

INTELLECTUAL TURNS AND LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL LUCIDITY

*VIRAGENS INTELLECTUAIS E A LUCIDEZ SOCIAL LATINO-AMERICANA*

*GIROS INTELLECTUALES Y LUCIDEZ SOCIAL LATINOAMERICANA*



Renata Ovenhausen ALBERNAZ<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: renata.ovenhausen@ufrgs.br

**How to reference this paper:**

ALBERNAZ, R. O. Intellectual Turns and Latin American Social Lucidity. *Plurais - Revista Multidisciplinar*, Salvador, v. 7, n. 00, e023010. e-ISSN: 2177-5060. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29378/plurais.v8i00.17764>



| Submitted: 23/06/2023  
| Revisions required: 10/07/2023  
| Approved: 18/10/2023  
| Published: 20/12/2023

---

**Editors:** Prof. Dr. Célia Tanajura Machado  
Prof. Dr. Kathia Marise Borges Sales  
Prof. Dr. Rosângela da Luz Matos

**Deputy Executive Editor:** Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

---

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre – RS – Brazil. Associate Professor. Doctoral degree in Law (UFSC).

**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to analyze an intellectual movement that problematizes the process, "efficiency" and externalities of research results in social sciences in Latin America. A bibliographical survey was carried out of texts by prominent Latin American intellectuals from this movement. The main proposals and criticisms of this movement are: 1) to deconstruct the trap of hegemonic knowledge that unbalances what makes visible and invisible, notably in facts of redistribution, maneuvering social consensus; 2) to invert the usual logic of the efficiency of investigations, minimizing their character of being at the service of the capitalist modernizing bet; 3) to change the aesthetic standards in Brazilian science, abandoning the privileged taste for exotic (Euro-North American-centric) methods and standards; 4) to immunize intellectuals against the defeatism of frustrated programming on the continent; 5) to insist on the deeper causes of social problems, not content with the closest and most obvious ones.

**KEYWORDS:** Intellectuals. Epistemic Turns. Latin America. Decolonial Research. Social Justice.

**RESUMO:** *Esse artigo objetiva analisar um movimento intelectual que problematiza o processo, a "eficiência" e as externalidades dos resultados das pesquisas em ciências sociais aplicadas na América Latina. Para isso, realizou-se uma pesquisa bibliográfica em textos de intelectuais destacados desse movimento, notadamente, pensadores decoloniais latino-americanos. Analisando esse movimento, suas principais propostas e críticas são: 1) desconstruir a cilada do saber hegemônico que desequilibra o que visibiliza e invisibiliza, notadamente em fatos de redistribuição, manobrando o consenso social; 2) inverter a lógica usual da eficiência das investigações, minimizando o seu estar a serviço da aposta modernizante e da eficiência econômica capitalista; 3) mudar os padrões estéticos na ciência brasileira, abandonando qualquer resquício do gosto privilegiado aos métodos e padrões exóticos (euro-norte-americano-centrados); 4) imunizar os intelectuais contra o derrotismo de programações frustradas, no continente; 5) buscar as causas mais profundas dos problemas sociais, não se contentando com as mais próximas e evidentes.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Intelectuais. Viragens Epistêmicas. América Latina. Pesquisa Decolonial. Justiça Social.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo pretende analizar un movimiento intelectual que problematiza el proceso, la "eficiencia" y las externalidades de los resultados de la investigación en ciencias sociales en América Latina. Se realizó un relevamiento bibliográfico de textos de intelectuales latinoamericanos de este movimiento y se constató que sus principales propuestas y críticas son: 1) desconstruir la trampa del conocimiento hegemónico que desequilibra lo que hace visible e invisible, especialmente en el caso de la redistribución, maniobrando el consenso social; 2) invertir la lógica habitual de la eficiencia de la investigación, minimizando su estar al servicio de la apuesta modernizadora capitalista; 3) cambiar los estándares estéticos de esta ciencia, abandonando el gusto privilegiado por los métodos y estándares exóticos (euro-norteamericanos); 4) inmunizar a los intelectuales contra el derrotismo de la programación frustrada en el continente; 5) insistir en las causas más profundas de los problemas sociales, no contentándose con las evidentes.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Intelectuales. Giros epistémicos. América Latina. Investigación decolonial. Justicia Social.*

## Introduction

This article originated from a request for a lecture during a student mobilization at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, amidst the movements occupying public buildings in 2016 in Porto Alegre and throughout Brazil. Therefore, the initial inspiration was rooted in addressing young mobilized students, aiming to invigorate their questioning and emancipatory forces despite the discouragements of those days surrounding the Public Spending Amendment vote. Another trigger was the perception of a certain disenchantment that, in times of crisis, seems to afflict society regarding the purpose of key institutions associated with human life – the State, Unions, Social Movements, and Communities. This disenchantment has reinforced defensive and "intimate" and "possessive individualism"<sup>2</sup> behaviors, such as advocating for the privatization of state activities, defending private savings and investment as means of social protection, embracing a solitary life, or, at most, one restricted to the nuclear family, and staunchly defending the standard of freedom through individual preference in the market, resulting in the diminishing of an ethic of commitment and social solidarity.

