Alternautas

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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Introduction to Solidarity Politics: the (Re)activation of European-Latin American Solidarities

Samira Marty & Anna Grimaldi

Binghamton University, United States

University of Leeds, UK

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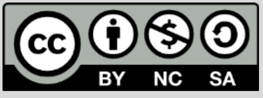

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Samira Marty[1] & Anna Grimaldi[2]

Introduction to Solidarity Politics: the (Re)activation of European-Latin American Solidarities

"Todos los callados, todos los sometidos, todos los invisibles (...)

Esto no es utopía, es alegre rebeldía

Del baile de los que sobran"

"All the silenced, the oppressed, the invisible (...)

This is not utopia, it is a joyful rebellion

Of the dance of those who are left"

Ana Tijoux, Somos Sur (2014, translation by authors)

In 2014, Chilean-French musician Ana Tijoux released the track and music video for *Somos Sur* ("We are South"), featuring British-Palestinian rapper Shadia Mansour. Although Tijoux "positions herself as both Chilean and French" (Dotson-Renta, 2021), *Somos Sur* draws from her experiences as a second-

[1] Samira Marty is a social anthropologist interested in political forms of violence, transnational solidarity movements, and afterlives of revolutionary movements. She is currently a Charles E. Scheidt Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Mass Atrocity and Genocide Prevention at Binghamton University, USA, and was awarded her PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo (2023). Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8118-5736.

[2] Anna Grimaldi is a Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Studies, at the University of Leeds, UK.

generation Chilean exile and *retornada*[3] to identify and generate solidarity with a particular transnational political subjectivity: the Global South. In doing so, Tijoux reactivates a mode of European-Latin American solidarity with specific roots in the wave of authoritarian-military regimes that swept across Latin America from the 1960s; one catalysed by political exile and sustained through immigrant-based networks, solidarities and knowledge exchange. With that particular historical legacy behind, Tijoux now amplifies these old solidarities and connects them to a wider web of support for all those suffering from the perpetual inequalities that colonialism evoked. *Somos Sur* captures several facets of this phenomenon, centering on Global South experiences of neocolonial extraction and exploitation (Donoso Aceituno, 2018), structural inequalities, and racism. Doing so, she names former colonial powers, such as Tijoux's country of upbringing, France, as the sources and drivers of oppression. Like many of her other works, the video for *Somos Sur* acts as a collection of visual, spoken, musical, and embodied symbols, which are brought together to expose counter-hegemonic experiences, highlight the agency of history's unsung heroes, and establish memory where it has been silenced, omitted and invisibilised. For Tijoux, this narrative cannot be constructed through hopeful political imaginaries alone but rather, through the joyful rebellion that is lived and (re)transmitted through the bodies of those who survive the horrors of political violence.

Somos Sur echoes a distinct strand of radical, Global-South-based solidarity networks between Latin America and Europe, which also extended into the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, surcompassing nation-states with legacies of repressive pasts. By centering these two women's presented shared struggle for freedom, the video is reminiscent of the concept of Global South solidarity established and disseminated through Cuban visual print material from the 1960s (Parrot, 2022; Stites Mor, 2019). Its lyrics are sung in (Latin American) Spanish and (Palestinian) Arabic, rejecting the imperial languages of English and French; through costumes and dances, the video assembles women's bodies to transmit solidarity and collective action; and advocate music as resistance "to deny erasure and proclaim and celebrate existence" (Dotson-Renta, 2021: 383). In essence, *Somos Sur* configures a specific combination of artefacts, some of which were generated by European-Latin American solidarities during the Cold War. Herself a product of exile solidarity and political activism, Tijoux's performance acts as a transmission of political action that connects past and present, providing insight

[3] *Retornada* (returnee), in this regard, describes Chileans who have not lived under the Pinochet regime but returned to the country in the late 1980s to early 1990s (Lindholm, 2018: 78).

into the genealogies of solidarity and the various ways they are reactivated through cultural and artistic practices.

When thinking about this introduction, Ana Tijoux's music video revealed itself as the perfect way to begin exploring questions of transnational solidarities. It captures precisely what drove our curiosities: a catalyst of debates around remnants of Global Cold War exile and solidarity, which both pushed the boundaries of methodological orthodoxies and challenged hegemonic political analyses of European-Latin American social networks. Like this special issue, Tijoux's performance of *Somos Sur* sheds light on a distinct form of cultural, transnational, and translocal solidarity and activism, adding to the bases of knowledge based on more classic forms of leftwing solidarities such as trade unionism and exile organisations, but also a wide range of cultural artefacts. Crucially, Tijoux mobilises indigeneity and gender as a marker of the Global South community to which she speaks, highlighting the intersectionality of diasporic experiences. Inspired by Nueva Canción,[4] Tijoux practises a specific Latin American form of local and global solidarity through music, which also emerges across a number of our interventions. Finally, Tijoux's work reflects the shifting landscape of European-Latin American exile and solidarity over time. As a second-generation exile and *retornada,* Tijoux's art embodies the memory and knowledge of transnational solidarity of the time while also reconfiguring the past and imbuing it with new meaning. This relationship between memory and re-iteration is likewise explored through the reinterpretations of artistic artefacts constructed and collected through solidarity. The dialogue between these pieces helps us to think beyond traditional conceptualisations of historical archival materials as evidence of past events, but rather as transmitters of political messages, knowledge and practices that are re-configured with each new iteration.

Archives and Solidarity

Our proposal for this special issue was inspired by the breadth of commemorations we were witnessing in the lead-up to September 11th, 2023, the 50th anniversary of the military coup that has cast a shadow over Chileans until today. Seeking to avoid repeating the question of where, how, and between whom European-Latin American solidarity takes and has taken place from its inception, we intended this special issue to go beyond the question of chronological memory

[4] Nueva Canción describes a popular Latin American music style that emerged in the 1960s and 70s as part of vast leftwing movements, notably in Chile, Cuba, Argentina and Uruguay (McSherry, 2019).

and historiography to rethink the cyclical and reiterative nature of these solidarities rooted in the Cold War. From the unique vantage point of living with the third generation of Chile's exile diaspora, we wanted to revisit the current-day vernaculars and practices of European-Latin American relations through concepts of translocal and transgenerational solidarity. Similarly, at a time when older categories of internationalism and anti-imperialism have taken on entirely new meanings for protest movements and social justice activism, adapted definitions of the vocabulary surrounding human rights, solidarity, and democracy play an increasingly central role in activism narratives and need to be more thoroughly scrutinised.

We interpreted this challenge from a critical, decolonial theorisation of the archive in relation to memory (Longoni, 2016; Cook, 2011; Fraser and Todd, 2016; Ghadar and Caswell, 2019; see also: Traverso, 2017). Given our particular interest in the relationship between past and present, we took artefacts of past solidarity as the starting point for our conversation. Instead of reducing cultural pieces to historical relics, we consider cultural artefacts to be vessels through which the past can be reinterpreted, reflected and reenacted. Overcoming their imperial baggage of being loci of power (Stoler, 2009), archives can also be places of political mobilisation (Hall, 2001; Hirsch and Taylor, 2012). From this perspective, archives are more than just dusty repositories of documenting the past: they represent a dynamic potential for collective action through engaging artefacts beyond the "historical", as they have the potential to document present struggles as well as past ones. Through our critical approach to the archive, we unlock multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations of temporalities and solidarity.

Our issue focuses specifically on the Latin American-European solidarities that blossomed from the 1970s, a phenomenon that has inspired historians and political scientists alike to periodise the 1970s as the transnationalisation of human rights and solidarity practices (Moyn, 2010; Burk, 2013). While some authors have argued that solidarity was a concept belonging to the "dustbin of 1970s ideals" (de Koenig and de Jong, 2017: 11), we follow a range of interdisciplinary thinkers in reflecting on solidarity as a theoretical principle as well as a practice. We contribute to debates around the complexities of conceptualising solidarity itself, drawing from insights in political philosophy, history, and geography (Brunkhorst, 2005; Christiaens, 2014, 2018; Featherstone, 2012; Kelliher, 2018; Pensky, 2008). In its loosest understanding, these authors describe solidarity as an unwritten social contract of a common perception of injustice or oppression that holds a group together. These can arise out of moral principles, a sense of civic duty, or other mobilising forces. It is assumed that solidarity is based on mutuality and unity and on uniting across differences.

Research on solidarity in and with Latin America reflects the important role of grassroots movements that emerged in response to the region's Cold War

violence. A recent wave of publications, many of which draw inspiration from historian Tanya Harmer's work on Latin America's experience of the Global Cold War (Harmer, 2011; Harmer and Alvares, 2021), have shed light on the multiple intersecting global networks of exchange between Latin Americans and Europeans (Avery, 2022; Bradbury, 2023; Garbe, 2022; Gould, 2019; Grimaldi, 2023; Hatzky and Stites Mor, 2014; Helm, 2014; Livingstone, 2018; Stites Mor, 2013; Markarian, 2016; Sharnak, 2023; Van Ommen, 2024). These works have also benefited from the groundwork of a vast, albeit disperse, number of studies based on specific artefacts, localities, time periods, and actors involved in solidarity, largely between Western Europe and Latin America, but also beyond (Camacho Padilla, 2011; Camacho Padilla and Cristiá, 2021; Carrasco and Smith, forthcoming; Christiaens, 2018; Kievd, 2013; Badan Ribeiro, 2016; Chirio, 2005; Quadrat, 2008; Perry, 2020; Orzes, 2022). These studies demonstrate, in particular, how modalities of solidarity, and knowledge thereof, are transmitted through cultural artefacts, such as murals, songs, political posters, and cartoons. In some case studies, these artefacts also connect to the digital sphere. These help convey the particular struggles that Latin American leftwing struggles faced in the Cold War and up until today.

Forging a debate between solidarity studies and the historical relationship between Latin America and Europe, we intend to address the very nature and meaning of solidarity while also contemplating the role of archives in its making; in establishing, preserving, developing, disseminating, memorialising and reviving knowledge and practices of solidarity from the past.

New Modalities of Solidarity

This special issue unites various disciplinary backgrounds, such as history, cultural studies, education, anthropology, and political geography, to introduce the various forms of the vernacular mobilisation of solidarity. The latter act as "snapshots," interventions in the critical and theoretical dialogue ongoing between the research articles, providing a moment for reflecting on the relationship between theory and praxis, memory, history, and the present. Given our starting point, a reflection on the past 50 years of solidarity between Latin America and Europe, it is unsurprising that so many of our interventions focused on Chile, largely considered the watershed moment of transnational solidarity movements that occurred with the Chilean coup d'état in 1973. Until today, public awareness of and academic research on Latin American solidarities during the Cold War, particularly of Western scholarship, has largely focused on Chile. This results from a combination of how close the social democratic Allende project

was to the hearts of the European and US-American Left and how sudden and violent the end of Allende's tenure was. In this context, Chile is seen as having played a central role in the construction of European forms and practices of solidarity from the 1970s.

Hence, solidarity between Europe and Latin America has evolved along a complex and long series of developments since the 1970s, constructing a multifaceted genealogy that is mobilised to varying degrees and to diverse ends in the present. To capture this diversity as best as we could, we included contributions from both academics and activists, all of whom engage with artefacts in different ways, and we conceptualised the modality of solidarity in an expansive way, to include a range of cultural, visual and embodied artefacts. This element of our approach reaffirms our understanding of what constitutes an archive, and therefore the transmission and reconfiguration of knowledge between past and present. We weave these 'non-academic' interventions with the research articles, placing them against and alongside one another in the co-production of new knowledge. In this way, we cut through the typical rhythms of empiricism with real voices and self-representations, creating an overall experience that allows the reader's own interpretation of the spaces in between and across the various pieces that make up the whole.

The contributions to this special issue explores multiple entangled histories of Cold War hot spots such as Chile (Barria & Rudman), El Salvador (Bradbury et al.), and Nicaragua (Molina) with their transnational connections with Western Europe, such as Austria (Molden et al.), the Federal Republic of Germany (Garbe), the German Democratic Republic (Marty), Greece (Featherstone et al.), and the UK (Bradbury et al.; Grimaldi & Smith; Relano; West). These pieces evoke the past with exploring historical artefacts and archival approaches such as archives/documents, political pamphlets, posters, interviews, songs, testimony, personal (digital) photographs, workshops, exhibitions, and social media content (Grimaldi & Smith; Molden et al.; Relano). Murals have received surprising attention, possibly due to their widespread locations, and grassroots efforts for their restauration (Barria & Rudman; Bradbury et al.; Marty).

Finally, each contribution to this volume sheds light on questions surrounding the relationship between past and present in the solidarities of Europe and Latin America. In dynamic ways, the issue showcases how interdisciplinary and multi-modal archival methods can reveal new dimensions of transnational solidarity in the past; how collaborative, artistic practices and cultural knowledge exchange act as gateways for the transmission of past knowledge and practices in the present; and, how phrases, symbols, objects, locations, repertoires of contention and cultural artefacts are continuously reconfigured and redeployed across generations of exiles and diasporic communities, academics, students and activists.

The political and social significance of archives is documented across several of the following interventions, such as through the creation of digital platforms and collective practices of memory-making around Chilean exile and solidarity. These insights have likewise allowed us to highlight forms of activism and research that challenge colonial conceptualisations of the archive by engaging with the past through artefacts. One of the key ways this has emerged is through highlighting the political-pedagogical dimensions of archival work. Archives and artefacts, as transmitters of various types of knowledge and experiences, are also the source of learning through the co-creation of new ideas and practices. Several of our contributions attest to this, either by revisiting historical archives with novel perspectives, highlighting the agency of historically overlooked protagonists, creating informal spaces of collective learning through culture, or actively reconfiguring the meanings and purposes around historical artefacts (Bradbury et al.; Featherstone et al.; Grimaldi & Smith; Molden et al.; Relano). In a similar vein, our exploration of the cyclical nature of solidarity also brings to mind the most recent wave of far-right politics sweeping across Europe, which has the potential to recreate, or reawaken, the conditions for identification with and solidarity for Latin America seen during the long 1970s and 80s.

Reflecting on this issue's contributions, it is clear that class and inequality form a predominant discursive role across the Cold War solidarities observed, heightened by its internationalist understanding. At the same time, our focus on the reawakening, reperforming or reconfiguration of past Latin American-European solidarities in the current socio-political climate also captures the shift in their relationships within and to new global political-economic paradigms. While in the 1970s more "traditional" leftwing, internationalist connections such as trade union solidarities were predominant, contemporary challenges included bridging divergent ideas of solidarity derived from different modes of thinking. A crucial mode of solidarity-making is, as some of the contributions highlight, now expressed through indigeneity, national belonging in exile communities, and the reclamation of cultural symbols and artefacts. The constraints of these new forms and expressions of solidarity activism lie in the exclusionary nature of some of these alliances. They demonstrate that solidarity is not merely a one-size-fits-all principle but can restrict the extent to which it is shared and reciprocated. Thus, this special issue intervenes in the previously assumed universal principle of solidarity, leading to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the term.

Reaching out through our networks to bring more diverse voices to the fore allowed us to weave together a dynamic picture. Our research articles focused on indigenous groups, workers, students, musicians, artists, and politicians as subjects of study; working critically with sources to shed light on the experiences

and contributions of narratives that have been historically obscured. We also noted the influence of the recent turn to gendered and racial lenses, as many of the articles, albeit implicitly, raise the importance of women, the elderly, or indigenous activists in organising and participating in social justice solidarity and exile activism. By inviting 'non-academic' contributions, we also included the perspectives of activists, (exile) artists, practitioners, students, and activist-academics of today. In this way, our more critical approach and expansive conceptualisation of the archive has allowed us to move beyond the text, incorporating a variety of sources and artefacts. The issue also prompts a reflection on broader European-Latin American relations, especially the *direction* of solidarities. In multiple contributions, visual materials and testimonies have revealed the 'two-way'-ness of Latin American-European solidarities, both in the past and present, highlighting the potential to revisit existing conceptualisations of solidarity itself.

Collecting and Showcasing Solidarities

This special issue features six scholarly articles and four contributions that offer a perspective on solidarity rooted in local communities and grassroots efforts. To begin, David Featherstone, Ben Gowland, and Lazaros Karaliotas present *Solidarity, Worldmaking and Inter-Connected Geographies of Authoritarianism: Trade Unions and the Multiple Trajectories of Chile Solidarity* to interrogate how geographically distant trade union solidarities with Chile in Britain, Greece, Grenada, and Trinidad came together in their fight against authoritarianism. One of the work's many strengths is its multi-lingual, multi-archival approach to research, which brings new voices to the fore and helps us to reflect on the evolution of solidarity, particularly the protagonist role played by unions.

Departing from traditional leftwing solidarities, Samira Marty critically interrogates past and present struggles of Nicaraguan exiles and German residents that arose around the so-called Monimbó mural in a former East Berlin district. Her article, *On Weathering: Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Struggles Around the Nicaragua Mural in Berlin After 2018*, questions the legacies and continuities of anti-imperialist solidarities amid the backdrop of Nicaragua's brutal crackdown on protesters in 2018. Marty's work takes a specific artefact and uses this as a point of departure for understanding the multiple timelines of solidarity that are lived, reawoken, shared and contested between generations.

Continuing with the Nicaraguan solidarity after 2018, the Nicaraguan artist Pedro Molina demonstrates in *Political Caricature to Mobilize Solidarity Through Humor* how he uses his artistic –and often satirical– practice to raise awareness of Nicaragua's descent into authoritarianism. As an artist, Pedro's work invites us to reflect on the shifting modalities of archiving exile experiences, and the evolution

from political pamphlets and posters to digital collections on social media accounts.

In *Changing the Picture and Music for Hope: Cultural Expressions of Solidarity in the UK with El Salvador at the End of the Cold War,* Pablo Bradbury, Emily McIndoe and Andrew Redden explore two specific instances of cultural practices of international solidarity in the context of the end of the Cold War and the civil war in El Salvador, as well as the reception of the latter in the UK. Their investigation of the mural "Changing the Picture" is an example of Salvadoran political art being reinvigorated in London's Greenwich district, while "Music for Hope" showcases how traditional Salvadoran musical practices can be preserved and mobilised within a community-building project. Together, these examples provide a picture of what lies at the nexus of research-activism today, as well as how solidarity can be constructed through the exile and transnational exchange of specific cultural, artistic, and musical practices.

