maria Luíza, depois de um período no qual os protestos se ampliaram, contribuindo também “para o aumento das condenações populares ao segundo governo Vargas (1951-1954)”, houve um recuo tanto de artistas vanguardistas quanto de artesãos panfletários, “fragilizados com o suicídio de

Vargas, ato que recuperou a popularidade do ex-presidente e facilitou as estratégias que culminaram com o golpe militar em 31 de março de 1964”.

Por isso, entre outras tantas razões, a leitura deste livro torna-se fundamental para o momento no qual vivemos. Simbolicamente, ele se inicia com o afastamento de uma presidente legitimamente eleita e culmina no atentado à *facada*, de 2018, como o ato farsesco inicial da escalada de autoritarismo e de violências civis perpetradas em nosso país atualmente, em nome de um grupo de militares ressentidos, de famílias de classe média que consumiram além da conta a propaganda oficial da ditadura militar em seu imaginário pouco exercitado, além, é claro, de uma família em especial, de agafanhadores de salários da República.

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