Although the private and intimate realms are defensible and necessary spaces for the protection of freedom, maturity, and individual responsibility, as existentialists advocate immunizing individuals against certain mass compulsions and harmful effects of socialization<sup>3</sup>, a commitment to their widespread dissemination should be a matter of concern.

One might be experiencing the peak of what Touraine (1998) referred to in the 90s as "de-modernization." On the one hand, there's a perception of a rupture in the ability of major modern institutions to maintain collective cohesion, something that evokes "a 'non-social'

---

<sup>2</sup> *Possessive individualism* is the fundamental element of the current societal model, as elucidated by Macpherson (1979) in understanding the constitution of modern society through the lens of Thomas Hobbes. He terms this model the *Possessive Market Society*, wherein an individual's labor is treated as a commodity. Although the "energy and skill" of an individual are their personal "property," they are not considered integral to their personality but rather their "belongings," as individuals are free to offer their competencies to others for a specific price. The adjective "possessive" is employed by the author to characterize the full development of the market society, a society in which labor has become a market commodity, and almost all social relations—except for a few social enclaves—have been transformed into market relations. In this case, the term "market economy" no longer captures its essence, making the designation "market society" more appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> The detrimental effects of socialization are not overlooked, aligning with the caution raised by Azevedo and Albernaz (2006). Following Guerreiro Ramos' evaluation, they assert that the average man—the healthy man championed by Durkheim—was essentially considered an "adjusted man," non-confrontational, constantly seeking perfect adaptation to the social environment. However, the sociologist from Bahia warns that Durkheim never attempted to entertain speculation about the unhealthy nature of the social environment, assuming that all socialization was inherently beneficial. The authors emphasize Guerreiro Ramos' call for social science not to remain aloof from critiques directed at the "pathology of conformity or social normality" (Guerreiro Ramos, 1971, p. 25-26, our translation).

analysis of social reality" (Touraine, 2011, our translation), namely the loss of the vision of society as an integrated system.

On the other hand, attempts to revive the shattered social unity with old recipes (sometimes exacerbated nationalisms and culturalisms) seem anachronistic in the face of the propulsion of communicability and transactions engendered by virtual life and globalization. In this state of "space-time compression,"<sup>4</sup> neither new liberalism, socialism of the old left, nor multiculturalist communitarianism seem to achieve consensus or sustainable political agonism convincingly (Mouffe, 2005). The question, therefore, is whether this dissolution of social ties is real or illusory and what intellectuals can do to clarify or unveil this reality or illusion. This article aims to invite intellectual self-reflection towards this goal.

### **Unveiling Imbalances between Displays and Invisibilities**

Firstly, this dis-location of social bonds might be merely a false impression, as there is perhaps an unprecedented intensification of the socialization of the impacts of social actions, notably their risks. However, this socialization is obfuscated by imbalanced measures of visibility and invisibility, even within the realm of science. This makes the genuine operation of any form of deliberative democratic functioning challenging, whether based on a consensus model (Habermas, 2009), or dissent (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015), as both presuppose widely available reasons and, thus, conscious political engagement.

The case of organizations, whether instrumental or substantive (Guerreiro Ramos, 1981), is evident in this regard. Regarding more substantive organizations, such as those in civil society, solidarity enterprises, non-profit entities, and social movements, studies on these organizations and social mobilizations from the 1980s to the 2000s were expressive and apologetic. There was a perception and expectation that these organizations overflowed with

---

<sup>4</sup> The state of dis-location of the individual in the social realm is here evoked as the subject's sensation of being in a condition of associative fragility. In this context, the individual perceives the association as unstable and unreliable in ensuring their life and recognition or in the contempt they feel towards social bonds, especially in their burdens, even when deeply entangled within them.

"rupture effects"<sup>5</sup>, whether programmed or not and were "counter-systematic"<sup>6</sup>, in nature. They expanded into "networks of social movements"<sup>7</sup>, opening up political and institutional clearings in the sum of their actions, demanding a new form of organization and management – or social management<sup>8</sup>.

It was argued that these organizations had repercussions far beyond their immediate objectives' simple and evident effect, generating a broad-spectrum political, social, and economic transformation (Dagnino, 2004). Today, after an inevitable waning of academic attention to these subjects, it is revived in the studies of network mobilizations, which operate differently but are also fertile in effects, such as environmental protection movements, anti-racism, and anti-police violence movements, diversity movements, among others.