Continuing on murals, NGO practitioner Neil West recounts how he commissioned a collective of Argentinian and English artists to paint a mural, which visually connected Northern England's Stockport (near Manchester) with Buenos Aires' La Boca district. *La Boca to La Stocka* transmits the complex yet joyful experience of bringing artists across the Atlantic under the umbrella of solidarity. It also captures how the moment of solidarity-making can arise in the most unexpected of circumstances; in this story, chance conversations and intercultural exchanges led to the creation of a *new* solidarity, one which draws on age-old practices of muralism while also benefiting from the creation of digital collections to capture the experiences and disseminate them online.

Murals appear again in a contribution from Cristóbal Barria and Sandra Rudman, who take murals in various European cities as a starting point to explore how, despite being ephemeral in nature, these monuments serve as symbols of collective, transnational memory associated with Chilean exile. *Chilean Muralism in Exile: On Solidarity and Transnational Memory of Exile* exposes the potential of murals, as artefacts, to provide insight into the multiple social relations and experiences behind this mode of exile-based solidarity. Barria and Rudman also challenge conceptualisations of exile itself, framing the murals as carriers of cultural and political practices of resistance to the Pinochet regime.

"Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised" by Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres, and Marcela Torres-Heredia, written on behalf of the Viena Chilena 73 | 23 collective, introduces the vernacular archive of Austrian-Chilean encounters with the fiftieth anniversary of the coup d'état in Chile. The project engages personal archives, consisting of photographs,

pamphlets, political posters and a wide array of personal statements of Chilean exiles in Vienna. Through a more inclusive approach to digital archive-making, the project's particular organisation of its collection of artefacts is designed to mitigate against prescribed categories and labels, inviting visitors to embark on their own journey and narrative discovery of its contents.

Complicating the historiography of Chilean solidarities, Sebastian Garbe's ethnographic exploration, titled *Indigenous Solidarities – 50 Years of the Transnational Mapuche Advocacy Network,* looks at how the Mapuche from Chile interacted with the Chile solidarity movement and exile activists in Western Europe. Through indigenous experiences and narratives of exile during the Chilean military regime, Garbe highlights the centrality of intergenerational knowledges and practices of solidarity that began with the struggle to carve out a space in the wider solidarity movement around Chilean nationals. Engaging with decolonial and feminist readings of the past and present, Garbe prompts us to contemplate an alternative reading of the hegemonic universalist principles of solidarity.

In another exploration of the past and present, Anna Grimaldi and Richard Smith reflect on their experiences as participants in a decolonial pedagogical project. Their contribution, *The Semiotics of Solidarity: Reinterpreting Artefacts of Latin American Resistance in Contemporary Leeds*, presents novel interpretations of Latin American solidarity, the relationship between past and present, and the transformative political potential of archives. Returning to the spaces between academia and activism, the article sheds light on how students, researchers, and local community organisations can co-create new experiences and knowledge around intergenerational memory, digital intercultural exchange, and affective co-creation.

The special issue closes with a contribution from student Elisa Martinez Relano, whose reflective piece, *¿Why Leeds?,* provides first-hand insight into the experience of participating in Grimaldi and Smith's project. Her work, a critical reflection of her learning process, contemplates the origins of solidarity and captures the moment a single artefact inspired an entire research endeavour. The experience took Martinez Relano on an intense journey through the past of her home city and university, to visit the multiple collections that document experiences of exile, to witness and participate in the cultural dimensions of solidarity, and into direct conversation with Chilean activists, exiles and the second and third generation of those who fled Chile in the 1970s.

As we open the floor to our truly inspirational and enriching contributions, we invite the reader to explore the issue with curiosity and with an eye to the future; to participate in completing our foray into the connections between past and present by taking forward the artefacts and experiences we showcase to create

your own prefigurative visions of solidarity in the future. What direction do we see for the future of transnational union, student, and indigenous solidarity in the current socio-political climate? Will the murals, songs, and posters introduced to us throughout the issue survive and return once again to take on new meaning? What new modalities of knowledge transmission will emerge with the evolution of the digital sphere? And in light of these circumstances, how does all of this translate into our understanding and practice of solidarity in the present day?

To return to where we began: we see potential answers to these questions in Ana Tijoux's video performance of *Somos Sur.* As a picture of the more radical, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal transnational solidarities stemming from the exile experiences of Latin Americans in Europe, the video produces a solidarity of and for the Global South, defined as a non-geographical political subjectivity based on resistance to oppression. As much of the world enters a frightening if recognisable normalisation of Far-Right politics and colonial, genocidal territorial conflicts, the return of solidarity artefacts, and the explicit and embodied knowledges they possess, provide vital tools that can be taken forward. The particular Global South solidarities we see in Tijoux's video form part of a broader movement in cultural production, which, supported by the digital sphere, are gaining increasing global visibility. Here, solidarity rooted in Cold War Latin American exile experiences in Europe has the potential to bring together the Global South, and in doing so, calls us to pay more nuanced attention to Latin America and its solidarities today.

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Solidarity, Worldmaking and Inter-Connected Geographies of Authoritarianism: Trade Unions and the Multiple Trajectories of Chile Solidarity

David Featherstone, Ben Gowland & Lazaros Karaliotas

University of Glasgow, UK; University of Oxford, UK; University of Glasgow, UK

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David Featherstone[1], Ben Gowland[2] & Lazaros Karaliotas[3]

Solidarity, Worldmaking and Inter-Connected Geographies of Authoritarianism: Trade Unions and the Multiple Trajectories of Chile Solidarity

Abstract

This paper intervenes in debates around the relationship between solidarity and worldmaking in the context of decolonisation and the Cold War. While work on worldmaking has drawn attention to key aspects of solidarity formation in this context (e.g. Getachew, 2019; Kelley, 2019), to date it has offered a limited engagement with the role of labour in the articulation of such solidarities. Here, we demonstrate how such a focus on worldmaking can help to highlight the multiple political trajectories that have been shaped through articulations between

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[1] David Featherstone is a Professor of Political Geography' at the School of Geographical & Earth Sciences, in the University of Glasgow, UK.

[2] Ben Gowland is a Departmental Lecturer in Human Geography in the School of Geography and the Environment. His research interests include the spatial politics of the West Indian Black Power movement, the geographies of trade unionism and democratic politics and the contested politics of post-colonial state formation in the decolonising British Empire. His research is primarily historically focused and employs archival methodologies. He has had recent work published in leading geographical journals and is currently working on a co-authored monograph to be published as part of the University Manchester Press' Critical Labour Movement Studies series. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9090-0747.

[3] Lazaros Karaliotas is a Senior Lecturer in Urban Geography at the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow. His research is located at the intersection of 'the urban' and 'the political' with a particular interest in urban democratic movements, the articulation of democratic political subjects and their spatial practices as well as the formation of solidarities across differences. He is currently working on a co-authored monograph on trade unions and democratic politics to be published as part of the University Manchester Press' Critical Labour Movement Studies series. Lazaros is the Debates Section for the journal Urban Studies. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1473-1897.

Chile solidarity and labour internationalism. Drawing on recent work on the Chilean Left, which stresses such multiple trajectories (eg Schlotterbeck, 2017), we provide three engagements with the opposition to authoritarian politics in different geographical contexts, foregrounding the role of exiled trade unionists involved in the Committee of the Exterior of the Central Única de Trabajadores de Chile (CEXCUT). These cases are the contestation of links between the Pinochet regime and Eric Gairy's dictatorship in Grenada by Caribbean left activists in the Oilfield Workers Trade Union in Trinidad and Caribbean Labour Solidarity (CLS) in Britain; the role of Luis Figueroa of the CEXCUT and other Chilean exiles in shaping links between opposition to Pinochet and struggles for democratisation in the immediate post-junta period in Greece; and the role of maritime workers in British port cities such as Liverpool in contesting trade with Chile. We argue that through examining the relations between different trajectories of solidarity and interconnected geographies of authoritarianism, an engagement with worldmaking practices can help move beyond narrowly statist and methodologically nationalist frameworks.

Introduction

In a speech at the 1977 conference of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Johnnie Walker, the Scottish Secretary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), argued that the 'fight for democracy in Chile' was an 'important and an integral part of the fight for democracy in Britain', emphasising that it was necessary 'to learn from the lessons of what happened in Chile because it could happen here' (Walker, 1977: 52). Moving a motion in solidarity with Chile and against the Pinochet dictatorship, Walker observed that :

> It wasn't an accident when military exercises took place in London with tanks on London Airport. We cannot forget the mercenaries volunteering for Angola, they were in the main former officers and soldiers of the British Army, and our British soldiers are now becoming highly trained in crowd suppression in Northern Ireland (Walker, 1977: 52).

Walker concluded that it was important 'to give support to the Chilean [(Trade Union Congress)] TUC's call for a boycott on trade with Chile,' and stressed the need to support 'the trade unions involved in refusing to man ships engaged in trade with Chile or loading and unloading those ships in British ports' (ibid.).

Walker's intervention places the solidarities with Chile, shaped by trade unionists both in the UK and beyond, in relation to interconnected geographies of

authoritarianism. By linking the coup in Chile to authoritarian dimensions of politics in the UK, particularly regarding state violence in Northern Ireland, and to the links between former UK military personnel and repression of the liberation struggles in Angola, Walker positions such authoritarian political cultures at the intersection of militarism and colonialism. Through so doing, the speech indicates the importance of situating transnational solidarities as shaped through opposition to different experiences of rightist authoritarianism.

To engage with the importance of such solidarities, this paper focuses on forms of labour internationalism shaped by trade unionists and left-wing political activists in Britain, Grenada, Greece and Trinidad. In line with Walkers' stress on the importance of intervening in economic connections between Britain and Chile, we explore both challenges to the foreign trade and infrastructures on which the Pinochet regime depended, and the 'infrastructures of solidarity' shaped by Chile solidarity organising (Abou-El-Fadl, 2019; Kelliher, 2018). In so doing, we position the solidarities built through opposition to the Pinochet regime as constitutive of common efforts to dismantle a world order shaped by the imperatives of Western and US imperialism, as well as how these efforts shaped different left-wing political cultures.

Focussing on these transnational geographies foregrounds how multiple solidarities were articulated together with oppositional left-wing geographical imaginaries across the various contexts we explore. Such a focus is significant; as Kim Christiaens has argued, 'most of the historical work' on Chile solidarity 'has remained focused on national case studies or popular organizations' (Christiaens, 2018: 415). Christiaens usefully traces some of the different geographies through which Chilean solidarities were articulated and envisioned – particularly in relation to 'the dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece' (Christiaens, 2018: 416; see also Poulantzas, 1976). Here we contribute to and extend this project by moving beyond Christiaens predominant focus on 'transnational issues within the borders of Europe' (Christiaens, 2018: 416).

Such a focus on solidarities 'within Europe' tends to abstract these political interventions from broader geographies, circulations and imaginaries of the global Left, which impacted on and shaped internationalisms in relation to Chile. This framing has consequences, as Christiaens also refigures quite bounded understandings of European politics ignoring, for example, the ways in which the Portuguese Revolution was in part intertwined with events in former Portuguese colonies, such as Angola and Guinea-Bissau. To develop an account that positions Chile solidarities in relation to some of the different transnational connections that shaped the global Left, this paper brings these diverse solidarities in conversation with recent work on 'worldmaking,' which has sought to chart the geographies of decolonisation beyond nation-centred accounts of anti-colonial politics (Getachew, 2019). We also develop a linked analysis of the 'variegated

authoritarianisms' that such transnational solidarities were forged in opposition to, as we draw connections between the authoritarian regimes examined in this paper through to broader rightist political cultures and practices.

To achieve these aims, this paper develops a sustained focus on trade unions and labour internationalisms that engages with worldmaking beyond Getachew's predominant focus on national leadership figures and political elites. Drawing on recent work on the Chilean left (e.g. Harmer, 2021; Schlotterbeck, 2017), we provide three engagements with opposition to interconnected geographies of authoritarianism. The paper firstly discusses denunciations of the links between the regime of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) and Eric Gairy's dictatorship in Grenada (1974-1979), made by Caribbean left activists in the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) in Trinidad, and Caribbean Labour Solidarity (CLS) in Britain; secondly, it explores the role of Luis Figueroa of the Exterior Committee of the Chilean TUC (CEXCUT)[4] and other Chilean exiles in shaping links between opposition to Pinochet and struggles for democratisation in the immediate post-junta period in Greece; and finally, the paper examines the role of maritime workers in British port cities, such as Liverpool, in contesting trade with Chile. Through our analysis, we evidence the value of engaging the relations between different trajectories of solidarity, articulated in this case in relation to Chile, as well as the differently placed geographies of authoritarianism that shaped them. These engagements with worldmaking, thus, enable us to both think about different Chile solidarities as interconnected, but also to analyse how international trade union solidarities were shaped in and through specific material and embodied 'infrastructures from below'.

Worldmaking, Authoritarianism and Infrastructures of Solidarity From Below

In her book *Worldmaking After Empire: the Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, Adom Getachew set out an influential set of arguments which seek to complicate '[n]arratives that equate decolonization with the transition from empire to nation-state' (Getachew, 2019: 9). She recasts 'anti-colonial nationalism as worldmaking' in opposition to views of decolonisation as a moment of nation-building, in which the anticolonial demand for self-

[4] A committee of the exterior abbreviated here as CEXCUT was 'formed by exiled CUT members in Paris in 1974 and played an important role in connecting the Chilean labour movement with international labour and solidarity organisations' (Bowen, 2020: 634).

determination of alien rule and the formation of nation-states were seen as coterminous (Getachew, 2019: 2). She positions such worldmaking practices as shaped through, and as shaping, the post-colonial political geographies that exist at the intersections of nationalism and internationalism. Thus, Getachew contends that what 'made anticolonial nationalism distinctive as a project of worldmaking was not only that it imagined nationalism and internationalism as compatible commitments,' but rather 'that anticolonial nationalists believed national independence could be achieved only through internationalist projects' (Getachew, 2019: 170).

Here, we understand worldmaking practices as 'historically specific ways of practising the world' (Stanek, 2022: 1578) and position them as concerted efforts to create, shape or influence the socio-political world in more just and progressive ways. Locating solidarities as worldmaking practices can help to foreground the relations between broader global Left geographies, circulations and imaginaries, as well as the everyday internationalisms that working people developed in relation to Chile following the military coup of 11th September, 1973. Our approach allows us to make a distinctive contribution to existing literatures on Chile solidarity, by tracing solidarities that were forged in the wake of Pinochet's deposing of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity (UP) government (1970-1973) and linked to broader anticolonial and anti-imperialist commitments. These solidarities challenged an unequal world order that maintained reactionary and authoritarian regimes such as that of Pinochet in Chile. This approach builds on the work of scholars such as Tanya Harmer, who by eschewing tendencies to either exceptionalise or subordinate Chile to global Cold War dynamics, have sought to construct more global histories of the Unidad Popular period itself (Harmer, 2021). Harmer also opens up a very useful sense of the different geographies of the Chilean Left prior to 1973, including the importance of 'the Chilean Left's relationship with Algeria from the 1950s to the 1970s' (Harmer, 2021: 7).

We argue that such a politics, however, was still attuned to and articulated through place-based struggles against authoritarianism. Solidarities were shaped through different interventions and connections in relation to forms of 'variegated authoritarianism' (Karaliotas, Featherstone and Gowland, 2023). That is, we locate authoritarianisms as being forged through a set of diverse practices, linked to various authoritarian rightist political formations that were also foundational to the emergence of neoliberalism through interconnected political projects. Democratic opposition forces in Grenada and Greece, for example, engaged in an internationalist politics and sought to restructure geopolitical relations precisely because these domestic regimes were backed by neo-colonial and neo-imperialist powers abroad. Getachew's conception of worldmaking then usefully accounts for the multiple geographies through which transnational solidarities operated in

these circumstances. This emphasises that solidarities were intervening in and shaped by the broader conjuncture, rather than being locked into a narrowly statist or methodologically nationalist framework which abstracts solidarities with Chile from the diverse linkages and relations these solidarities were shaped by.

In this respect, Getachew's focus on forms of worldmaking offers significant resources for thinking about the way these trajectories of solidarity and internationalism were shaped in the context of decolonisation, and in relation to the geopolitics of the Cold War. This approach can help to rethink the terms and spatialities through which solidarity in opposition to Pinochet's dictatorship were constructed and articulated in and between different geographical locations. As Robin D.G. Kelley argued in an insightful discussion of African American solidarities with Palestine, Getachew's work is useful for reframing understandings of solidarity beyond a limited politics of analogy and coalitionism (Kelley, 2019: 73). Thus, he contends that this move can reconfigure solidarity as about 'more than short term alliances or coalitions but a sort of prefigurative politics that demands of us a deeper transformation of society and of our relationships to one another' (Kelley, 2019: 85).

Such concern with the ongoing construction of solidarities has been central to work on 'infrastructures of solidarity' in geography and beyond (Abou-El-Fadl, 2019; Kelliher, 2018). This work offers ways of moving beyond the primary focus on anti-colonial political leaderships that structure Getachew's work, and taking up Abou-El Fadl's emphasis on the forms of 'subaltern agency' that are central to shaping such infrastructures of solidarity (see also Prashad, 2007). Simultaneously engaging with forms of worldmaking and focusing on the construction of particular 'infrastructures of solidarity' can help to presence different forms of agency and actors in shaping internationalist labour politics. In this paper, a key way we do this is through engaging with the role of the exterior committee of the CEXCUT in shaping solidarities with Chile, particularly in relation to the global labour movement.

In exile, the CUT played an important role in shaping articulations of internationalist solidarity with Chile, along with a range of other significant organisations and individuals that are largely beyond the scope of this paper. Banned in Chile after the coup, as part of Pinochet's intense and concerted repression of trade unions and left parties, key figures of the CUT went into exile, including Luis Figuroa, a Communist and Minister of Labour under the Unidad Popular government led by Allende since 1970. A committee of the exterior abbreviated here as CEXCUT was 'formed by exiled CUT members' whose activities were centred on Paris and also Sweden, where Figueroa was based, and 'played an important role in connecting the Chilean labour movement with

international labour and solidarity organisations' (Bowen, 2020: 634; Christaens, 2014: 100).