In the realm of more instrumental organizations, such as those of capitalist economic agents driven by accumulation, numerous socializations also take place, primarily of burdens and negative externalities of their activities and interests.

Situations are identified where costs are distributed to consumers in the form of prices, higher interest rates in banking institutions to compensate for losses resulting from defaults,

---

<sup>5</sup> The idea of transruptive effects, as conceptualized by Stuart Hall, is employed here in an analogous manner. Hall (2003) introduces this concept by observing that the mutation from colonial to post-colonial relations in England initially did not by itself alter the subaltern connotations embedded within them. However, the migration facilitated by this mutation has generated various transruptive effects, primarily in the receiving society (England). Among these, Hall highlights the repositioning, under erasure, of the idea of race and its strategic use as a denunciation of an exploitative system; the break from essentialist and evolutionist notions of culture in favor of hybridity and mixed and diasporic cultures; the questioning of the neutrality and universality of the liberal state from its margins. Thus, transruptive effects are the deconstructive and revisionist impacts that the pluralization of social life generates in a society, effects that, in Hall's case, originate from outside to inside the receiving society and, in the case of Brazil, from the margins to the center of that same society.

<sup>6</sup> With the category of counter-systematic collective action, Melucci (2001) directs attention to conflicts at the system level and the mode of opposition, in this case, in which social mobilizations affect it, even if punctually and temporarily. With this idea, he explains collective action not in the form of a character actor with a well-defined identity but as a unity of ends generated by the temporary aggregation in a field of multiple forces acting to destabilize the system.

<sup>7</sup> Scherer-Warren (2005, p. 30) analyzes social movements in networks of social mobilizations, considering the links and reciprocal means that, escaping the limits of given collective organizations, expand symbolically and in solidarity with other collective actors and individual subjects through: 1) social, ethical, political-ideological, and cultural identifications; 2) exchanges, negotiations, and definitions of fields of conflict and common adversaries; and 3) the realization of projects, proposals, and objectives that complement each other.

<sup>8</sup> Incorporating some interpretative keys of this new conception of management—social management, Cançado (2014, p. 81-82, our translation) locates them as follows: the logic of Well-Understood Interest; the locus of the Public Sphere, the end of Emancipation; and a "negative dialogical perspective (Adorno, 2009, our translation), without the pretense of synthesis." Concerning Well-Understood Interest, a concept derived from Tocqueville's description of American society in the 19th century, the author (2014) explains that this concept "is based on the premise that collective well-being is a precondition for individual well-being (as opposed to Adam Smith's premise) (...). In other words, 'virtue is useful.'" Regarding the locus of the public sphere, it is the communicative and deliberative meeting place for individual and collective subjects on matters of societal interest and the ability to navigate this space. Emancipation is defined as breaking free from tutelage and establishing autonomy, focusing on actions of collective self-organization.

and socialization is carried out by complementary health systems where individual payment is a condition for other users to access treatment. There is the externalization of environmental and community damages (noise, waste, odors, and accidents resulting from the rupture of dams containing toxic waste from industries, among others). Additionally, there is the socialization of the risks of activities, transferring responsibility to service providers in favor of ensuring profits for the owners of application systems, among other aspects.

These socializations of burdens and externalities are not easy to research and often remain poorly publicized, as companies are shielded by various confidentiality rights (banking, financial, industrial, intellectual, and criminal). It is common, in fact, when authorizing research within these instrumental organizations, for them to demand a confidentiality agreement, restricting the public disclosure of data and information produced in these studies that could be of collective interest. This is argued because they are exposed to a competitive environment.

On the other hand, the state organization's exhibition tends to be more intense due to the legal principle of public transparency (Article 216, item IX, and Law No. 12,527/2011). However, there are also imbalances between the publicization of expenditures, for example, on public administration and redistributive social justice programs, compared to access to information on subsidies and fiscal default of economic organizations, protected by the same confidentiality rights.

Equalizing the publicization of various socialized aspects of contemporary life is essential not only for conscious deliberative democratic progress but also for the conduct of sustainable development. Award-winning theories on development and justice have insisted on the importance of this. Economists like Amartya Sen (2011) and Joseph Stiglitz (2012) propose analyses with expanded informational bases to include this data. This is aimed at determining, in the measure of development, other human values (beyond income and wealth) in order to eliminate freedom deprivations and severe and unjust inequalities concretely. For a social pact in this direction to operate, one of its conditions is to balance measures of social visibility, enabling a proper construction of a sense of justice.