As Christiaens argues, CEXCUT pursued 'the struggle against Pinochet from abroad in cooperation with the Chilean underground'. This activity was legitimised 'by the clandestine CUT in Chile and composed of a group of prominent exiled leaders, the committee was quick to develop branches in other countries and to access national trade unions thanks to the spread of trade unionists in exile' (Christiaens, 2014: 100). The role of CEXCUT, as Walkers' comments in the introduction indicate, was significant in securing legitimacy for Chile solidarity actions within the international labour movement, as well as shaping the terms and activities of related solidarities. While the significance of CEXCUT has been acknowledged in existing work on labour internationalism and Chile solidarity (e.g. Christiaens, 2014, 2018; Jones, 2014; Livingstone, 2019), the organisation's role has not generally been discussed in depth (though see Bowen, 2020: 634-5; Christiaens, 2014).

Christiaens does, however, provide a useful, detailed institutional history of CEXCUT and its shifting relations with the international labour movement (Christiaens, 2014).[5] While these broader institutional histories of internationalism are significant, our focus is rather on how key figures of CEXCUT were engaged with and shaped placed solidarities and relations, and we discuss the 'infrastructures of solidarity' they contributed to through their activities. This is indicated by the 'International Solidarity Platform of the Chilean TUC' which in January 1975 called for a 'Total boycott on all loading of armaments or ammunition for Chile' and also advocated targeting international trade to Chile[6]. The program signals how forms of solidarity and internationalism shaped 'from below' were linked to the strategic direction of the CUT and other union leaderships. Such engagements with solidarities and 'infrastructures from below' (see Griffin 2023; Karaliotas, 2024; Minuchin, 2021; Minuchin and Maino, 2023) enable us to trace the multiple trajectories of political activity, internationalism and solidarity.

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[5] Engaging with this exile committee offers one way of presencing Chilean activists in shaping the terms of international solidarities, but it is also important to recognise that the role of the CUT during the Popular Unity period was contested, particularly in relation to tensions relating to the role of the CUT and Chilean Communist Party during the Popular Unity government (Gonzalez, 1984; Schlotterbeck, 2018; and see Henfrey and Sorj, 1977 for discussion of different activists' engagements with the CUT during the duration of the Popular Unity government).

[6] Working Class Movement Library, Merseyside Chile Solidarity Campaign, Archives Box 3 'International Solidarity Platform of the Chilean TUC – January 1975.'

In the case of Chile solidarities, infrastructures from below unsettled the spatial divisions confined to matters of the nation-state, for example, and materialised ideas of worldmaking, specifying them and situating agency in two ways. Firstly, focusing on infrastructures from below draws attention to how trade unionists and activists contested the terms of different geographies of connection and trade by engaging with key infrastructure networks – most notably maritime networks. Secondly, it foregrounds the material and embodied infrastructures that enabled the circulation of ideas and organising in solidarity with Chile through practices such as printing and circulation infrastructures, conference organising, and so on. This offers a way into thinking about the different forms of agency that have sought to construct worldmaking practices in this period through different geographies of connections. It also raises key questions about whose agency, voice, perspective and experience is seen as integral to worldmaking practices.

De-centring leadership figures is arguably a pre-condition for opening up a more expansive sense of the relations between forms of worldmaking and solidarity and post-colonial articulations of the political (Akhtar, 2022). Getachew's articulation of worldmaking processes and solidarities does not develop substantive engagements with the importance of trade unions and broader labour and social movements. By engaging with different articulations of the relations between trade unions and solidarity with Chile and Chilean exiles, we examine some of the ways working-class movements have articulated transnational solidarities to challenge international relations of imperialist domination and its local manifestations of authoritarianism. As Tanya Harmer argues:

> The military leaders who overthrew Allende in Chile were diehard nationalists and virulent anticommunists who self-appointed themselves as supposed saviors of their own nation and the Southern Cone. The origins of these beliefs came from home and from abroad, being molded into a particularly vicious Cold War mentality by the particular experiences that Chile had lived through (Harmer, 2013: 140-141).

In this respect, solidarity with Chile is a particular touchstone. Chile was an anti-imperialist government backed by the labour movement, and was toppled, in part, to foreclose a more egalitarian transformation of the world order. The period of mid-twentieth century decolonisation and the expansion of a politics of self-determination provided the colonised world an opportune moment to challenge the unequal world order (Getachew, 2019). We seek to position trade unions and labour movements as key actors in this process by situating labour organising as a key contested terrain of worldmaking. Doing this can both expand the terms on which worldmaking is understood, and foreground the tensions over which post-colonial worlds struggled. One of our main examples, Grenada's Eric Gairy, was

one of a number of post-independence leaders in the Caribbean who had a background in trade union organising. He became an authoritarian political leader, who was contested by democratic forces in the Caribbean labour movement (Bolland, 2001). This work also speaks to some of the contested political trajectories of global left politics since the early years of decolonisation that frame Getachew's account of worldmaking.

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar has noted that the 'grand political horizon of remaking the world' sketched by Getachew, 'receded' by the late 1970s, gave 'way to the earliest incarnations of what became the hegemonic neoliberal order' (Akhtar, 2022: 55; see also Scott, 2004). Akhtar positions Pinochet's regime and its treatment of Chile as a 'neoliberal laboratory,' as a pivotal event in this respect, arguing that the 'New International Economic Order (NIEO) spearheaded by the so-called G77 countries' was a 'last hurrah' before 'the regimes of Reagan, Thatcher, Pinochet, Zia ul Haq and many others made common cause to "rollback" whatever gains the internationalist movement had made' (Akhtar, 2022: 56; see also Ahmed, 1992, Navarrate-Hernandez and Toro, 2019; Riesco, 1999; Sabri Öncü, 2023). In this context, bringing together work on worldmaking, solidarity and labour internationalism offers possibilities for thinking through, and tracing, the relations between interconnected geographies and their multiple articulations of solidarity.

To do this, the paper draws together a discussion of solidarities shaped in relation to Chile, by trade unions and trade unionists in the context of Grenada and Trinidad, and in relation to Greece, and Britain. Engaging with these geographical contexts provides different perspectives on the formation of transnational solidarities, but also highlights the ways in which these solidarities shaped worldmaking on different terms, though often through related practices. This also positions solidarities with Chile in relation to some of the different geographies of power that shaped these labour internationalisms – for example, trade unions such as the National Union of Seamen (NUS) in the UK were constituted through histories of racism and the agenda of key leaders of the union, such as Havelock Wilson and Thomas Yates, who linked imperial sentiments with anti-Communism (Gordon and Reilly, 1986). By drawing attention to the different trajectories through which solidarities were shaped, we explore how these interventions shaped more than either a singular left politics of solidarity or depoliticised articulations of human rights (cf Bowen, 2002).

We draw on a range of archival materials from Britain, Trinidad and Greece, which we use to recover diverse trajectories of solidarity and combine work on union archives with material from social and political movements, including those directly relating to Chile solidarity. Our approach in this respect draws on the expansive conceptualisation of left-wing politics that Marian E. Schlotterbeck develops in her work on the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (the

Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR) in the city of Concepción, which mobilises engagement with different sources and oral histories relating to unions, left political parties and placed political cultures (Schlotterbeck, 2018: 13; see also Hardt, 2023). This highlights a multiplicity of trajectories moving through the Chilean socialist project, many of which would also play out transnationally (Reyes Matta, 1988). We engage archival sources that document how solidarities in relation to Chile were linked in specific ways, as well as with forms of situated opposition and resistance to authoritarianism in the context of varied Cold War geopolitics, particularly in relation to the OWTU and in Greece. Given our language skills and competencies as a research team, the paper draws on sources in English and Greek, as well as on key documents such as statements, declarations and correspondence from CEXCUT, which were found across various trade union archives across the UK and Greece and translated into English. This indicates the mobilities that were integral to labour internationalisms, and reveals dynamics of how differently placed trade unionists engaged with CUT. In Trinidad, the official archives of the OWTU were engaged with extensively to examine how solidarities with democratic forces in Grenada were articulated. The key focus being how links between authoritarian regimes in Grenada and Chile were highlighted in both materials produced for popular consumption and how the contestation of these connections shaped internal union discussions and policy. The next section considers some of these transnational connections by exploring how trade unionists involved in the OWTU in Trinidad linked Chile solidarity to opposition to the dictatorship of Eric Gairy in Grenada.

Solidarity and Interconnected Geographies of Authoritarianism

In 1975, Maurice Bishop, a key leader of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) and soon-to-be Prime Minister of Grenada, gave a talk at the OWTU headquarters in San Fernando, a city in Southern Trinidad's oil belt, titled 'Fascism – A Caribbean reality?'. Bishop would later become Prime Minister following a socialist revolution on the island in 1979. This talk was transcribed and later published for educational purposes by the union (Bishop, 1975). Bishop assessed the emergence of what he saw as increasingly fascist tendencies in the Caribbean, in states like Grenada, Dominica and Haiti, and he positioned these states within a broader collection of neo-fascist regimes including "Spain, South Africa, Portugal before the 1974 coup [and]…Chile" (Bishop, 1975: 5). Here, Bishop signalled the international context within which authoritarian regimes such as Pinochet's existed. These neo-fascist regimes were connected via multiple circulations of aid, military material and authoritarian practices. In this section, we examine how Trinidad's OWTU and the CLS group in Britain developed an

opposition to the Pinochet regime through solidarity with trade unions and popular democratic organisations in another authoritarian state, namely, the West Indian island of Grenada. Central to such solidarities were efforts to popularise knowledge of the connections between the Grenadian and Chilean regimes. This was reliant upon the production and circulation of print materials distributed through transnational infrastructures of trade union and Caribbean left-wing printing and communication. Relatedly, the OWTU and democratic forces in Grenada also worked to disturb mutual relations of aid and support between Chile and Grenada by disrupting and (re)politicising international infrastructures of maritime trade and transport.

Authoritarian politics and repressive rule in Grenada preceded the Chilean coup of 1973. Grenada had its own autocratic leader in the figure of Eric Gairy, who would dominate the island's political life from his rise to prominence in the early 1950s until his ousting in 1979 during the Grenadian Revolution (Bolland, 2001). Through Gairy's founding of the Grenada Manual and Mental Workers Union and the Grenada United Labour Party, he positioned himself as the head of the anti-colonial and labour movement (ibid.). He developed a charismatic leadership style and a deeply clientelist form of politics that saw the entrenchment of corruption and theft of public funds (Bolland 2001; Searle 1983). As first Premier and then Prime Minister of an independent Grenada, Gairy and his regime oversaw the country's transition to independence and post-colonial project of nation-building. However, Gairy's government did little to challenge the neo-colonial character of the Grenadian economy, with US and British firms such as Cadburys, Holiday Inn and Geest maintaining monopolies in key sectors such as tourism, banana production and the export of cocoa and nutmeg (Bishop, 1975).

Gairy's nationalism and post-colonial project represents precisely the limitations of a narrowly statist articulation of anticolonialism, which a politics of anticolonial worldmaking (Getachew 2019) seeks to exceed. In the case of Gairy and Grenada, nationhood and state power was a means of entrenching clientelism and corruption, and establishing a material basis for an emergent [7] political class

[7] The term *comprador* denotes a person who acts as an agent for foreign organisations or states. In the context of Caribbean political-economy, theorists such as Walter Rodney (1975) and Clive Thomas (1984) use this term in their analysis of the emergence and consolidation of the post-independence state. In this analysis the region's political class, drawn from the middle-classes and constituting something of a national bourgeoisie, maintain power and wealth through the continued structuring of Caribbean economies along essentially colonial lines. These *compradors* acting as middle-men between foreign capital and the extraction and exploitation of local resources and labour are thus able to secure personal wealth and the continuation of their political project at the expense of complete subordination to the interests of foreign capital and imperialism (Poulantzas 1976; Kamugisha 2019)

(Bolland 2001; Rodney 1975). By necessity, therefore, there could be no break with imperialist and neo-colonial powers active in the Caribbean, and, as noted above, Gairy's regime was compliant with Western capital. Ultimately, this led to increasing authoritarianism as his regime's popular legitimacy deteriorated. The opposition to Gairy sought to push a politics of self-determination beyond the attainment of formal independence, to include popular participation in economic and political decision-making on the island. Furthermore, this expanded conception of the politics of anticolonial self-determination, identified by Getachew (2019) as characteristic of the worldmaking she explores, was articulated internationally to build solidarities in opposition to an international order of US-led capitalist-imperialism that supported and backed authoritarian regimes such as those of Gairy and Pinochet.

Such international relations of reaction and repression that supported the Gairy and Pinochet regimes extended beyond a dependence on the imperial core with key support networks and alliances developed bilaterally between Chile and Grenada. As CLS reported in their official organ *Cutlass* (Issue 10: 2, 1977), Gairy had held "cordial discussions" with Pinochet, in which Chilean economic and military support was pledged to Grenada. CLS was formed in 1974 as the Jamaica Trade Union Solidarity Campaign, with the organisation responding to an appeal for support from trade unionists in Jamaica, who at the time were protesting repressive labour legislation. However, CLS would soon broaden its efforts to support anti-imperialist and democratic forces across the entirety of the Caribbean. One of CLS' primary activities was the collation, publication and distribution of correspondence and reports from Caribbean workers and trade unionists to audiences in Britain. CLS would hold open meetings to discuss events in the Caribbean (*Cutlass* 1976 issue 1) informed by such correspondence, and through their journal, *Cutlass*, transmit knowledge of events in the Caribbean through networks of radical bookshops in London (Simpson, 2022), as well as distributing materials in workplaces and selling them to friends and family (*Cutlass,* Issue 5, 1977). These transnational networks of communication and print production constituted the material and technical infrastructures through which a politics of solidarity could be formed and articulated with worker and progressive struggles in the Caribbean.

A core focus of the anti-imperialist and labour solidarity activities of both CLS and the OWTU were the transnational support networks that helped maintain the authoritarian rule of Pinochet and Gairy. The major group in Grenada that CLS and the OWTU worked with to popularise knowledge of and oppose such networks was NJM. NJM led the mass-based democratic opposition to Gairy on the island, and would eventually launch a revolution in 1979 and establish a

thirdworldist Marxist-Leninist revolutionary government between 1979 and 1983 (Meeks, 2009). This would be relatively short-lived, however, as by 1983 the Revolution collapsed into factional infighting and violence, and was ultimately 'finished off' by a US invasion on the 25th October (John, 2010).

CLS, the OWTU and NJM spent a great amount of time and effort publicising Gairy's links to Pinochet, and in so doing connecting their own struggle for democracy in Grenada to democratic and anti-imperialist struggles globally. This can readily be conceived of as an anti-imperialist worldmaking project, articulated from below through labour and worker solidarity, constituting infrastructures of transnational communication and print production. This was an internationalist politics that sought mass liberation and self-determination beyond the 'mere' trappings of national independence, and a formal end to colonisation to be realised through the nation-state. Further, the democratisation of Grenada would serve to remove a link from a chain of repressive regimes that extended across the Global South and indeed into Southern Europe. These moves challenged a world order of imperialism to entrench a politics of self-determination, non-domination and mass participation both in local-national terms, as well as to inaugurate a new international regime, one in which neo-colonial powers would no longer dominate global institutions and prop up authoritarian governments (Getachew, 2019).

The most visceral and egregious connection between Chile and Grenada that these pro-democracy forces focused on was the circulation of arms, repressive tactics and military material. In a 1979 interview, Bernard Coard, Minister of Finance in the post-revolutionary Government of Grenada, recounts that leading officers in Gairy's army had been sent to train in Chile (Searle, 1979). This was part of a broader pattern that CLS reported on in *Cutlass*, stating "Many shipments of arms have arrived, military officials from Chile are resident in Grenada, and Grenada personnel are being trained in Chile" (*Cutlass,* Issue 15: 1, 1978). In more specific terms, Coard explained, "He [Gairy] received ten crates of arms from Chile, marked 'medical supplies', which turned out to be guns and uniforms" (Searle, 1979: 10). The clandestine nature of the circulations of arms and material that supported authoritarianism, in both Chile and Grenada, highlights the necessity of the popularisation of such connections through the reportings of CLS, which would regularly republish NJM reports and information in *Cutlass* (Issue 15, 1978). By broadening popular knowledge of such links in Britain, CLS sought and was able to rally greater support for the democratic struggles of NJM in Grenada, and, by extension, remove or weaken one of Pinochet's allies and economic partners. This relationship of military aid wasn't unidirectional with the Chilean-trained officers regularly housed in Grenadian barracks (Searle 1979). Indeed, it was in such barracks that revolutionary forces would discover torture manuals written in Spanish after Gairy had been overthrown (ibid.). The circulation of arms and personnel represent the material infrastructures through

which a world order of imperialism (Getachew, 2019) was maintained, and as such the opposition worked to disrupt such flows. To counter this, groups like CLS and NJM built their own transnational infrastructures of solidarity, which were representative and prefigurative of an international politics based on commitments to anti-authoritarianism, as well as equal exchange between working people in the Global North and South.

These largely maritime transnational geographies and networks were not just vectors for the circulation of repressive tactics between oppressive regimes, however (Cole, 2018). In 1974, the OWTU leveraged their key position within Pan-Caribbean networks of oil distribution and shipping to bear significant pressure on the Gairy government (OWTU, 1978). The OWTU instigated an oil embargo in support of mass anti-Gairy protests, and a general strike in Grenada led by NJM (Searle, 1983). In November of 1973, they called a 'People's Congress' with some 10,000 Grenadians attending the mass meeting at the island's Seamoon Stadium (Mandle, 1985). At the meeting, it was resolved that the government should resign within two weeks as part of a 'People's Indictment,' or else a general strike would be called (Mandle, 1985; Searle, 1983). Gairy responded with a campaign of terror, unleashing his notorious paramilitary group the 'Mongoose Gang' to beat and target opposition leaders whilst key figures in NJM were jailed. Tensions on the island reached a peak in early 1974, with the general strike in effect and the government on the offensive. Future Prime Minister of revolutionary Grenada Maurice Bishop's father was killed by police during a docker's strike, whilst the island was overcome by an extensive economic shutdown (ibid.).

The OWTU embargo then materially contributed to the weakening of the Gairy regime during this time through aiding the general strike. Chris Searle (1983) notes that by early 1974, fuel supplies on the island had effectively run dry. OWTU workers were able to shape infrastructures of solidarity from below through their intervention in Caribbean oil economies, with the international networks of shipping that maintained the Gairy regime with Chile and Pinochet being key backers. The construction of these transnational solidarities aligned with those enacted by the NUS, who boycotted Chilean vessels post-coup. Indeed, the OWTU's actions challenged the extractivist and racial-capitalist functioning of a Trinidadian oil industry dominated primarily by US and British firms (see also Kosmatopolous, 2023). This account also adds nuance to Getachew's (2019) analysis of this period of history. She sees the more radical worldmaking projects of anticolonial leaders such as Jamaica's Michael Manley and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere thwarted by a combination of the Oil Shock, the IMF, the World Bank and Western multinational corporations. OWTU workers utilised their strategic

position vis a vis Western oil multinationals to actively curb the excesses of the imperialist-backed authoritarian regime of Eric Gairy, and build internationalist bonds of solidarity to advance more popular and participatory politics.