## Options Available to Emancipatory Intellectuals

According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2014, the participation of employees in the employed population was 61.0%, with the percentage of people without signed work permits being 42.1% among employees and 72.8% among domestic workers. The unemployment rate was nearly 12% for women and 8% for men, with the overall labor underutilization rate at 14.8%, and the average income in 2014 was R\$1,800.00. These are concerning statistics regarding formalization and social assistance for Brazilian workers.

However, even with these figures, labor rights were "relaxed" in the Labor Reform (Law No. 13,467, July 13, 2017). Results from the survey conducted by Figueiras, Lima, and Souza (2019) indicate that, despite the mitigation of guarantees and securities, the promised gains in the number of jobs and wages did not materialize. After the reform, "formal employee entry-level wages remain basically stagnant," open unemployment was 11.6%, and labor force underutilization was 25% in the last quarter of 2018. How was this legal approval possible in this context?

Losses like these may not be explained by the political apathy of the people, who are the victims, as they have historically been subjected to a regime of "subcitizenship"<sup>9</sup>. It is not easy for them to be heard in their despair. Instead, these losses are fueled by political insistence on the old modernizing gamble advocated by the economic elite, an agency for which the state has been a captive servant. The useful people have been directed or dismissed in favor of this elite.

Against this trajectory, the challenge for intellectuals would be to insist on investigating the logic inverse to this modern gamble. This is something akin to what our late Enrique Dussel called "trans modernity"<sup>10</sup>, starting from the perspective of those denied and neglected by

---

<sup>9</sup> Through the concept of *subcitizenship*, Souza (2009, p. 174, our translation) seeks to explain the existence of a certain type of consensus, almost bodily, pre-reflective, and naturalized. Without undermining the effectiveness and legal structure, this consensus allows some individuals and classes to be above the law while others are below it. In other words, there are "invisible and objective networks that disqualify prepared individuals and social groups as sub-producers and sub-citizens, and this takes the form of an unquestionable social evidence, both for the privileged and for the victims of precariousness." Thus, the "social production of a 'structural rabble' in peripheral societies" is not an occasional or social pathology in Brazil but an institutionalized phenomenon, politically and sub politically.

<sup>10</sup> Transmodernity is a position that is assumed and a project of liberation. Dussel (2005, p. 55-70) defends it as the commitment to deny the denial of the myth of Modernity as a myth. To achieve this, the other face, the denied and violated side of Modernity, must assert itself as innocent, judging the Modernity that violated it as guilty. According to Dussel, Modernity is a myth where modern civilization self-describes as civilized; as a result, it obliges itself to develop the primitives; this development follows the process determined by Europe, and it justifies violence against the barbarian who resists this development. The barbarian is considered guilty of their barbarism.

modernity to devise new solutions for old social problems. Indeed, wasn't it from this reverse perspective that Paulo Freire (2003) realized he had much more to learn than to teach from the oppressed? From this attentive listening, the fertility and originality of his emancipatory educational solution (pedagogies of the oppressed, autonomy, etc.) emerged?

The reverse gaze may also discern that the people, today and always, devise their schemes of solutions to their condition in creative, plastic, relaxed, and rebellious ways, a subterranean, branched, rhizomatic resistance with its codes, sometimes invisible to the tradition of academic methods and categories. In a very interesting study on decolonial pedagogies based on the praxis and discourses of Latin American resistance, Catherine Walsh makes reference, for example, to the lesson of the Kichwa leader in Ecuador, Mrs. Dolores Cacuango, known as Mama Dulu. In the 1930s, she nurtured the strength and hope of her oppressed people by saying: "*Somos como la paja del cerro que se arranca e volve a crescer y del paya del cerro cobriremos el mundo*" (Walsh, 2017).

Walsh also mentions the cosmology of African hope as resistance in the pedagogy of enslaved mothers who, with their songs, legends, and dances, sought to shield the black dignity in their children against the onslaught of the deprivation of their humanity through slavery. She cites various texts of resistance intentionally forgotten by Western Eurocentric knowledge, such as the manuscripts of the indigenous people of Huarochiri and Popul Vuh (today, Peru and Guatemala) in the 16th century and the narrative of their strategies of subversion to the colonial logic from the perspective of their peoples.

In this sense, the text *Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno*, is authored by the Quechua Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and sent to King Philip III in 1616. It serves as an example of a narrative that spoke about the indigenous people from the Andean cosmology, denouncing the conflicting dialogue with Christian cosmology and the bureaucratic mentality of agents of the Spanish state. Walsh, therefore, is an intellectual who makes this fruitful inversion in her research and is successfully mapping, thereby making visible and strengthening, the origins and struggles for emancipation arising from the very heart of the Andean people.

Maria Lugones (2014), an Argentine intellectual in decolonial feminism, also calls for this inversion when she suggests imagining and thinking about everyday resistances to colonial

---

and Modernity is elevated as an emancipation from this situation. The costs of modernization are deemed inevitable in terms of those sacrificed by it. The way to legitimize this myth is to hide/deny itself as a myth and affirm itself as a universal truth. 'Transmodernity,' thus, is "a global project of liberation in which Alterity, which was co-essential to Modernity, equally realizes itself" (Dussel, 2005, p. 66, our translation) through mutual creative fecundity.

differences involving non-representative individuals' interactions in official public terms. Addressing resistance to decolonizing gender, the author asserts that the "colonized woman" is an empty concept, "there is no colonized woman; one can only affirm the colonized woman by denying her as a historical being and unilateralizing the gaze on her (Lugones, 2014, p. 939, our translation). And this is a false perspective."

The author suggests focusing on beings and practices that resist Coloniality, highlighting "the subjective/intersubjective relational proliferation of liberation, both adaptively and creatively oppositional" (Lugones, 2014, p. 939, our translation). While this resistance may be minimal in scale, it is constant and transformative. The subjectivity that resists often expresses itself, according to Lugones (2014, p. 942), in the ability of communities of the oppressed to constitute meanings among themselves that reject those imposed by colonial power and express them in codes not understood by that power. This is an infra-political victory, but due to its plasticity and dissemination capacity, it has a considerable social impact. Lugones (2014, p. 943, our translation) thus emphasizes "the process of oppressing ← → resisting in the fractured *locus* of colonial difference."

Therefore, the work of this intellectual contributes both to deconstructing the impression of the oppressed's immobilism in the face of the alleged unchecked magnification of dominating forces today and to mitigating the myth of this magnification, reminding that there is no fully successful, massive domination exempt from the fractures caused by the locus of infra political resistance and social mobilizations. Furthermore, her theory helps promote and make visible the multiplication of these fractures, empowering them by causing a gradual but constant "osteoporosis" in the vertebral column of unjust structures of power, distribution, and modern capitalist socialization.

For this fruitful inversion of research, it is also necessary to change the aesthetic and power standards in Latin American science, denying the structure of the scientific field as it has been designed until now (Bourdieu, 2015). After all, if clear research, extension, and teaching are the tasks that society assigns to university academics to reveal its most subterranean and complex truths, which the untrained eyes of ordinary citizens cannot see, would it be advantageous to embrace this fruitful inversion when these inverted objects are outside the spotlight and academic applause dictated by the criteria of North American and European scientific success?

No, or perhaps, yes. Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1995) called for, back in the 1950s, a truly creative Brazilian intellectual endeavor in the sense of epistemic inversion. What kind of

creative intellectual work would that be? One that, following the Bahian author (1995), would be committed to aiding in the national personification of Brazil and in the macro-structural revision against what imprisoned the country in a cycle of backwardness and dependence, one that promotes the visibility of Brazil's unique social effervescences; a knowledge whose methods, while remaining scientific and rigorous (empirical, but not positivist!)<sup>11</sup>, allow for capturing these social effervescences in a "pedestrian" manner, as conventional and abstract methods might leave them unnoticed.

Finally, it would be the knowledge initiated by an intellectual capable of looking at Brazil with tenderness and proximity, shedding the stigma of self-degrading prejudices imposed by hegemonic colonial understanding. Only this type of knowledge would allow Brazil not only to enter, with originality and notoriety, into the composition of the universal tradition of knowledge but also to help build a country capable of understanding itself and constructing itself in an increasingly self-determined and just manner.

After all, if Arendt (2012) was so insightful in explaining totalitarianism because it was close to her touched her personal experience, and if Bhabha (2018) was so explicit in unveiling hybridity as a bilingual Indian, facing one of the most inequitable realities in the world in terms of wealth concentration and the dysfunction of its distribution, and so creative in both its techniques of oppression and resistance, Brazilian academics are afforded a unique position of speech and phenomenological unveiling that intellectuals from developed countries would be unable to reach. However, this opportunity for authentic intellectual authorship is often lost in favor of the bureaucratic success of academics aligned with foreign "canned sociologies"<sup>12</sup>.

In addition to this inverse perspective and authentic authorship, another intellectual challenge of the present time is to immunize oneself, in this world of impatient demands, against the defeatism of frustrated intellectual agendas – those that, despite all intellectual efforts of clarification and social direction, involve actions and events that escape programming and

---

<sup>11</sup> Guerreiro Ramos (1995) severely critiques positivism as a method instituted by Comte and Durkheim. He asserts that, unlike sociology before the 19th century, which was attentive to social transformations, problems, and issues posed by these transformations and thus was a dynamic sociology, the sociology institutionalized by Comte and Durkheim is a conservative sociology whose intention is to freeze and control social forces in an effort to restrain them for the stabilization of the order imposed by the bourgeois class, considered the standard of normality. Positivist sociology, according to Guerreiro Ramos, is ideological, despite claiming neutrality, as it is committed to establishing the normality of the order imposed by bourgeois society against any resistance to it. Hence, the author rejects this sociology for societies in states of latency, as was Brazilian society in his time.