These actions by OWTU workers challenge accounts such as Timothy Mitchell's (2011) in *Carbon Democracy,* which present the emergence of a global oil economy as necessarily weakening trade union power and democratic agency. Indeed, it suggests how such engagements with the oil economy could provide key forms of leverage through reshaping and (re)politicising the technical and transport infrastructures that the global oil trade requires. OWTU workers enacted a "radical politics of infrastructure" (Vasudevan, 2015: 318) by disrupting the usual functioning of oil shipment and transport that they were employed to carry out. In the service of backing the democratic struggle and general strike in Grenada, OWTU workers re-imagined and restructured their relationship to the technical and material bases of the Caribbean oil industry (Vasudevan, 2015). Through so doing, they retooled material networks as infrastructures of solidarity, asserting workers' agency and speaking to how political engagement can inaugurate new and prefigurative political spatialities and materialities (Karaliotas, 2024). The OWTU boycott might also be usefully read alongside the CUT's (1975) 'International Solidarity Platform,' which called for the boycotting of arms sales to Chile and the targeting of Chilean international trade, primarily through maritime networks. Whilst the OWTU weren't directly targeting Chile, by weakening Gairy and Grenada and potentially supporting Gairy's removal from power, they were nonetheless targeting a committed ally of the Pinochet regime through the kinds of international boycotts urged by the CUT.

The OWTU embargo represented a material practice and means through which an anti-imperialist worldmaking project was enacted from below by organised labour. By intervening in the transnational circuits and infrastructures of the oil economy that OWTU workers were enmeshed with, it became possible to advance a project of solidarity to remove a link in an alliance of US-backed reactionary governments. This anti-imperialist stance and practice of material aid would continue to be enacted by the OWTU and NJM in the late 1970s. In 1978, the OWTU instigated another oil embargo against Antigua. This was because the island was being used as a trans-shipment point for arms bound for the Apartheid regime in South Africa (OWTU, 1978). This anti-Apartheid stance was similarly upheld by NJM. Following the Grenadian Revolution in 1979, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop outlined this policy during his address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations: "we particularly join in the chorus of support for the application demanding mandatory sanctions against the racist state of South Africa." Bishop positioned South Africa within broader networks of imperialism, neo-colonialism and, in his words, "fascism" (ibid.).

As noted at the opening of this section, Bishop (1975) assessed the Pinochet regime to be fascist or neo-fascist, and here, again, we see an analysis of the existence and maintenance of reactionary regimes across the Global South, with Gairy's Grenada representing a key example. This was the world order that required dismantling if a new world was to be made. This was a new world in which the politics of anti-colonial self-determination were expanded to include the protection of civil liberties and democratic freedoms of all peoples in the Global South (Getachew, 2019); a new world order based upon sovereign equality, international non-domination and a radical commitment to political and economic equality (ibid.). The OWTU and NJM built towards this vision with a politics that materially manifested through mass mobilisation, strike action and embargoes. These practices weakened or disrupted the infrastructures that maintained neo-fascist regimes, and simultaneously reworked these infrastructures and aided in the construction of new ones that allowed for the articulation of a transnational solidarity from below.

Bishop's analysis of Chilean and Grenadian neo-fascism noted above was also routinely deployed in CLS' reportage and consciousness raising efforts. This position is neatly illustrated in a cartoon produced by CLS and shown in figure 1 below.

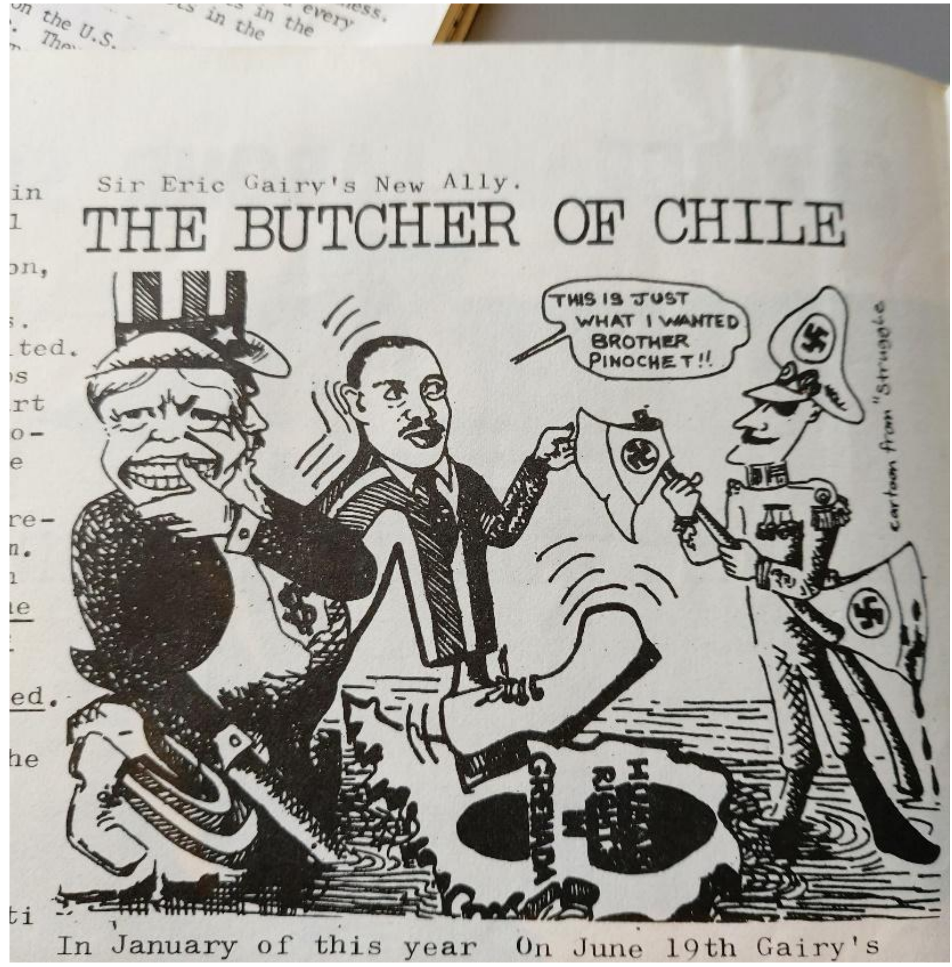

Figure 1: Political Cartoon in Cutlass: The Butcher of Chile[8]

In figure 1, Gairy is portrayed as an appendage of the imperialist US, which is depicted as two-faced and literally sucking the Caribbean dry. Here again, US imperial backing and the imperatives of continued neo-imperialist exploitation of the Caribbean and the Americas was seen as essential to the maintenance of authoritarian regimes in the region. Strikingly, Pinochet is portrayed as a Nazi, a representation that aligns with Maurice Bishop's (1975) analysis. The central relationship depicted between Gairy and Pinochet here is the trading of arms.

[8] The George Pedmore Institute Archives, Newspapers UK and Caribbean, NEW/44, Cutlass, Issue 10, 1977

CLS's particular form of popular reporting on trade in Britain must be understood alongside the efforts of NJM and the OWTU in the Caribbean, who sought to block these circulations through direct action (OWTU, 1978, Searle, 1979). The rhetoric and analysis of neo-fascism behind these actions was similarly deployed by Chilean democratic and exile groups in Europe, who drew connections and similarities between the 'fascist' dictatorships of Southern Europe and the Pinochet regime (Christiaens, 2018). This language of fascism also highlighted a similarity of experience that would be intimately familiar and readily identifiable for Europeans given the continent's recent political history. Returning to Getachew's (2019) worldmaking framing, we can understand the analysis of international fascism as the intellectual and theoretical work necessary to transform the international world order in a more egalitarian and democratic fashion.

CLS would continue their work to popularise NJM's efforts to link the reactionary and authoritarian Gairy regime to Chile in 1978. In *Cutlass* (issue 15, 1978), a report by an NJM delegate was sent to the World Conference of Solidarity with Chile held in Madrid in 1978 and organised by Chile Democrático, a Rome-based organisation of Chilean exiles in which Hortensia Bussi de Allende played a prominent role (Christiaens, 2018). The conference was one in a series of major international conferences held across Southern Europe to demand and organise solidarities with anti-dictatorial forces in Chile. These conferences might usefully be thought of as a mobile solidarity infrastructure (Griffin, 2023) through the organisation and hosting of delegates from across the global Left and trade union movement. The construction of such spaces of solidarity and interaction acted as a locus through which multiple political trajectories of groups and movements that opposed the Pinochet regime, and its backers and allies such as Gairy, could be drawn together to articulate an alternative worldmaking project from below. In the following section, we discuss in detail the conference held in Athens in November 1975.

Returning to the attendance of the Grenadian delegation, their presence was indicative of efforts to popularise knowledge about the linkages between the Gairy and Pinochet regimes in a broader international context, particularly within the Chile solidarity movement. The case of an NJM delegate attending the conference usefully expands the geographies and horizons of solidarity beyond the European-centred discussions of authors such as Christiaens (2018). The delegate reported both to *Cutlass* and the conference that whilst Gairy was strengthening his links with the Pinochet regime, domestic anti-democratic pressure in Grenada was being ratcheted up, through actions such as banning opposition parties' and organisations' access to the national media (Cutlass issue

15, 1978). Alongside the NJM's reporting to the conference on the extensive circulations of arms and men between Grenada and Chile, this account again speaks to an analysis and language of international fascism that was being deployed in the Caribbean, the UK and wider Europe. Partly influenced by the USSR through organisations like the World Peace Council, the language of anti-fascism was also present in key CEXCUT documents and statements. These political discourses indicate some of the diverse terms and forms of international solidarity with Chile that were configured on the left in the 1970s, and highlights the ways in which they have been partly occluded by a focus on the depoliticising impact of the liberal human rights regime (see also Bowen, 2020).

In this context, NJM called for international pressure to be placed on Gairy to topple his weakening regime in Grenada, effectively removing an ally of Pinochet on the world stage. Such a call reminiscent of and aligned with those of Chilean exile groups, such as the CUT, who similarly stressed the need for international solidarity to undermine Pinochet's rule. CLS' publicity efforts regarding the connections between Grenada and Chile were manifested through the distribution of NJM reports in the UK, and can be seen as part of this broader international effort. The next section considers how multiple geographies of solidarity were shaped in relation to Greece, which was under the military dictatorship of 'the Colonels' between 1967 and 1974.

The Two Juntas and Infrastructures of Solidarity from Below

In a now partially declassified report on the importance of the Chile Solidarity Movement in Europe, written on December 1974, the author – a US National Intelligence Officer for Europe – provides a telling account of the multiple geographies of solidarity and anti-imperialism shaped in light of the Chilean coup. After consultations with various CIA officials, the report contends that Chile 'has replaced Vietnam as a convenient means of focusing anti-US sentiment. It offers a common ground for communists, socialists and left-to-moderate Christians and Liberals to come together on an issue – when they agree on little else' (CIA, 1974: 1). The official goes on to argue that 'whether measured as a rallying point for disparate groups, or a public impact issue, it is most significant in Portugal, Greece, Italy and Sweden, least so in Britain and West Germany; France in between' (*ibid*). Importantly, however, the report is quick to suggest that:

> In Greece and especially Portugal, fears that Chile might show what the US might do to them are no doubt sharpened by the CSM's activities, but would also no doubt be there if the CSM did not exist. They are the result of circumstances having nothing to do with Chile, and will grow or diminish for reasons having nothing to do with Chile. (CIA, 1974:2)

Thus, the CIA's report usefully draws attention to the role of situated experiences of authoritarianism in the articulation of Chile internationalist solidarities, even

without naming the former. The 'circumstances having nothing to do with Chile' mentioned in the report are, of course, the dictatorial regimes in the two countries that had just collapsed during the same year. For Greek and Portuguese citizens and activists, the events in Chile were nothing but related with their own experiences in the sense of the involvement and support of the US in the Greek, Portuguese and Chilean coups and dictatorial regimes. It is through these shared but variegated experiences that processes of worldmaking were taking shape through the Chile Solidarity Movement.

For Greece in particular, Allende's killing, Pinochet's military dictatorship and US interventionism in Chile became a rallying point and a common reference during the final year of the military Junta. Already in September 1973, a demonstration in solidarity with Chile was staged in the cracks created by 'liberalisation' reforms by the Colonel's regime (Kornetis, 2013, 2015). Rigas Feraios, the Student Union affiliated with the Communist Party of the Interior (KKE-es),[9] passed a resolution clearly articulating the links between the two regimes as part of the US Cold War geopolitics. As Kornetis writes, Pinochet's dictatorship was seen in Greece as 'proof that American interests were ruthlessly pursued in the same manner all over the world, always at the expense of people's democratic rights' (2013: 248). Rigas' pamphlet is telling in this regard:

> For the Greek students, who have lived for six years now under the dictatorship of Papadopoulos, the scenario is well-known. Just like Papadopoulos in Greece, Pinochet in Chile talks about "a patient in a plaster cast," they have the same obscurantist ideology, they use the same rough-and-ready demagogy, the same lies. And it is not strange. Because the assassins of the Chilean people and the Greek Junta have been trained in the same centres of international subversion in the United States (…)

The best contribution to the struggle of Chile is the intensification of our own struggle, against the common enemy. Rigas Feraios calls its members and all Greek students to contribute as much as they can to the solidarity movement to the people of Chile. Their struggle is our struggle (Rigas Feraios, 1973).

The military Junta's violent repression of the Polytechnic Uprising on the 17 of November 1973, when a students' occupation of the School to demand student elections turned into a massive popular uprising against the colonels' regime,

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[9] The Greek Communist Party split in 1968 during the military Junta. The split unfolded along the lines of Party leadership from abroad – by KKE members in exile and in close relation to the Soviet Communist Party – and resulted in the existence of the 'orthodox' Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the 'Euro-communist' Communist Party of Greece – Interior (KKE-es).

deeply intensified the sense of a shared trajectory and solidarity between the Greek and the Chilean people. The links between the Greek and Chilean experience continued to constitute a key reference in post-dictatorial Greece, as students, trade unionists and left-wing activists 'emotionally identified with the "Chilean tragedy" through their own experiences of military authoritarianism' (Palieraki, 2023: 526). Thus, an important body of scholarship has usefully drawn attention to how Greece-Chile solidarities were being articulated on the plane of anti-imperialism and thirdworldism (Christiaens, 2018; Kornetis, 2013, 2015; Palieraki, 2023; Papadogiannis, 2015). Tracing the spaces and 'infrastructures from below' in and through which such worldmaking solidarities were articulated can shed new light on their embodied dimensions, as well as how they shaped political discourses, imaginaries and identities in Greece, and broader solidarities with Chile. It can also help illuminate the often neglected role of trade unions and grassroots syndicalism in shaping these solidarities.

A key 'infrastructure from below' that emerges in this line of argument is the 'World Conference of Solidarity with the Chilean People', hosted in Athens between the 13th and the 16th of November 1975 to coincide with the second anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising (Christiaens, 2018; Palieraki, 2023). The conference was organised by the Chile Democrático international network, the World Peace Council (WPC) and a broad alliance of actors in Greece who came together around the Greek Committee of Solidarity for Chile (Elliniki Epitropi Allileggyis me ti Chili, GCSC). It was one of many organised in Southern European cities, like Lisbon (September 1974), Athens (November 1975 and 1982) and Madrid (November 1978) by Chile Democrático (Christiaens, 2018; Jones, 2014; Palieraki, 2023). As Christiaens notes, 'the plans for this conference had crystallized through contact between the World Peace Council and exile leaders of Chile Democrático in the aftermath of the Moscow Conference of Peace Forces in October 1973' (2014: 226). For its part, the GCSC was closely connected with the Greek Communist Party (KKE), but operated as a broader popular front that brought together various personalities that were not necessarily members of the KKE. As Palieraki documents, the

> Committee's president was the KKE militant Odysseas Tsoukopoulos, who was known largely for his participation in the 1940s Resistance, Peace Movement activism (…) and work as a human rights lawyer. Other GCSC members (…) included human rights activist Lady Amalia Fleming, the centrist MP and human rights lawyer Georgios Magkakis, and the President of the Panhellenic Union of National Resistance Fighters, Themistocles Zafeiropoulos. Finally, world-renowned artists, including Mikis Theodorakis and Danae Stratigopoulou, also participated in the GCSC (2023: 531).

In Athens and other Southern European cities, Chile Solidarity conferences built on narratives around the role of US geopolitical interventionism, as well as shared experiences with dictatorial regimes, to shape Chile-Southern Europe solidarities around narratives of thirdworldism (Christiaens, 2018). These solidarities also revolved around shared demands 'for the people's movements struggling for democracy and human rights worldwide' as COMACHI (Coordinación de Movimientos de Ayuda a Chile) – the Latin American Coordination of Movements in Solidarity with Chile – put it in its message to the Athens conference (COMACHI, 1975:1).

Figure 2. Poster for the Athens 1975 Conference designed by Greek artist and architect Dimitris Talaganis[10]

[10] Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Afiche para la Conferencia Internacional de Solidaridad con Chile organizado por Comité griego de solidaridad con Chile para efectuarse en Atenas, Grecia del 13 al 16 de noviembre de 1975, CL MMDH 00000846-000001-000019

The 1975 Conference (see figure 2) was attended by delegates from 75 countries (ERT, 1975), including ‘90 national organizations’ and ‘12 international youth and student organizations’ (Chile Democrático, 1975a: 1). Key Chilean figures attending were Clodomiro Almeyda, Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Popular Unity’s government, who also delivered the conference keynote; the president of the CUT, Luis Figueroa, a Communist who had been Minister of Labour under Allende; and Hortensia Bussi de Allende, who as aforementioned was a leading figure in the Chile Solidarity movement (ERT, 1975). The opening of the conference was declared by the Mayor of Athens, Ioannis Papatheodorou, a member of the communist-party affiliated National Liberation Front (EAM) in WWII, and the first democratically-elected mayor of Athens after the Junta supported by a broad alliance of the L eft (Rizospastis, 1983). The WPC General Secretary, Romesh Chandra, also gave an opening speech (ERT, 1975). The conference was attended by various Greek MPs from the left – including the leaders of KKE Harilaos Florakis; KKE-es Babis Dracopoulos; and PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement)[11] Andreas Papandreou. The leadership of the country’s key Trade Unions was also in attendance: the President and the General Secretary of the General Federation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) Papageorgiou and Karakitsios; the President of the Panhellenic Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives Chronopoulos; and the President of the General Federation of Private Employees, Karathanasis (Chile Democrático, 1975b; ERT, 1975).

An often neglected element of the conference was the trade unions’ meeting, held on 15 November and attended by ‘the representatives of trade unions from 52 countries and of the international organizations attending the conference’ (CUT, 1975:1). In this meeting, the president of CEXCUT, Luis Figueroa, presented a long report on the current situation in Chile, highlighting the atrocities and violence of Pinochet’s regime and emphasising how the operations of the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), Chile’s secret police during the Pinochet regime, were expanding beyond Chile’s borders into places like Rome and Paris (Figueroa, 1975: 1-2). He went on to criticise Pinochet’s economic policies and how they supported the interests of ‘local and foreign capital’ (Figueroa, 1975: 3-4). Interestingly enough, Figueroa’s speech also devoted a large part to discussing how a strategy of broad alliances between trade unions, socialists, communists, political churches and progressive elements of the army was necessary to ‘defeat fascism through a multi-faceted struggle but, ultimately,

[11] In the 1970s, Papandreou’s PASOK was taking key inspiration from dependency theory and thirdworldism, advocating for national independence and social justice that was being wronged by imperialist interests. Indicatively, during these years and before being elected as the Government, PASOK advocated for Greece's withdrawal from NATO and the European Economic Community (EEC). For PASOK, these concerns with Chile Solidarity were also shaped through the Socialist International.

the real possibilities to reconquer freedom lie in united popular struggle' (ibid: 5). He then moved on to argue that ongoing Trade Union and workers' struggles in Chile, by the likes of coal miners, technicians and University employees, among others, were succeeding in 'preventing the outspread of the fascist Employment Code' (ibid: 6). Highlighting how 'the sources of solidarity with the struggle of the Chilean people globally are multifaceted', Figueroa concluded his speech by foregrounding the importance of trade union activism, including an economic boycott, in exercising pressure on Pinochet's regime and calling for a number of coordinated actions, including the 'solidarity shipment of food for Chilean children' and 'various acts of boycott at national or regional level that would isolate the Junta economically and technologically (…) particularly targeting the arrival of military equipment' (ibid: 8).

Figueroa's speech is important in highlighting the agency of Chilean Trade Unions, both in exile and in Chile, in shaping the terms through which solidarities with Chile and resistances to Pinochet were being articulated. The speech illuminates how, for (Chilean) trade unionists and other activists, the articulation of infrastructures from below was key in resisting Pinochet's regime in three ways. First, Figueroa calls for an infrastructural politics from below that would put pressure on the regime by boycotting and blockading existing infrastructural networks. The next section of the paper discusses this in more detail. Second, the speech highlights how infrastructures from below were central both in terms of organising Chile solidarities (like the organising spaces of the Athens conference, where common strategies were devised), and in supporting the Chilean people (like the shipment of goods for Chilean children). Third, the speech also draws attention to how this articulation of global solidarity and resistance networks was met with the articulation of a global network of authoritarianism and oppression through DINA's activities abroad.

The key resolution passed by the trade unions' meeting during the Athens conference gives a clear sense of this. Adopting Figueroa's and the CUT's proposals, the ten conclusions adopted by the delegates form a multi-faceted trade union strategy in contributing to the Chilean struggles through national and international action. They highlight how 'the Trade Union movement must do its best to prevent directly or indirectly the supply of arms and military equipment to the fascist junta', as well as to participate 'in the shipment of food for Chilean children' and 'recommend the organization of an International Day of Solidarity with the Chilean Workers (…) on the 12th of February 1976 [when] nothing needs to be sent to or received from Chile' (CUT, 1975: 3).

Both the Athens Conference and the trade union meeting, thus, emerge as key examples of a mobile and transient solidarity infrastructure from below[12] (Griffin, 2023; Kelliher, 2021). As similar Chile Solidarity Conferences were organised across Europe, the Athens conference exemplifies how 'mobile forms of organisation travelled through material infrastructures produced by labour and left movements, so that local embeddedness and relationships across space were mutually reinforcing' (Kelliher, 2021: 12). Such fleeting spaces of organising and encounters are key in shaping, but also circulating, shared worldmaking visions and solidarities (Karaliotas, 2024) to challenge not only Pinochet's Junta, but also the world order supporting it. The letter from COMACHI also foregrounds how interest and involvement in these events extended beyond the confines of the conference. The conference was also important in creating long-lasting bonds and place-based connections that would inform future Chile solidarity actions, as expressed in the organisation of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Crimes of the Junta in Chile (ICECMJC) in Athens between the 24 and 26 September, 1982 (Avgi, 1982; Ta Nea, 1982). This Conference was again driven by the GCSC and Greek participants included many of the attendants of the 1975 meeting, such as: composer Mikis Theodorakis; artist and architect Dimitris Talaganis who also prepared the poster for the 1975 conference; and the then-Prime Minister Papandreou. In parallel, representatives from all left-wing political parties and key trade union figures were also involved, such as the GSEE President, Orestis Chatzivasileiou and President of the Federation of High School Teachers, K. Economou (ICECMJC, 1982: 1-2).

Attracting wide publicity in the left-wing and trade union press (eg. Anti 1975a; 1975b), the 1975 conference was also one of the many reference points in and through which the Chilean experience shaped political identities, cultures and debates in post-dictatorial Greece. These discussions were taking place as much in everyday spaces of encounter and socialisation as in the party offices. As Nikos Papadogiannis writes, in cinemas and '[i]n the tavernas, again the discussion revolved around the issues of "democratisation" and "anti-imperialist struggle," such as the Vietnam War or the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile' (2015: 155). Cultural activities like these, as well as Theodorakis' concerts of Canto General[13],

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[12] Our use of the term infrastructure from below here is not intended to deny the key role that figures like Figueroa and others had within the Chilean left or the role of MPs or figures like Theodorakis in the Greek left. The term, on the contrary, is meant to signify how these spaces were created out-with formal institutional frameworks and how they also opened up avenues for the participation of other trade unionists and activists beyond established figures.

[13] Theodorakis' "Canto General", first released in 1974, is a musical adaptation of Pablo Neruda's epic poem, blending powerful orchestration with lyrical narratives to celebrate

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became key spaces for the formation of both international solidarities and domestic political narratives. This, however, was far from a frictionless process, as two opposing narratives emerged. Papandreou's PASOK and Maoist Groups like EKKE (Revolutionary Communist Party of Greece) put forward a thirdworldist perspective around the Chilean struggle and the broader conjuncture (Kornetis, 2015). This was fiercely debated and contested by the more 'traditional' anti-imperialist line of the KKE and the euro-communist reading of the KKE-es that centred on democratisation and Popular Unity's strategy of broader alliances (see also Kornetis, 2013; 2015; Papadogiannis, 2015; Palieraki, 2023). Chile solidarities were, thus, a terrain in and through which political identities within the Greek Left were articulated, political analyses were debated, and political strategies were shaped.

Solidarities with Chile also unfolded through grassroots syndicalism. A pertinent example here is the 45-day strike staged by workers in the US multinational, International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), in Athens, during April and May 1975, just a few months before the Chile Solidarity Conference. While the ITT dispute revolved around demands against the dismissal of two women trade unionists and wage increases (Agonas, 1975; Doukouri, 2013), it is of particular interest as ITT 'had been heavily implicated in the economic disruption and subsequent coup' in Chile (Hirsch, 2016: 245), which shaped the trade unionists' engagement in the strike. The ITT strike is also important in that it was part of a broader current of grassroots industrial unionism that centred around workers' committees that was developing in post-dictatorial Greece at the time. The grassroots industrial unionism movement employed militant and autonomous tactics of factory occupations and long strikes, often without the approval of official trade unions, and was a key, albeit often neglected, actor in the struggles for trade union democracy in Greece (Doukouri, 2013; Ioannidis, 2019; Palaiologos, 2018).

The ITT strike began as a one-day stoppage that evolved into a 45-day long dispute after one more woman trade unionist was sacked after the first 24 hours of strike (Doukouri, 2013: 13). Interestingly, Shirin Hirsch draws attention to an industrial dispute at the Glasgow ITT McLaren controls factory in November 1973. While this began as an industrial dispute over wages and the dismissal of striking workers, Hirsch notes how 'subtle links were being drawn between Chile and the workers' occupation', by actors like the Chile Solidarity Campaign but also striking workers (2016: 244). In post-dictatorial Greece, these links were

the history, struggles, and spirit of Latin American peoples. In post-dictatorial Greece performances of Canto General were also perceived as acts of solidarity.

quite prominent and pronounced. Under the motto ‘Down the beast called ITT’ (Agonas, 1975; Doukouri, 2013), workers would rally support for their cause by also drawing attention to ITT’s role in Chile (see also OPA, 1975). In the immediate post-junta period, widespread anti-US political sentiment was prevalent in Greece often targeting US multinational companies across the country (Ioannidis, 2019). For ITT, specifically, there were widespread allegations of wiretapping, allegedly carried out by its ‘foreign’ employees, importing and distributing surveillance technology, and receiving preferential treatment during the Junta (ibid: 194). These claims were largely shaped by the company’s role in Chile, as Greek citizens, activists and trade unionists drew parallels with Chile’s experience. Such discussions and pressures forced the company to issue a public statement, disputing the wiretapping claim just a few days before the strike broke out. While foregrounding their particular demands, ITT workers – women in their majority – traced the roots of their struggle through the company’s links with the military Junta, which enabled the implementation of strict working practices and crushed any possibilities for unionising, while also insisting in linking all of these practices with the company’s role in Chile (Agonas, 1975). Crucially, in such narratives, references to Chile also served to support the grassroots industrial unionism critique of formal union leadership that was seen as defeatist and reformist.

References to Chile were also prevalent in how the ITT strike was reported by the Greek media (eg. Anti 1975c) popularising sentiments of opposition to US imperialism as articulated through US multinationals in Greece. The documentary film ‘The Struggle’ (O Agonas) co-produced by the ‘Group of 6’ in 1975 included ITT’s strike as one of its key themes, making clear links between Greece and Chile and promoting a thirdworldist anti-imperialist common narrative (Agonas, 1975; see also Kornetis, 2015). The widespread anti-US and anti-Pinochet sentiment in Greece was also shaping government policies. Only a month after the ITT strike was crushed, Karamanlis’ government decided, in early June, to renegotiate its contract with ITT, so that phone books would be now published by the state-owned Organization of Telecommunications of Greece (OTE), and to limit its equipment supplies from ITT (Ioannidis, 2019).

The experiences of Greeks living and studying abroad during the Junta were also central in shaping these everyday solidarities. In an oral history interview with Stefanos Ioannidis, Eleni Zacharopoulou, who participated in the ITT strike, noted of her experience in Paris:

> No one was studying for school. We went to the university, we went to... Where there was celebration and joy, it was after May of 1968, it was the LIP [self-managed watch factory], it was Chile. The next day, we went and picked up Allende's widow, we went and picked her up from the

airport. All the solidarity movements. That's what we did, beyond the [campaign for] Greece. [...] (Ioannidis, 2019: 163).

While the connections and networks formed by prominent figures in exile like Theodorakis have attracted scholarly interest, Zacharopoulou's testimony draws attention to how students' and workers' international everyday encounters and struggles in cities like Paris would be formal in shaping post-dictatorial politics, grassroots unionism, and political identities in Greece. Chile solidarity and encounters with Chilean activists were a key space for the articulation of such experiences in the broader political conjuncture.

Solidarity From Below and Maritime Infrastructures

The previous section has discussed the importance of the mobility of key figures in the CUT in shaping transnational solidarity around Chile. Such linkages were also shaped with the labour movement in the UK. It was in this context that Luis Figueroa visited Britain along with Eduardo Rojas between January 4th and January 8th, 1975, at the invitation of the British Trades Union Congress (TUC). Among the delegation of trade unionists who met with Figueroa and Rojas was Sam McCluskie, then national organiser of the British National Union of Seamen (NUS). In an article for the NUS paper, *The Seaman,* McCluskie noted that a meeting of 'the international committee of the Labour Party under the chairmanship of the Labour MP Ian Mikardo' had 'met a delegation from the equivalent of our TUC in Chile' (McLuskie, 1975: 46). His role was indicative of the broader involvement of the Socialist International in Chile solidarity politics. McCluskie observed that they had been 'questioned about British ships trading to Chile, it was made plain that one well-known Liverpool shipowner [the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC)], continued to trade to and from that country' and that this 'could be an area where our executive council might explore in order to see what direct help they can give the Chilean people' (ibid.).

McCluskie's account draws attention to the role of Figueroa and Rojas, as figures of CEXCUT, in shaping international solidarity and knowledges of maritime trade in terms of targeting particular PSNC ships. While the report on the meeting between Chileans and British trade unionists indicates that these discussions took place at the leadership level of the NUS, the union's involvement in solidarity with Chile was also a result of ongoing pressure from below In 1974, for example, the *Seamen's Charter,* a 'rank and file' paper in the NUS with strong connections to the Communist Party, noted that the Union's Biannual General Meeting held in Torquay in 1974 had passed 'a motion tabled by the Liverpool branch of the NUS condemning the policy of torture carried out by the Chilean Fascist military junta'

(Seamen's Charter, 1974). The union's branch secretary in Liverpool, Tony Santamera, was strongly involved in the Communist Party Seamen's Branch on Merseyside and in Chile solidarity.

The Branch, which regularly discussed Chile at its meetings through the second half of the 1970s, was part of a broader culture of left-wing organising in the NUS, which had been important in challenging antidemocratic cultures in the union itself. An outcome of this campaign to democratise the union was a progressive orientation to internationalist solidarities which hitherto had been closed down by the union leadership. Such internationalist solidarities in relation to Chile and the anti-apartheid movement was in line with action by seafarers in other geographical contexts, such as Australia (see Kirkby, 2017). Thus, on the 17 September, 1975, Jim Slater, who had been elected General Secretary of the Branch in 1974, after long-standing campaigns against figures on the right of the union, instructed 'all officials and members' on behalf of the NUS Executive Council, 'that no member of the union shall be cleared for or engage on any British registered ship trading to or from any port in Chile. Ships trading to any other South American country are not affected by this instruction' (Slater, 1975). This was significant as the union operated a virtually 'closed shop' on British ships, so had significant influence over who signed on to crew ships. The statement also noted that this decision was 'made as a gesture of solidarity to the oppressed Chilean trade union movement in the hope it will inspire the international labour movement, particularly those engaged in sea and air transport, to embark on a similar course of action' (Slater, 1975).

As Slater's statement makes clear, a key broader intent of the motion was to act as a 'catalyst' for similar action by other unions, indicating their worldmaking ambitions. The recognition of this action by key figures on the left of the trade union movement in Britain is demonstrated by Johnnie Walker's statement at the 1976 STUC Congress. The Executive Committee of the Chile Solidarity Campaign also resolved to 'write to each of the national unions which have affiliated to us, or which are represented on our committee, appealing for full support to be given to the initiative of the NUS' (Chile Solidarity Campaign, September 19, 1975). As Mike Gatehouse, who was Joint Secretary of the CSC between 1974 and 1979, recalled, 'the trade union component was regarded as very important, partly because some of the most concrete actions, and the earliest actions were boycotts', drawing attention to 'the seamen in Liverpool, the dockers in Liverpool, and the potential for dockers elsewhere.'[14] More informal support

[14] Mike Gatehouse interview with David Featherstone, 9th April, 2022.

for the boycott was provided by Merseyside Chile Solidarity Committee, who organised a social for seafarers involved in the boycott.[15]

Here, the role of the Liverpool branch of the NUS indicates the significance of infrastructures of solidarity in the city, which were central to operationalising the executives' proposals. These infrastructures of solidarity combined localised dynamics with internationalist connections shaped through maritime and/or left-wing organising. This organising drew on the long-standing culture of militancy in both seafarers and dockers' unions in the city, both of which had often been shaped in direct opposition to the leadership of unions such as the NUS (Wailey, 1984). Tony Wailey's account of the 1966 seafarers' strike in the city, based on his own experiences during the dispute, also emphasises how cultures of seafarers' solidarity also depended on, and were shaped by, forms of gendered labour and support related to kinship networks (Wailey, 2024: 235).[16] The infrastructure of Chile solidarity in the city was shaped by intersections between trade unionists; intellectuals, such as Tony Lane, a Communist Party member, sociologist and writer on maritime history and politics; Chilean exiles and activists, such as Angela Thew, then Secretary of Merseyside Chile Solidarity Campaign; and the Liverpool Trades Council, which functioned as a network between different trade unionists at the local level.

Thew played a key role in shaping linkages between the city's trades council and various different unions, which represented both dockers and seafarers seeking to coordinate action between them. Thus, she worked on behalf of the Merseyside committee in liaising with key trade unionists such as the Secretary of the Dock Shops Stewards Committee, in order to garner support for a consumer boycott of 'all Chilean goods (especially food stuffs) which usually come into the Port in April', noting how this boycott was supported by 'the Chilean TUC.' This emphasises the ways in which boycott work was carefully targeted to anticipate the importance of building the leverage necessary to impact on the peak period of importation of Chilean produce in the northern hemisphere spring, as well as the

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[15] Working Class Movement Library, Merseyside Chile Solidarity Campaign papers, Box 3.

[16] 'Other times you'd have one in the Animal House that Jimmy Cavanagh's auntie used to run, and when the money ran short, she would always let you have a few and pay her when you could, strike or no strike' (Wailey, 2024: 235).

way that links to the CUT were invoked to signal the legitimacy and importance of such boycott work.[17]

As well as the city's branch of the NUS, 'rank and file' organising among left seafarers was also significant, particularly through the work of members of the Merseyside Communist Seamen's Branch. Figures involved in the branch made connections with the local branch of the Chile Solidarity Campaign, spoke about Chile at Liverpool Trade's Council meetings and produced and distributed a pamphlet as part of their campaign (Merseyside Communist Seamen's Branch, 1976, Riethof, 2022). A handbill was also circulated in British ports in 1975, to publicise that the Executive Council of the Union had instructed NUS members 'Not to go on ships sailing to Chile'. It explained that this was because of 'the atrocities committed against the Chilean Trade Unionists and Workers' by the regime of General Augusto Pinochet (see also Jones, 2014: 149).[18] Noting that the response to the Executive Council's decision had been 'tremendous', the handbill observed that 'over 700 Liverpool Seamen who have been unemployed for many weeks and months will not set foot on ships carrying Chilean cargoes.'