<sup>12</sup> Guerreiro Ramos (1995) argues that sociology has a salvific and social reconstruction purpose. However, the training of the sociologist has been geared towards training and conformity; they become mere *répétituer*, and their output is packaged almost like "cultural preserves," forming an infantile ailment, more of a gesturing than an active nature, projecting a pathology of normality external to what it apologizes for.

prescription by any intellectual. In a democratic society, social construction is the work of the society itself, not an intellectual elite. However urgent the data revealed by intellectuals may be.

Collective mobilizations, for example, even if they contribute extensively to the composition of creative resistances by the people, have their timing and dynamics and cannot be programmable by intellectuals. As Alberoni (1991) stated, social movements have their genesis in a specific confluence of events and consciousness that brings some individuals a "nascent state," not only of clarity about the essence of things and a possible alternative future but also of a significant propulsive energy potential.

The *nascent state* is a social discontinuity provoked by an experience of death and rebirth at an individual level. Individuals look at themselves, the people around them, society, and the world with an astonished gaze, as if they were seeing these things for the first time and wondering why on earth they are the way they are. Why are they the way they are? Why do they live that way, and why have they accepted living in that way when infinite different forms of life were possible? All the forms of life experienced by people from various societies over millennia and more? In the nascent state, the human being discovers their plasticity, experiences their incredible malleability, and feels, for a moment, miraculous and free from the mode of being in which they were molded and imprisoned. They feel free to realize all their potentialities. It is an absolutely extraordinary experience. Nevertheless, we have all experienced it. Societies and groups periodically go through the same experience. These are moments of *discontinuous change* (Alberoni, 1991, p. 37, our translation).

This nascent state, at least not in a totalitarian way, cannot be created in a laboratory. Intellectuals can only cooperate in the theoretical fermentation of various life alternatives that may provoke the backdrop for these upheavals. Something similar to this nascent state happened, in fact, with the mobilized students who occupied schools and universities in 2016 when they were fighting against the Constitutional Amendment Proposal for Public Expenditure Limitation, approved as Constitutional Amendment 95 (EC95/16) on 15/12/2016. Despite these mobilizations, this amendment was revoked by EC 126/22 and regulated by Complementary Law 200/2023.

The phrases "despite these mobilizations" and "thanks to them" also provoke reflections here. It is necessary to study the reality in motion, going back and forth between the perspectives of the subjects in the struggle, to provide society with responsible explanations and predictions. For example, following the news of the bank workers' movement in 2016, it was noted that it lasted 31 days. Ten years ago, achieving similar gains would have been only two days.

Why did they need more mobilization time? Because, realizing their losses in previous strikes, bankers became immune to the effects of this fighting tool. They created and expanded Home Banking, credit card, and bankfone systems and broadened solutions through ATMs. Bank employees became more dispensable, decreasing their numbers and making their mobilizations less transgressive. As for social networks, initially, they were an alternative and confronting channel to the official media, but now they face challenges such as indications of co-optation, the spread of fake news, manipulation, and commodification. Therefore, new channels and actions need to be invented. Studies should consider that the creativity of subversive resistance generates the creativity of reactionary resistance, establishing a creative and dialectical social movement.

Finally, more than just a study with "formal quality," it is necessary to take into account the "political quality" of research (Demo, 1995)<sup>13</sup>. In this regard, attention must be paid to the potential negative externalities of research results in social sciences and humanities, even in so-called critical research. For example, many empirical studies are conducted in institutional settings of participatory democracy. This is indispensable, considering that these means were hard-won in Brazil but are subject to disrespect from governments and public opinion aligned with a "post-democratic" ideology (Casara, 2019, our translation) or "authoritarian liberalism" (Chamayo, 2020, our translation).

However, these studies are limited to gathering evidence highlighting low popular participation. In that case, the appropriation of these institutions by certain groups and parties, insufficient instrumentalization and qualification, among other widely known problems, one negative externality of such research, which can be used as ammunition for discrediting it, is that, instead of expanding and improving political participation, they may generate discouragement and fuel the ideological belief, facile and shrewd, that, based on the presented evidence, it is not worth investing in political participation in Brazil. However, if these studies delve deeper into the analysis beyond these pieces of evidence, exploring the deeper causes of these findings, they may reach the crucial points of Brazil's participatory failure, elucidating

---

<sup>13</sup> Demo (1995) emphasizes the need to combine both formal and political qualities in research. Formal qualities encompass aspects such as "logical propriety, technical instrumentation, within the usual academic rites: mastery of data collection techniques; handling and use of data; ability to manipulate bibliography; versatility in theoretical discussion; knowledge of theories and authors; adherence to established steps, such as the path of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies" (p. 21, our translation). However, the political quality of research raises the question of its aims, contents, and role as a historical practice, weighing reflections on research's responsibilities in its social context. "It is concerned, for example, with the persistence with which social sciences serve as instrumentation for social control and asks why they know much more about how not to change, how to demobilize social movements, how to justify the rich and powerful than to act as instrumentation for historical transformations considered strategic by the unequal" (p. 25, our translation).

who the real culprits are. This is the productive phase of this type of critical research. Antonio Cattani (s.d.) adopted a similar approach: in studying poverty, he went increasingly deeper, reaching the study of the affluent, and perhaps, in this depth, he is "uncovering" many culprits and "exonerating" many innocents.

### **Final Considerations**

These intellectual commitments encounter a series of obstacles that are shared anxieties among many intellectuals today. Sacrificed by quantitative productivity that can produce little quality, haunted by the discredit of denialists and by a bewildering proliferation of information (which includes both the positive multiplication of voices on social networks and deliberately disseminated fake news), we find ourselves in a state of perplexity about "what to do." It was this state that motivated the writing of this article.

The intellectual turns in the strategies mentioned here – 1) unveiling the pitfalls of imbalances between measures of visibility and invisibility of social redistributions among different actors; 2) reversing the usual logic of the efficiency of investigations, removing them from serving the capitalist modernizing bet and putting them in the service of combating the state of sub-citizenship of our people; 3) conditioning the emergence and valuing intellectuals who militate for authentic and original Latin American authorship; 4) immunizing oneself against the defeatism of intellectual programs frustrated by the timing of social movements; and 5) being mindful of the negative externalities of research results, even if they are still reflections and possibilities, are already underway and indicate a significant intellectual movement of self-reflection on the purposes of research and its role in these emancipatory changes.

## REFERENCES

- ALBERONI, F. **Gênese**. Como se criam os mitos e as instituições da civilização ocidental. Tradução de Mário Fondelli. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1991.
- ARENDT, H. **As origens do totalitarismo**. Tradução de Roberto Raposo. 13. Impressão. 1. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012.
- AZEVEDO, A.; ALBERNAZ, R. A "antropologia" do Guerreiro: a história do conceito de homem parentético: em memória a Eliana Guerreiro Ramos (1949-2003). **Cad. EBAPE.BR**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 4, n. 3, p. 01-19, Oct. 2006. DOI: 10.1590/S1679-39512006000300003.
- BHABHA, H. K. **O local da cultura**. 2. ed. Tradução de Myrian Ávila, Eliana Lorenço de Lima Reis e Gláucia Renate Gonçalves. Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG, 2018.
- BOURDIEU, P. **Para uma sociologia da ciência**. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2015.
- CANÇADO, A. P. Verbete: Gestão Social. *In*: BOULLOSA, R. **Dicionário para a formação em gestão social**. Salvador: CIAGS/UFBA, 2014. Available at: [www.enap.gov.br/files/Caderno\\_EIAPP\\_Programas\\_Sociais.pdf](http://www.enap.gov.br/files/Caderno_EIAPP_Programas_Sociais.pdf). Accessed in: 10 June 2023.
- CASARA, R. R. R. **Estado Pós-democrático**. Neo-obscurantismo e gestão dos indesejáveis. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2019.
- CATTANI, A. D. **Ricos, podres de ricos**. 2. ed. Porto Alegre: Tomo Editorial, s.d.
- CHAMAYOU, G. **A sociedade ingovernável: uma genealogia do liberalismo autoritário**. São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2020
- DAGNINO, E. Sociedade civil, participação e cidadania: de que estamos falando? *In*: MATO, D. (coord.). **Políticas de ciudadanía y sociedad civil en tiempos de globalización**. Caracas: FACES, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2004. p. 95-110.
- DEMO, P. **Metodologia Científica em Ciências Sociais**. 3 ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 1995.
- DUSSEL, E. Europa, Modernidade e Eurocentrismo. *In*: LANDER, E. (org.). **Colonialidade do saber**. Eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas Latino-Americanas. Tradução Julio César Casrtin Barroso Silva. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales – CLACSO, 2005. p. 55-70. Available at: <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/sur-sur/20100708034410/lander.pdf>. Accessed in: 10 June 2023.
- FIGUEIRAS, V. A.; LIMA, U. M.; SOUZA, I. F. de. Os impactos jurídicos, econômicos e sociais das reformas trabalhistas. **Cad. CRH**, Salvador, v. 32, n. 86, p. 231-252, ago. 2019. DOI: 10.9771/ccrh.v32i86.30731.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia do Oprimido**. 36. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Paz e Terra, 2003(1970).