Such solidarity work drew on links with Chilean maritime workers and on seafarers' experiences of Chilean ports, emphasising that these interventions were part of ongoing engagements with worldmaking through the construction of linkages and routes of solidarity. As Mike Gatehouse of the Chile Solidarity Campaign noted in his 1974 correspondence with Stuart Hyslop, a seafarer based in South West Scotland, 'a strike by seamen on the ferry between Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas' had been violently repressed by the Junta.[19] Hyslop's own involvement in Chile solidarity was shaped in part by his personal experience of Chilean politics; he had been in Puerto Montt on a PSNC ship in 1969. He recalls seeing dockers barracking the then Christian Democrat President Eduardo Frei when he came into the port to campaign in the city ahead of the 1970 general election.[20] His links with Chilean maritime workers were facilitated by his shipmate and friend John Eastwood who had extensive contacts with left-wing Chilean dockers and seafarers.[21]

[17] Working Class Movement Library, Merseyside Chile Solidarity Campaign papers, Box 3, letter from Angela Thew to the Secretary, Dock Shop Stewards Committee, dated 20th January, 1978.`

[18] Liverpool Record Office, Merseyside Communist Party records 329 COM/13/10.

[19] Letter from Mike Gatehouse to Stuart Hyslop dated November, 12th, 1974, in possession of Stuart Hyslop.

[20] Conversation between Davi Featherstone and Stuart Hyslop, 6th November, 2023.

[21] Conversations between Davi Featherstone and Stuart Hyslop, 6th November, 2023 and July 23rd 2024.

The boycott, as the Communist seafarer Joe Kenny made clear at a conference on Trade Unions and Chile Solidarity organised by the CSC in 1975, drew on connections with and knowledge and experience of Chilean ports. Thus he argued that:

> Boycotts do not start and end at the docks: boycotts start with seamen in Chilean ports like San Antonio and ports like Antofagasta and Valparaiso. That's where it starts, and that's why the Executive Council of the NUS took the decision to boycott goods, because we believe that it would act as a catalyst to every other trade union in Great Britain. We know the results of the boycott, we know how it will affect the transport workers, the dockers and the road hauliers. We know how it will affect the motor car workers and all that depend on copper (Kenny cited by Chile Solidarity Campaign, 1976).

Kenny's intervention provides a powerful articulation of the ways in which solidarity was envisioned as a relational, connected act between seafarers in Chile and Liverpool, which in part emerged from existing connections and relations (see also Fox-Hodess and Santibáñez Rebolledo, 2020, Khalili, 2020). This resonates with the actions of workers at the Rolls Royce plant in East Kilbride, whose refusal to work on eight Hawker Hunter jet engines that were sent to be refurbished from Chile in 1974 is celebrated in the film *Nae Pasaran* (Bustos Sierra, 2012). It also emphasises that 'solidarities from below' and the infrastructures shaped through them were articulated in key ways through the organising work of figures like Kenny and Thew.

Seafarers' involvement in solidarities around Chile was also shaped by broader trajectories of opposition to rightist authoritarian-regimes, including the Greek Junta. Phil Ballard, who was a member of the union's executive council and a key figure in the Seamen's Charter group and was involved in Chile solidarity work, was arrested in Greece and deported along with two other seafarers for attempting to distribute literature critical of the junta, after their ship, the British Petroleum (BP) tanker *British Commerce*, had berthed at Scaramanga, near Piraeus, for repairs. They were said to have distributed 'excerpts from the recent May Day proclamation of the Greek Seamen's United Trade Union Anti-Dictatorship Committee (EASKEN).'[22] This was part of a broader culture of repression against British opposition to Greek rightist politics, including significant repression of demonstrations in Britain relating to Greece such as those in July 1963 against the visit of the Greek King and Queen (Bowes, 1966: 96-105).

[22] 'Three Members Arrested in Greece' *The Seaman*, June-July, 1969, p. 154.

As an executive council member, Ballard was also disciplined by the NUS's then right- leaning General Secretary William Hogarth for bringing the union 'into disrepute', in line with the broader anti-Communist politics that shaped the union's leadership at this juncture.[23] This indicates that seafarers' cultures of solidarity could be constructed at odds with union leaderships and structures, and were part of broader challenges to the anti-democratic cultures of the union in the post-war period. It also emphasises that such international solidarities often ran counter to the leaderships of the NUS, as well as the Transport and General Workers' Union, the main union representing dockworkers in Britain at the time, who often sought to close down such mobilisation (eg see Dash, 1987: 67-75). The NUS's organising cultures were also structured by problematic racialised geographies, which at the time included the union charging a levy to shipowners for seafarers who were not domiciled in the UK (Gordon and Reilly, 1986). Progressive worldmaking solidarities, therefore, necessitated challenging key aspects of dominant trade union cultures, and were in part a political intervention in how maritime labour was understood and shaped.

While by 1974 the union's General Secretary, Jim Slater, was associated with the Left, there were nonetheless tensions over the union leadership and executive council's attitudes to Chile solidarity, as well as contrasting assessments of the purpose, commitment and impact of the union's boycott. At a Chile Solidarity Campaign Executive Committee meeting on 22 June, 1976, where a number of leading trade unionists representatives of different transport sectors were present, Slater gave a down-beat assessment of the impact of the boycott. He argued that the impact of the Executive Council's decision had 'been in some respects disappointing.'[24] He continued that while 'blackings had taken place in Merseyside and elsewhere, ships continued to sail to Chile, and to load and unload in British ports. There had been some support from other unions, but this had not been sufficient.'[25] Slater was wary of potentially expelling members who did not participate in the boycott (The Seaman, October, 1975). His assessment of the mixed impact of the action is also supported by indications of some of the tactics allegedly used by ship owners to limit the impact of the NUS boycott on crewing ships involved in trade with Chile.

In correspondence with the International Transport Workers Federation, which supported and facilitated this kind of boycott work against the Pinochet regime,

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[23] See 'Executive Councillor Expelled' *The Seaman*, August 1969, p. 179.

[24] People's History Museum, Labour History and Archives Study Centre Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers CSC/1/7, Chile Solidarity Campaign Executive Committee Notes, June 22nd 1976.

[25] Marieke Riethof notes that the use of the term 'blackings' to refer to boycott work was beginning to be contested during this period, Riethof, 2022.-

Ken Hulme of the CSC reported indications that ships bound for Chile from Liverpool 'with incomplete crews' were picking up seamen at Belfast 'to make up the deficit complement thus bypassing the boycott' in the port.[26] Hulme's letter suggests the ways in which shipping companies like PSNC remained in a powerful position to circumvent a boycott, particularly because of some of the ways in which the differential geographies of support for the boycott in different ports. The chair of Merseyside Docks Shop Stewards Committee, Jimmy Symes, also stressed at the 1975 Trade Union conference organised by the CSC, 'the need for more international cooperation and coordination of boycotts,' arguing that 'Ships can always be diverted, goods trans-shipped or brought in "through the back door."'[27] Similar tactics were used by shipping companies in the 1980s, as owners of oil tankers were targeted by Maritime Unions Against Apartheid in an attempt to blockade oil supplies to South Africa (see Allan 1985: 10, Sparks, 2017).

There was also concern that the pressure that the boycott placed on seafarers was far greater than the impact on ship-owners. In a letter to *The Seaman* in May 1976, Jim Jerrett noted that while the boycott was commendable, he thought that the Executive Council had 'gone about this thing in the wrong way and have ended up putting seamen "on the spot" instead of the British shipping owners concerned and this makes me angry' (Jerrett, 1976: 74). Other participants, however, placed a different emphasis on the importance of the boycott. Jack Rollins, an NUS member who was part of East London CSC, offered a different analysis of the boycott at the CSC executive meeting. Contrasting Slater's position, Rollins emphasised 'the tremendous positive impact on the Campaign of the NUS decision', whilst also noting that the 'CSC had had no illusions about total boycott.'[28] As Mike Gatehouse recalled, 'a lot of these boycotts were pretty much symbolic, they didn't actually damage trade much', but nonetheless had 'significant broader political impacts'.[29] This raises questions about the efficacy of boycott work, but also about the different forms of agency and impact that such

[26] People's History Museum, Labour History and Archives Study Centre Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers CSC/28/8, Ken Hulme CSC to International Transport Workers Federation 23.4.76.
[27] Chile Solidarity Campaign 'Report to Delegates' Trade Union Conference, Saturday October 25th, 1975 Cardiff Trades Council Papers, 321/16.26 Chile 2/2, Cardiff University Special Collections.

[28] People's History Museum, Labour History and Archives Study Centre Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers CSC/1/7, Chile Solidarity Campaign Executive Committee Notes, June 22nd 1976.
[29] Mike Gatehouse conversation with David Featherstone, 9th April, 2022 and follow up discussion on June 1st, 2024.

work can have on participants, as well as about the ways in which solidarity and worldmaking practices are envisioned and understood.

Conclusions

This paper has located solidarities with Chile in Britain, Greece, Grenada and Trinidad in relation to interconnected geographies of authoritarianism. We have argued that it is necessary to consider how the global histories of authoritarianism in Chile, developed by scholars such as Tanya Harmer (2021), relate to interconnected understandings of transnational histories and geographies of solidarity. To do this, we have based this research on the relations between worldmaking (Getachew 2019) and infrastructures of solidarity to trace some of the ways in which labour internationalism was shaped by forms of democratic opposition to geographically variegated experiences of authoritarianism. Doing this has foregrounded key forms of agency shaped through different forms of 'solidarity from below,' and has drawn attention to transnational geographies of solidarity that have been neglected in existing discussions of Chile solidarity.

In so doing, we have sought to make a distinctive contribution to work on Chile solidarity and particularly to emerging transnational histories of Chile solidarity, such as the work of Christiaens (2018). We have argued that trade unionists and other left-wing activists we have engaged with across different geographical contexts developed forms of solidarity with Chile that were linked with other forms of situated opposition to authoritarianism. Further, we have sought to explore some of the lasting impacts of these connections in terms of differently placed left-wing political cultures. We have highlighted the ways in which different authoritarian political contexts were understood as related, with this shaping solidarities in important ways. Thus, we have discussed both the ways in which, during the post-junta period in Greece, links were made between the Pinochet regime and the Colonels dictatorship, as well as the ways in which OWTU activists contested the relations between Eric Gairy's regime in Grenada and the Pinochet dictatorship. By engaging with the important role played by organisations like the CEXCUT in envisioning and facilitating these solidarities, we have sought to emphasise the role of Chilean actors in exile in shaping the terms on which actions such as boycotts were envisioned and operationalised.

This article has emphasised some of the generative connections and trajectories that shaped solidarities in these contexts. Drawing attention to these generative connections has also enabled us to make a distinctive contribution to emerging conversations about the relations between solidarity and worldmaking. This foregrounds some of the contested political trajectories of global left politics in mid-twentieth century decolonisation projects, reframing aspects of Getachew's (2019) account of worldmaking. In this context, we point to the contested

dynamics related to differently positioned labour organising in. Through exploring the relations between practices of worldmaking and particular infrastructures of solidarity, such as those that shaped the NUS's attempt to boycott ships trading with Chile, for example, we have sought to recognise different and less well remembered forms of agency and connection, as well as to offer accounts of worldmaking that go beyond a focus on key political leaders and figures. We have also highlighted how such solidarities often necessitated challenging leaderships and dominant union cultures. In a context where solidarities with Palestine are being shaped through related practices – and dockworkers and seafarers have refused to ship munitions to Gaza[30] – these accounts emphasise_their ongoing and continued relevance for different political conjunctures.

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On Weathering: Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Struggles Around the Nicaragua Mural in Berlin After 2018

Samira Marty

Binghamton University, United States

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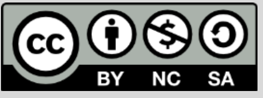

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Samira Marty[1]

On Weathering: Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Struggles Around the Nicaragua Mural in Berlin After 2018

Abstract

This article looks at the process of historical reinterpretation and anti-imperialist struggle around the Nicaragua mural in (former East) Berlin to demonstrate how internationalist solidarity does not unfold singularly but in a multi-layered, often contradictory manner. Since 2018, this mural has turned from an inconspicuous site into a place of contestation. On the one hand, for residents, the mural has transformed into a projection of rescuing and reinstating memory of the former GDR's efforts of internationalist friendship and solidarity. On the other hand, it has become a site for political struggle for Nicaraguan exiles living in the area. Based on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in Nicaragua and Germany in 2018–2019 and 2023, this article complicates how memory practices shape everyday lives in Berlin for German and Nicaraguan residents alike. Their divergent interpretations of the mural's meaning sheds light on the tensions of memory politics vis à vis political and historical reinterpretation and demonstrate the potential for the Nicaragua mural to place a magnifying glass over the anti-imperial politics of Berlin.

Keywords: Solidarity, Anti-Imperialism, Nicaragua, East Berlin, Mural, Memory

Introduction

Despite its notable size of 255m², the Nicaragua mural in Eastern Berlin's Lichtenberg district is easy to miss. Painted on a windowless gable wall on a five-

[1] Samira Marty is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, at Binghamton University, United Sates. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8118-5736.

story residential block of apartments, a former cooperative building, its imperceptible appearance hides its once political clout. The mural, officially entitled "Nicaraguan Village – Monimbó 1978" and known locally as the "Nicaragua mural," depicts the village of Monimbó, a former town that today forms part of the city of Masaya (see figure 1). A large volcano, most likely the Masaya Volcano, looms over the scene in the background.[2] The artist, Nicaraguan *muralista* Manuel García Moia, was commissioned to create the artwork in 1985 by the German Democratic Republic's Ministry of Culture and the East Berlin City Council.[3] García Moia was one of Nicaragua's most renowned artists who employed a distinctively primitivist style (Kunzle, 1995, p.69–70). At first glance, the colourful picture depicts a simple country life in the tropics: a cluster of dwellings with thatched roofs, banana palms, and free-roaming livestock. However, a closer look reveals the gruesome war scenes taking place—the grievances of Nicaragua's civil war before the Sandinista revolutionary triumph in 1979 (see Figure 2).

[2] Volcanoes have long been featured as symbols of insurrection in Nicaragua, be it around the FSLN insurrection (Kunzle 1995, 68) or the 2018 mass protests where the slogan "*juntos somos un volcán*" ("together, we're a volcano") featured prominently.

[3] In fact, García Moia was commissioned to paint a a second mural in the nearby Wilhelmsberg school, entitled "Folk Festival in Monimbó". Given the mural's inside location and constraint of public access, this second mural has received much less attention.

Figure 1: The mural after the 2019 restoration. Picture taken by the author, February 6, 2023.

Figure 2: Depictions of war grievances. Picture taken by the author, February 6, 2023.

Murals are a common form of political expression in Nicaragua and have been deeply embedded in Nicaraguan national cultural identity since a leftwing revolution in 1979 – when the Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, FSLN) staged a successful armed revolution against Nicaragua's then-President Anastasio Somoza, the latest member of a political dynasty that had ruled the country for over four decades. The Sandinistas' once-revolutionary proposal was to turn Nicaragua into a unique socialist state with solid public institutions and market and land reforms (Lancaster, 1988; Sierakowski, 2002). The FSLN's armed struggle continued when fractions of Somoza supporters and other opponents of the revolution, who united as the *Contras*, began a civil war in the early 1980s (Agudelo Builes, 2017). The civil war lasted almost a decade until the FSLN's electoral defeat in 1989 (Babb, 2004). After decades of political opposition, the former revolutionary leader and President Daniel Ortega returned to power in 2007. His political campaign built firmly on revolutionary successes of the past, while obscuring anything that would distract from Ortega as a leading and heroic figure (Francis, 2012; Torres Rivas, 2007). The consequence of Ortega's authoritarian regime was a mass popular uprising in 2018, which was met with extreme forms of state violence, resulting in a wave of mass exile, amounting to almost a million in early 2024 (Grupo de

Expertos en Derechos Humanos sobre Nicaragua, 2024). As Schindler, a German activist and former member of the solidarity brigade in Nicaragua, recalls regretting, “all the hopes associated with the Sandinista revolution, both within Nicaragua and internationally, had been completely dashed” (Schindler, 2022).

My first encounter with the mural was accidental. I was on a quest to visit all the streets and squares in the city that bore names related to the Nicaraguan revolution and came across Monimbó Square – which, as it turned out, was named after the mural. This first visit, as well as the many to follow, took place during my ethnographic fieldwork on the transnational solidarity movements that emerged after the Nicaraguan regime violently oppressed mass protests in 2018. The deterioration of the mural’s façade, worn by wind and weather, bore the imprints of time passed (see figure 3). Reflecting on the architectural value of the changes to its surfaces, Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow (1993) observe that weathering includes “naming both the process and the object through which this process is controlled and allowed to make itself manifest (ibid., 1993, p. 36). While the mural’s fading colours first proposed structural neglect, I came to understand that it instead invoked passages of time that both the mural *and* the depicted scene underwent. Thus, the coevalness of the weathering invoked a powerful metaphor for the complex political processes of the depicted scene – both in seemingly far away Nicaragua and the mural’s immediate surroundings in former East Berlin.

Figure 3: The Nicaragua mural before its latest renovation. Picture taken by the author, February 4, 2019

To my knowledge, the Nicaragua mural is a unique expression of anti-imperialist ideology in the former Eastern bloc. While murals, often arranged through colourful mosaics, formed an integral part of promoting Soviet folk art and ideology, these were exclusively created by local artists (Hilton, 2002). However, many international solidarity brigades who travelled to Nicaragua to support the Sandinistas in the 1980s were inspired by the country's muralism and applied the techniques they learned in Nicaragua after returning to their local communities (Alewitz and Buhle, 2002; Kunzle, 1995). As Bradbury et al. (*in this volume*, 2024) describe, promoting transnational solidarity over murals also found traction in the support of El Salvador's leftwing Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front.

With the example of the Nicaragua mural, this article ponders the remnants of the localised history of leftist anti-imperialist politics in Berlin, which has been significantly shaped by the city's past division and contrasting alignments in relation to the Cold War. My engagement with anti-imperialism serves both as an analytical tool and as a term used and strategically mobilised by my interlocutors. Ideologically, anti-imperialism has been the vehement stance against US domination and capitalist exploitation. The activists I encountered have

particularly welcomed efforts for national independence and revolutionary freedom. International solidarity has been an ideological and practical vernacular response to manifest their support of these struggles. However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many of these older struggles have significantly shifted. The processes of historical reinterpretation and memory politics are ripe with tension on broader questions, such as who gets to decide what the mural stands for and to whom the past solidarity and its remnants – exemplified by the mural – belong today.

Beyond *Ostalgie*: a site for contestation

In the early hours of a day in mid-August, 2019, Friedrich and Birgit, elderly residents of the Lichtenberg district in Eastern Berlin, took their dog on their usual walk in the early morning hours. They were giddy: later that day, the Nicaraguan ambassador, together with the local mayor, would finally reveal the newly restored Nicaragua mural. The pair had dedicated over twenty years of advocacy and fundraising for its renovation, and even founded an association to keep the mural intact.[4] However, when the couple reached Monimbó Square where the mural was located, they realised with great horror that its walls, benches, and lamp posts were covered in colourful leaflets. Each of them depicted the black contours of an elderly man with thick eyebrows, a curved moustache, and a round face, with the words "*Ortega Asesino*" ("Ortega Assassin") above the image. According to the couple, their initial shock was immediately replaced with a compulsion to do something; action mode. They frantically began tearing down all the posters, and stuffing them deep down inside the bin in the middle of the square. They then walked the neighbouring streets, up and down, eliminating any and all the posters they could find. "It was pure vandalism," they recounted indignantly.

A few hours earlier, a handful of Nicaraguan activists gathered in the square. They carried plastic bags filled with colourful printed sheets, glue, and paste. Protected by the darkness and the night-time abandonment of the largely residential district, they plastered the posters on every surface they could find. It was one of dozens of actions militant Nicaraguans took around the city to raise awareness about the Nicaraguan socio-political crisis ongoing since 2018. Several of the leading activists were political exiles who had fled to Berlin as a result of President

[4] In fact, the mural had already been renovated in 2012. Due to a mistake in the engineering of newly installed heating platters, the mural's surface withered prematurely.

Ortega's brutal crackdown on protesters. That night in 2019, with the "*Ortega Asesino*" posters, was, in fact, the second time that Nicaraguans had staged an anti-government protest in front of the mural. In the first days of the violent crackdown of mass protests in Nicaragua in mid-April 2018, Nicaraguan residents in Berlin gathered for their first protest in the city in front of the mural to express their solidarity with the protesters back in Nicaragua. At the time, the centrally-located Nicaraguan embassy had shut down due to budget constraints, and the only official building that remained was the ambassador's residence, in a district far to the west. Thus, the organiser of the first protest in front of the mural was the only place in the capital that held an imminent connection with Nicaragua.

Initially, the mural was commissioned to inspire residents and warn them of the dangers of imperialism – which lurked behind the Berlin Wall. The ruling party, the Socialist Union Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei*, SED), sought to use the Nicaragua mural as a place with an educational, political, and cultural mission. However, unlike the Berlin Wall, the mural was not intended to signal a message to the "other side." Its purpose lay (and remained) within the parameters of the Lichtenberg district. This district also housed the *Stasi* headquarters (an abbreviation of the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, Ministry of State Security). Thus, what nowadays might be considered a remote district of the city's Eastern outskirts, was once the centre of political power and control.

This notion of former political centres pushed into the periphery also reflects the struggles with and over the memory of the past in former East Germany. The memory of the German Democratic Republic and its material remnants have often been coined as *Ostalgie* (a neologism of *Ost*, East, and nostalgia) (Bach, 2021; Berdahl, 1999; Boyer, 2006). However, *Ostalgie* is also a term ripe with irony, and speaks much less of the longing for a more nuanced view of the GDR's rule, including its vibrant transnational relations beyond the Soviet Union, than it does East Germany's quick transition into a capitalist economy (Kunze and Vogel, 2012; Schwenkel, 2022). The fall of the Wall and the collapse of the state set off a deeply rooted uncertainty about a state project that East Germans thought "was forever, until it was no more," as Alexei Yurchak's (2006) book on post-Soviet change aptly puts it. The public erasure and ignorance around "anything East" has led to decades of resentment and misunderstanding. East Germans have juggled a "tightrope walk between the East's assimilation and the insistence upon their own identity" (Ladd, 2018, p. 197–8). Friedrich and Birgit, the local couple who tore down the protest flyers, were bothered by the faded surface of the mural, which they considered representative of the rest of East Berlin's former public buildings, statues, and other architectural remnants of the GDR (Ladd, 2018, p. 192f).

However, as it became clear throughout our long exchange, renovation efforts have been not really about renovating a withered surface but rather about reinstating a different account of memory, unveiling the tension between state-

mandated anti-imperialist and individually enacted understandings of solidarity. The mural once united children for so-called "*Kinderfeste*" (children's parties): during these events, children were encouraged to assemble in front of the mural, where they were taught about the deadly effects of imperialism on people worldwide. During these (and undoubtedly many more) occasions, residents were encouraged to link their everyday lived realities with people's struggles elsewhere. Solidarity was more than a dominant ideology; it was a means to situate individual citizens in a worldwide struggle. According to the mayor of the Lichtenberg district, Michael Grunst, who had grown up in the district before the fall of the wall, the mural still ought to be educational for residents and open their minds to a shared proletarian internationalist and anti-imperialist struggle in the ongoing battle against capitalist exploitation and US dominance:

> *"The mural raises questions [for children] like who supports the oppressor? Who supports the oppressed? And why was there a Sandinista revolution in the first place? (...) The mural has a strategic task here in the district (...) Art in public space, the conveying of history, that is its mandate."*

Thus, what the mural once stood for went beyond a top-down mandated anti-imperialist ideology. Appealing to younger residents, the mural was an important locus of a strategic politics of memory production that emphasised the educational value of ideological and emotional alignment with the Nicaraguan revolution. The mural's ongoing educational mission was why the mayor supported the citizens' association's request for additional subsidies for its renovation. Therefore, both the mayor and locals strived for an objective that went far beyond simple *Ostalgie*: their insistence on preserving the mural was an act of resisting the mandate of Western hegemony altogether. Those supporting the mural's renovation upheld the virtues of anti-imperialism, and especially anti-US and anti-capitalist sentiments. Fostering solidarity between Lichtenberg and the Nicaraguan revolution did not have an expiration date; it was a historical reminder of some of the core values of the GDR. Indeed, the withering of the mural's facade became a metaphor for political neglect and the disregard for the internationalist values that had shaped the district in past decades.

***Mahnmal* against Imperialism**

Berlin's cityscape is imbued with the past: remnants of the Berlin Wall that once cut a rift through the city meet with Prussian statutes and, most importantly, the city's numerous Holocaust memorials and other places dedicated to commemorating the victims of the Nazi regime (Jordan, 2006; Whigham, 2022; Young, 2000). Like other memorials, *Mahnmale* is committed to ensuring that the

past is not forgotten and that victims of past wrongdoings remain commemorated. *Mahnmale*, derived from the German term *ermahnen*, translates as 'to caution' or 'to remind,' are pivotal in Germany's memory politics regarding the Holocaust, where they serve as public monuments of a collective politics of "Never Again" (Till, 2005, p. 82). However, their core, being a memorial admonishment – is an active proces*s* that, as this article underlines, is imbued in the case of the Nicaragua mural as well: the mural's intention, as I will explore, was to warn East Berliners of the deadly effects of US imperialism. In that vein, the Nicaraguan revolution was not simply presented as a hopeful new beginning but a gruesome portrait of the sacrifices that pursuing a liberating revolution entailed. Crucially, the Nicaraguans who overturned the Somoza dynasty were not isolated but part of a larger anti-imperial agenda that also included the support of Marxist revolutionary struggles in Angola, Chile, Cuba, Mozambique, Syria and Vietnam (Otieni Sumba, 2024).

In what follows, I map a political history of anti-imperialism from its beginnings of post-colonialism to turning into a core ideology of the GDR. Anti-imperialism emerged in the late 19th century as a critique of colonial powers, especially the European colonial empires, and became a century-long political project (Babiracki and Jersild, 2016; Manjapra, 2019; Parrot, 2022). Their intentional use of the term "anti-imperial" laid bare their open opposition to Western, i.e., Euro-American imperialism. Shared experiences of colonial exploitation in former colonies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America made anti-imperialism a joint political endeavour of resistance and South-South collaboration to counter these devastating and lasting effects of empire (Parrot, 2022, p. 4–6). For some, the framework of devastation and exploitation held specific economic significance, which is why their critique of anti-imperialism was, at the same time, strongly anti-capitalist (Weiss, 2016).

Anti-imperialist thought and militancy were premised on Marxism, which "constituted an instrument through which anti-colonial struggles could be translated from one colonial arena to another" (Young, 2016, p. 169). From this point of view, the colonised were equalised with the working class (i.e., the masses) vis à vis colonising forces (i.e., the bourgeoisie) (Parrot, 2022, p. 17). Building on this premise, the consequence of colonialism was a continuous, systematic logic of capitalist extraction and exploitation, which, in turn, were the object of anti-imperialist struggles. Although the Soviet Union initially formed an essential part of this anti-imperialist critique, it later developed a complicated relationship with anti-imperialism. On the one hand, the Soviet Union strove to build and maintain connections and a close relationship with allies in the Global

South.[5] On the other hand, its dogmatic idea of communism complicated collaborations with many leftwing movements that strove for alternative interpretations and forms of liberation (Laursen, 2019). Nevertheless, anti-imperialism emerged as a currency of movements for national liberation, racial equality, and an international redistribution of power and resources throughout the 20th century.

In light of this vibrant anti-imperialist endeavour, it is unsurprising that Nicaragua's FSLN received vast international support. Based on Akira Iriye, internationalism can be defined as "an idea, a movement, or an institution that seeks to reformulate the nature of relations among nations through cross-national cooperation and interchange" (Iriye, 2001, p. 3). During heightened tensions between East and West, internationalism promised to overcome the divisions across nations and classes and unite people in a "socialist commonwealth" (Rieber, 2016, p. 329). The Sandinistas strategically mobilised this deeply rooted desire for transnational solidarity and collaboration to mobilise supporters in Western Europe and the US, who travelled to Nicaragua as so-called "solidarity brigades" to experience the revolution first-hand and help advance its progress (Christiaens, 2014; Helm, 2018; Perla, 2009; Weber, 2006). The seduction of the Sandinista revolution was the deeply rooted belief that everyone could be part of it. For the Sandinistas, anti-imperialism was a reaction to the repeated experience of US invasions.

The GDR's Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei, SED*), led by Erich Honecker, mobilised support for the Sandinistas under the ideological umbrella of anti-imperialism, solidarity and internationalism. The GDR's idea of internationalist solidarity aligned with the Soviet internationalist alliance, based on an ideology of friendship (Burton, 2018; Müller, 2010; Otieni Sumba, 2024). The importance of this principle was anchored in the GDR's constitution, which, according to Article 6, states that "[t]he GDR supports those states and peoples which fight against imperialism and its colonial regime, for national freedom and independence" (quoted in Weis, 2011, p. 357). The importance of internationalist solidarity is also evident from the fact that it was not assigned to the Foreign Ministry but to a separate committee, the Solidarity Committee, that handled all financial and material contributions (Witkowski, 2015, p. 94). The GDR's understanding and pursuit of solidarity was tied to the idea of international socialist assistance. It aimed to counter efforts of US imperialism and the neo-

[5] The Tricontinental's objective was to unite anti-imperialist revolutionary movements in their struggle for liberation in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Louro et al. 2019; Parrot 2022; Stolte et al. 2020).

colonial ideology of development that opposed their core idea of mutual aid through solidarity. Moreover, due to the recent Nazi past, East Germany was especially committed to a longer tradition of antifascism, which shaped their internationalist agenda accordingly.

The Sandinistas in Nicaragua benefitted vastly from the GDR's efforts. Although the Sandinistas were not interested in implementing the "real socialism"[6] that the GDR projected onto them, the common ground of anti-US sentiment bound them together. Since the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, fears of a US invasion of Nicaragua increased. Moreover, the civil war held a firm grip over the country. The Contras, counterrevolutionary forces that fought the Sandinista revolution, received weaponry and military training from the CIA – which, at the time, was a rumour that was only later verified (Travis, 20017). The perception of the US as meddling in a civil war to destabilise a popular revolution tapped into the GDR's conviction that the US was the embodiment of the class enemy, which in turn helped them frame anti-US sentiments within East Germany (Balbier and Rösch, 2006, p. 11).

The GDR provided direct aid in terms of financial, material, and military support to Nicaragua in a top-down fashion. Their expressions of internationalist "friendship," a common phrase for internationalist solidarity, also included strengthening the public sector, particularly in the accessibility and equipment of public health infrastructure. The GDR dispatched dozens of trained German medical personnel to support their Nicaraguan counterparts in establishing a reliable national medical healthcare system. As a result, the GDR founded the *Carlos Marx* Hospital in Managua, for which they deployed medical personnel throughout the 1980s (Borowy, 2015, p. 418). Their assistance formed part of a broader discourse of anti-imperialist solidarity. This particular understanding of solidarity travelled from the GDR to Nicaragua and back. Beyond providing aid and winning a strategic ally in Central America, the GDR used the Sandinista project as a source of political education for its own citizens. The Sandinista revolution and Nicaragua's ongoing struggle to counter possible US sabotage became a cautionary tale of the dangers of US imperialism.

At the same time, solidarity with Nicaragua was a moral duty within an individual's responsibility. Although the GDR's notion and practice of solidarity were managed top-down, the SED leadership also encouraged citizens to support the struggle of the Nicaraguan people individually. Several of my German

[6] The expression "real socialism" (*real existierender Sozialismus*) was introduced by then SED-general secretary (and later President) Erich Honecker in 1973 (Ziemer, 2004, p. 535). While it emerged from the SED leadership, real socialism was later employed as a critique of the GDR (Bahro, 1977).

interlocutors from former East Berlin mentioned how they were regularly assigned to host or make purchases at cake fundraisers at local schools. Another tactic was a nationwide postal stamp action, charging buyers an extra third to donate to Nicaragua (see figure 4).[7] Thus, solidarity with Nicaragua can be seen as an amalgamation of a state-mandated ideology, foreign policy and personal practice.

Figure 4: "Solidarity with Nicaragua". Postal Stamp in the GDR (1983), scanned by the author.

The tension between individually enacted and state-mandated solidarity was a central theme in my recorded interview with Heinrich, an active member of the Nicaragua Solidarity Movement, a grassroots movement acting under the umbrella of the Protestant church in former East Germany. In our conversation, Heinrich reflected on over forty years of Nicaragua solidarity activism. In the early 1980s, Heinrich used the context of activities of the church primarily to disguise his political stance. Using the church both in terms of infrastructure and cloak was not exclusive to Nicaragua activism but was commonly treated as a gateway to political resistance in the GDR (Horvay, 2011). Interestingly, Heinrich brought up the potential dissent that the Nicaragua solidarity evoked in him and others. He explained that his activism was based on the principle that solidarity meant direct and individual contributions. This stood in contrast to GDR politics. He explained that "[s]omething like solidarity cannot be left to the state's

[7] The stamp portrayed the Sandinistas' first considerable grassroots effort, the so-called alphabetization campaign, which taught approximately 80% of the mostly rural population to read and write).

monopoly. The state has had everything under its monopoly, including solidarity." Thus, Heinrich framed the solidarity he pursued as an active process based on individual convictions, which he contrasted with state-sponsored solidarity. The activism he and other solidarity group members sought took similar forms: they supported the building and equipment of a public school in rural Nicaragua, and they collected donations to travel to Nicaragua in person.

Furthermore, beyond executing direct action outside a state realm, solidarity activism with Nicaragua permitted the East German activists to project their imaginations of new and more democratic beginnings of a socialist state. These were indeed not only in opposition to the GDR but also a more comprehensive rejection of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. In that manner, Volks expressed that:

[...] with Nicaragua, we associated something like a third way, in other words, a more democratic socialism. That was one side, and of course we also used that, so to speak, by looking at Nicaragua and what we thought was happening there, a democratic socialism, we held up a mirror, so to speak, to the GDR government. We said: Look at what's there and take a look! And that's how it works (...) That was yet another internal aspect, being able to do something in solidarity [with Nicaragua] across borders in such a closed country. Of course, this had an immense attraction [on us].

Heinrich's statements reveal a strong projection of his idealism on the Sandinista revolution, on which undermines the GDR's official discourse on anti-imperialism. Instead, young East German activists used Nicaragua to enact their visions of what a democratic socialist state should entail. In that vein, engagement with the Nicaraguan revolution, and, by extension, the Nicaragua mural, can also be considered a portal to a utopian conceptualisation of "socialism otherwise."

Murals: The Paradox of Revolutionary Scripts

Murals in Nicaragua are a particular form of cultural expression closely connected to the Sandinista revolution. Murals remain a powerful public expression of dissent, offering interpretations of the past and providing aspirations for alternative social and political futures. For most Nicaraguans in Berlin, the mural represented a conflation of the past and present, particularly in the wake of the violent events of April 2018, where at least 355 protesters were killed (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2021). The renewed interest in and engagement with murals is the reactivism and reconfiguration of the 1979 revolutionary insurrection. However, although youth in Berlin stuck to what I have termed "revolutionary scripts" by including the mural as the visual backdrop

of their first protests, they firmly rejected anything related to Ortega's Sandinismo, which they disdainfully named "*Orteguismo*."

Johnny was a Nicaraguan activist who had lived in the Lichtenberg district for the past few years. Originally trained as a lawyer in Nicaragua, he was now employed in elderly care. Upon seeing unarmed students being fatally shot in the streets of his hometown in April 2018, he joined a Nicaraguan friend for a spontaneous protest in front of the Nicaragua mural. Shortly after, he co-founded a collective with other Nicaraguan activists and dedicated all his free time to the cause. Johnny knew the mural's illustrations in great detail, having passed by on his daily walks to and from work for years. We met in front of the mural in early 2023, where the idea was that he would explain the mural to me from his own viewpoint. Standing in front of the mural, it became clear that he had studied its depictions in great detail as he pointed out minute details that I could barely make out with the naked eye. One of the things Johnny pointed out was an almost inconspicuous quote from Augusto Sandino, a Nicaraguan folk hero and namesake of the Sandinista party. This quote, painted in red capital letters, was placed in the bottom right-hand corner of the mural:

> *We are heading toward*
>
> *The sun of freedom*
>
> *Or toward death, and if*
>
> *We die, it doesn't matter*
>
> *Our cause will continue to live on*
>
> *Others will follow.*
>
> (see figure 5)

Figure 5: “We are heading toward the sun”. Picture taken by the author, February 6, 2023.