GUERREIRO RAMOS, A. The parenthetical man (an anthropological approach to organization design). *In*: ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, 1971, Denver, Los Angeles. **Anais** [...]. Denver, Los Angeles: Aspa, 1971.

GUERREIRO RAMOS, A. **A nova ciência das organizações**. Uma reconceitualização da riqueza das nações. Tradução: Mary Cardoso. Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1981.

GUERREIRO RAMOS, A. **Introdução Crítica à Sociologia Brasileira**. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1995.

GUERREIRO RAMOS, A. **A redução sociológica**. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1996.

HABERMAS, J. **Teoría de la acción comunicativa**. Racionalidad de la acción y racionalización social. Buenos Aires: Aguilae, Altea, Taurus, Alfaguara S.A. 2009. v. 1.

HALL, S. **Da Diáspora**. Identidades e mediações culturais. Organização de Liv Sovic; Tradução de Adelaine La Guardia Resende et al. Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG. 2003.

IBGE. **Brasil em síntese**. Trabalho. s/d. Available at: <https://brasilemsintese.ibge.gov.br/trabalho>. Accessed in: 25 jun. 2020.

LACLAU, E.; MOUFFE, C. **Hegemonia e Estratégia Socialista**: por uma política democrática radical. São Paulo: Intermeios, 2015.

LUGONES, María. Rumo a um feminismo descolonial. **Revista Estudos Feministas**, Florianópolis, v. 22, n. 3, p. 935-952, set. 2014. ISSN 1806-9584. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/ref/article/view/36755>. Accessed in: 02 jul. 2020.

MACPHERSON, C. B. **A teoria política do individualismo possessivo**. Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra 1979.

MELUCCI, A. **A invenção do presente**. Movimentos sociais nas sociedades complexas. Tradução de Maria do Carmo Alves do Bomfim. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2001.

MOUFFE, C. Por um modelo agonístico de democracia. **Revista de Sociologia e Política**, [S. l.], n. 25, nov. 2005. ISSN 1678-9873. Available at: <https://revistas.ufpr.br/rsp/article/view/7071>. Accessed in: 23 jun. 2023.

SCHERER-WARREN, I. Redes sociais: Trajetórias e fronteiras. *In*: DIAS, L. C.; SILVEIRA, R. L. L. (org.). **Redes, sociedades e territórios**. Santa Cruz do Sul, RS: EDUNISC, 2005. p. 29-50.

SEN, A. **A ideia de Justiça**. Tradução de Denise Bottmann e Ricardo Doninelli Mendes. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2011.

SOUZA, J. **A construção social da subcidadania**. Para uma sociologia política da Modernidade periférica. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG/ Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ, 2009.

STIGLITZ, J. **The price of inequality**. How Today' Divided Society Endangers our future. Nwe York: WW. Norton & Company, 2012.

TOURAINÉ, A. **Poderemos viver juntos? Iguais e diferentes**. Tradução de Jaime A. Clasen e Ephraim F. Alves. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998.

TOURAINÉ, A. **Um novo paradigma para compreender o mundo de hoje**. 2. ed. Tradução Gentil Avelino Tilton. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2011.

WALSH, C. Lo Pedagógico Y Lo Decolonial: Entretejiendo caminos. *In*: WALSH, C. (org.). **Pedagogías Decoloniales**: Práticas insurgentes de resistir, (re)existir e (re)viver. Série Pensamento Decolonial. Tomo 1. 2017. Available at: <https://ayalaboratorio.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/catherine-walsh-pedagogc3adas-decoloniales-volume-i.pdf>. Accessed in: 28 June 2019.

### ***CRediT Author Statement***

---

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the Student Movement - Occupy UFRGS, from 2016, for the invitation to initiate this reflection and for the contributions of the intellectual Ariston Azevedo on the thought of Guerreiro Ramos.

**Funding:** art of these studies were conducted with the funding of the research entitled "*Pluralismo Jurídico, Multiculturalismo e Democracia Latino-Americanos: seus reflexos na legalidade, nas políticas públicas federais e na jurisprudência superior do Estado Brasileiro atual (2005-2015)*"; Legal Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Latin American Democracy: Their Reflections on Legality, Federal Public Policies, and the Higher Jurisprudence of the Current Brazilian State (2005-2015)," awarded under Notice 001/2013 - Researcher Gaúcho Notice (PG), from the Foundation for the Support of Research of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS), research carried out between 2013 and 2016, under Grant Agreement No. 002068-2551/13-3.

**Conflicts of interest:** There are no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical approval:** Not applicable.

**Data and material availability:** All consulted texts are available on the internet and/or in libraries and bookstores.

**Authors' contributions:** Sole authorship.

---

**Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