Before I could even make out the first line of text, Johnny had already started reciting it, with a reverence and formality that surprised me. Like many other Nicaraguan anti-government protesters I met, Johnny’s family formed part of the Sandinista stronghold in the 1980s. Johnny joined its youth wing as a teenage militant, where he learned the basics of successful political crowd control and practised recitals of Sandino and other heroes and martyrs of the Sandinista counterinsurgency war and revolution. When he took to the streets to demonstrate the FSLN in Berlin, the party whose founding mission he was once committed to, his intricate knowledge helped him undermine their current mission. Moreover, coming-of-age youths like Johnny had grown up exclusively under President Daniel Ortega, significantly shaping their intimate understanding of the revolution and its memorabilia, including recitals from Sandinista’s ancestors (Rodgers, 2009).

During my fieldwork in early 2018 in the Northern Nicaraguan city of Estelí, nationally renowned for its mural culture, traditional murals of revolutionary “heroes and martyrs” could be found side-by-side with murals sponsored by local NGOs, which encouraged women to denounce accounts of domestic violence. Similar to other revolutionary cultural remnants being repurposed by protesters, such as poetry or music, murals soon became forums for their critical engagement

with the Ortega regime (Selejan, 2021)[8]: faces of well-known killed protesters such as the 15-year-old Nicaraguan high school student Álvaro Conrado mushroomed alongside anti-regime slogans, and the national blue-white colours increasingly drowned out the traditional red-black Sandinista party flag.

Initially, murals were placed on the cultural map of Latin America during the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), when they were used for cultural and political engagement, particularly with rural populations.[9] Moreover, murals became a token of Mexican national identity at a crucial point in Mexico's process of state formation (Greeley, 2012, p. 2–3). In that spirit, murals became synonymous with Mexican state culture (Anreus et al., 2012; Coffey, 2012; Raussert, 2023). The political messaging in public space that the Sandinistas promoted in Nicaragua similarly tapped into the opportunity to disseminate messages of Nicaragua's revolutionary insurrection and success, martyrs, and leading figures of the Sandinista movement, and, increasingly, to promote revolutionary campaigns such as public health announcements (Kunzle, 1995). Nicaragua's Cultural Minister, Ernesto Cardenal, was a poet and former Jesuit pastor who had been excommunicated due to his involvement in the revolution who promoted a grassroots approach to the arts (Selejan, 2015; Guevara, 2014; Vannini, 2012). In his view, the arts should grant accessibility for the working class, leaning toward the dissolution of the distinction from "painters" vis à vis "people who paint" (Kunzle, 1995, p. 75). Manuel García Moia was one of the most renowned Nicaraguan muralists, and he incorporated several characteristics of the revolution: youthfulness, the promotion of revolutionary tales and emblems, and accessibility, which is often derogatorily termed primitivism (Kunzle, 1995, p. 16; 68–70). However, the Berlin mural's content is far from "naive": it reflects García Moia's gruesome experience of violence in Monimbó, a district of Masaya known for a comparably high proportion of the country's indigenous population (Field, 1999).

Monimbó forms part of what I understand as Nicaragua's revolutionary script: the historical framework of revolution and insurrection that the protest movement relied on in 2018. It gained national popularity in the late 1970s when *Monimbeños* resisted the National Guard of Somoza during the revolutionary insurrection of the FSLN, despite significant losses (Field, 1999). In 2018, again,

[8] Nicaraguan police banned two *muralists* in Estelí from painting a celebratory mural of the recently elected Nicaraguan Miss Universe, Sheynnis Palacios, days after her election, denouncing the act as inciting public unrest. (see La Prensa, 2023)

[9] The three founding fathers, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, envisioned murals as a canvas for Marxist messaging for a broad (Mexican) audience (Anreus et al. 2012).

Masaya became a site of violent clashes between opponents of the Sandinista regime and security forces, which quickly invoked the "idiom of insurrection" (Díaz and Weegels, 2022, p. 342). In this regard, the Nicaraguan government's so-called "Operation Clean-Up" in June and July 2018, where street barricades, occupied university campuses, and other anti-government strongholds were violently removed, hundreds of protesters were arrested and several dozen killed, reproducing imagery that many interpreted as a repetition of the past (see Rocha, 2020).

Johnny's most pivotal remarks about the mural revolved around the symbols of the uprising and, as a result, the high price that the Nicaraguan population has (had) to pay. As he interpreted it from a safe distance in Berlin, the revolutionary script was that the present unfolded in the same way as the past did. In that vein, he pointed out in the mural that showed a man lying on the doorsteps of a simple house built of wooden pegs and a thatched roof. He held a folkloric mask and machete with a bleeding wound on his neck.[10] Near him, a woman runs away from the scene, barefoot with a half-naked baby in her arms. It was a gruesome sight (see figure 6).

[10] The so-called *Ahüizote* masks that the Sandinista revolution repurposed have their origins in a Nahuatl theatre play mocking the Spanish Crown in the 16th century (Field, 1999).

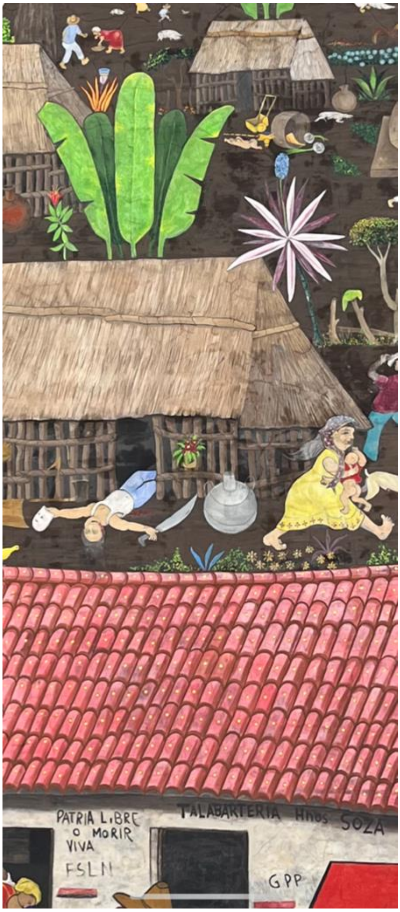

Figure 6: Detail pointed out on the mural in my interview with Johnny. Picture taken by the author, February 8, 2023.

Johnny then explained how, for him, the mural was a source of national pride before 2018. Back then, it represented his nation's struggle for revolution and the great sacrifices that went along with that. Since the outbreak of the protests, the mural had become a place of great sorrow. I asked him why this shift occurred. What did he see differently now? He replied agitatedly:

And now? And now this mural is the reality of what's happening in Nicaragua [today]. Nothing has changed, really. Nothing has changed. It's the same today. (...) Look at this dead person over there, on the doorstep of their house. If you look at the documentation of what happened in 2018, people were

intruding on other people's houses and killing them inside their own homes. It's the same. 40, 30-something years, and the same is going on. It's the same thing."

In his statement, Johnny brought Nicaragua's past and present together, conjuring them as "the same." As he saw it, the mural was not a relic of the past but a witness account of the present and proof that the history was repeating itself. That is why, for Johnny (and many other Nicaraguan activists in Berlin), pursuing anything vaguely familiar to the present-day Sandinista revolutionary project is not only reminiscent of the past, but is also doomed to failure. In that vein, anti-imperialism was a revolutionary and Sandinista virtue that belonged to an outdated and disdainful political project of the past.

Conclusion

Using the Nicaragua mural to study the "faraway nearby" (Solnit, 2014) that transnational activism around conflict can evoke, I have demonstrated how the past and present do not merely overlap but simultaneously produce unexpected frictions. These interactions were based on tensions behind the historical reinterpretation and memory politics that were unearthed with the renovation of the Nicaragua mural: on the one hand, the defence of internationalist, anti-imperialist solidarity, and on the other hand, Nicaragua's violent past rendered contemporary. These were the contestations about the significance and re-interpretation of what everyday life in the German Democratic Republic's Berlin-Lichtenberg district entailed. Monimbó in (former East) Berlin has not signified a simplistic projection of a romanticised revolution elsewhere. Instead, it lends itself to a complex case study of how internationalist solidarity does not unfold singularly but in a multi-layered, often contradictory manner.

Considering solidarity as a transformative process (Featherstone, 2012), contestations around the mural demonstrate how solidarity as a political relation can also branch out into different, if not contrasting, directions. The anti-imperialist solidarity that the GDR leadership pursued, propagated through the Nicaragua Mural in Lichtenberg, is a telling example. Young activists like Heinrich used the principle of internationalism in the 1980s to push for a route to a "Socialism Otherwise," reinterpreting the mural in their terms. Others, like the members of the local citizens' association and the mayor, mobilised for the renovation of the mural and considered its original mission of anti-imperialist solidarity an ongoing project of defending and reinstating the values that the GDR represented for them as former East German socialists. The remnants of East Germany's anti-imperialist solidarity, therefore, did not solely inform activism but also became a project of defending and honoring their past.

For local Nicaraguan residents like Johnny, on the other hand, the mural's symbolism shifted from portraying a rare bond with distant homelands, to a documentary testimony of the present-day state repression and violence that had been unfolding since April 2018. The conflation of past and present on the mural's façade powerfully illustrates the battlefield that shapes current Nicaraguan and local politics and, to a degree, a reflection of contemporary geopolitics: mass protests have put the relevance of the past and the Sandinista revolution at stake. What is more, for young Nicaraguans like Johnny, the only way out of the current socio-political crisis and repression is to abandon Nicaragua's revolutionary past, including its remnants, altogether.

The anti-imperialist solidarity I encountered produced its own set of complications and contradictions. Revealing this complexity also meant discovering that internationalist solidarity cannot be reduced to a single denominator and that conducting ethnography on timely political phenomena is to dwell on a simultaneity of opposing views. Residents providing financial donations to the renovation of the Nicaragua mural did not necessarily mean to declare support for the current regime; their contributions were much more a response to their social status in reunited Germany than a statement about current Nicaraguan politics. Then again, raising awareness about Nicaragua's recent bloodshed was much more a claim about Nicaragua's revolutionaries clinging to power than a statement about the GDR's tradition of solidarity politics.

The trials and tribulations around the Nicaragua mural demonstrate that internationalist solidarity, in its multiple and simultaneous forms, has remained a vital form of 21st-century politics. (Internationalist) alliances have been severed, adjusted, and mended, but the virtue of coming together to oppose imperialist ideology remains central to their mode of operating. Furthermore, this article sheds light on how activism, under the umbrella of solidarity, is a productive process that persistently reinstates fostered alliances. These, too, are constantly renegotiated and remain a pivotal force in our global political arena.

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ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

Vol.11 – Issue 1 [July 2024]

Political Caricature to Mobilize Solidarity Through Humor

Pedro Molina

Nicaraguan cartoonist, journalist, and illustrator

Accepted: 28 June 2024 / Published online: 31 July 2024

Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counter-balancing mainstream understandings of development.

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Pedro Molina[1]

Political Caricature to Mobilize Solidarity Through Humor

Introduction

Pedro X. Molina is an internationally acclaimed Nicaraguan cartoonist, journalist, and illustrator who was forced into exile in December 2018 following the Nicaraguan government's crackdown on journalists. He now lives and works in the US. You can find out more about his work on Instagram: PxMolinA.

As part of our special issue, we invited Molina to choose a selection of his works to dialogue with our central themes of past and present European-Latin American solidarities, and the role of artifacts therein. Molina has chosen three caricatures for our special issue, which we include over the coming pages. Reflecting on current socio-political affairs such as Nicaraguan authoritarianism, migration to the US, and memories of violence, his work manages to address these issues with sharpness and rigor.

Rather than incorporating extensive interpretations, we wish to leave space for the images to speak for themselves. Below each image is a brief summary by the artist Molina. We invite you to approach these documents of transnational exile in the spirit of this special issue.

[1] Pedro X. Molina is a cartoonist and illustrator from Nicaragua with more than 20 years of experience working for media in Nicaragua and worldwide. His cartoons, caricatures, editorial illustrations, and comics have been printed or published online in many major publications such as Politico, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and Courier International, as well as appearing daily on the exiled Nicaraguan news outlet Confidencial.com.ni. Molina was awarded the 2018 Excellence in Journalism award (category: cartoons) by the Inter-American Press Association. He was forced to flee Nicaragua as a consequence of his activities in 2018. Pedro X. Molina has contributed three cartoons to this special issue.

Figure 1: Yes, Sir. Pedro X. Molina, 2024. Printed with permission of the artist.

The caricature in figure 1 portrays Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, symbolizing the incongruence of the supposed 'nationalist pride' of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, Sandinista National Liberation Front). It highlights the irony of a leadership that claims to defend the country from the influence of foreigners, yet seeks to exploit those same relations for personal and political gain.

Figure 2: Migrant Child. Pedro X. Molina, 2021. Printed with permission of the artist.

This second piece (figure 2) is a cartoon I made when the case of a 10-year-old Nicaraguan child, who was wandering around lost in the Texan desert, went viral on social media2. The process of creating this helped me think through the ways migrant-receiving countries such as the US, where I'm residing now, deal with migrant issues. This is especially relevant in the context of the so-called US-Mexican border crisis.

Figure 3: GuerNicaragua. Pedro X. Molina, 2021. Printed with permission of the artist.

[2] Brito, Christopher: Video shows 10-year-old boy abandoned near U.S. border asking officer for help. April 7, 2021: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/boy-abandoned-us-mexico-border-officer-help/ (access June 22, 2024)

This last cartoon (figure 3) is a parody of Picasso's famous “Guernica.” I took advantage not only of the proximity of the work's name to that of my country [Nicaragua], but also of the context of civilians living through contexts of armed violence. I added several details of Nicaraguan reality to the original work without altering those that are repeated in both situations, such as the assassination of children. The elements I added include the national Nicaraguan blue-white flag, the ornament-like trees lining the streets of Managua, snipers positioned on top of buildings to shoot unarmed protesters, and the so-called mortero, a type of primitive short gun made from a tube to shoot fireworks upwards.

ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

Vol.11 – Issue 1 [July 2024]

Changing the Picture and Music for Hope: Cultural Expressions of Solidarity in the UK with El Salvador at the End of the Cold War

Pablo Bradbury, Emily McIndoe & Andrew Redden

University of Greenwich International College, UK

University of Liverpool, UK

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Pablo Bradbury[1], Emily McIndoe[2] & Andrew Redden[3]

Changing the Picture and Music for Hope: Cultural Expressions of Solidarity in the UK with El Salvador at the End of the Cold War

Abstract

This paper focuses on UK-based cultural expressions of international solidarity with El Salvador either side of the end of the Cold War and El Salvador's civil war. The article centres on a mural titled Changing the Picture, painted in Greenwich from 1985, which depicts a message of hope for overcoming state repression sponsored by multinational capital and Western powers; and Music for Hope, an ongoing musical education programme beginning in 1996-7 based in the Bajo Lempa, a coastal region of El Salvador, but set up and supported by a British solidarity network. After exploring the political meanings and

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[1] Pablo Bradbury holds a PhD in History from the University of Liverpool, which examined the emergence and mobilisation of liberation Christianity in Argentina. His research more broadly focuses on left-wing political culture and social movements in Latin America's Cold War, exploring religion, international solidarity and responses to state repression. Currently, he teaches at the University of Greenwich and is the programme leader for the international foundation year in Law and Social Science at the University of Greenwich's International College. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1837-6431.

[2] Emily McIndoe was awarded her PhD in History at the University of Liverpool (2023), which utilized oral history and archival research to explore the relationship between Britain and El Salvador from 1970 – 2009, focusing on foreign policy, humanitarian aid, and solidarity networks.

[3] Andrew Redden teaches and researches Latin American history at the University of Liverpool. He holds a PhD from the University of Liverpool and his academic career began as a specialist in indigenous American cosmovisions during the colonial period (particularly those of the Andean region), but more recently his research interests have also incorporated a much more contemporary outlook focussing on resistance to state repression, liberation theology, community development, solidarity and counter-violence cultures. He is currently working on a documentary history of Music for Hope, a community education programme based in the Bajo Lempa region of El Salvador and is a trustee of the charity that supports it. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2299-0773.

initiatives of solidarity in the UK during the Salvadoran civil war, we analyse Changing the Picture's central message of anti-imperialism, the depiction of collective popular struggle and the artwork's place within the cultural politics of London in the mid-1980s. The paper then examines how the communitarian message of popular democracy present in the mural has been articulated in new cultural forms by Music for Hope, particularly through the latter's pedagogical, horizontal and prefigurative practice of teaching music to children and adolescents and encouraging the formation of musical groups. As such, this paper foregrounds cultural and artistic practice as a central but underexplored dimension of international solidarity. Highlighting the literature on the shift in political culture, produced by the culmination of the Cold War, from a frame foregrounding revolutionary or political struggle to one centred on trauma, we explore how Changing the Picture and Music for Hope reflect different historical conditions. If the solidarity depicted in Changing the Picture reflected the final years of a period in which the revolutionary horizon was considered possible, Music for Hope emerged at a time that forced the initiative to confront the traumatic legacies of the civil war years. Despite these differences, the article argues that there is far more that connects the two examples, especially their emphasis on community agency. In doing so, we show that artistic expression can not only represent a powerful medium through which solidarity politics are communicated, condensing both local and international contexts in a radical vision of hope, but that cultural action can also structure the participatory practice frequently at the heart of international solidarity politics.

Keywords: El Salvador, international solidarity, murals, London, art activism, community music, prefigurative politics, Bajo Lempa

Introduction[4]

Down a quiet street in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the *Changing the Picture* mural strikes a discordant chord with the triumphalist and tourist-trodden district of the Cutty Sark and the old Royal Naval College, both just five minutes' walk away. The artwork fills the exterior wall of a block of council flats, many of which are now privately owned, but is faded, littered with defunct satellites and faced by communal bins that do not fit inside the brick structure built for them. Although it is now virtually impossible to make out the detail of the mural, the words 'El Salvador' remain clearly visible. *Changing the Picture* was

[4] Our thanks are due to Roland Clark, Dylan Bradbury, Samira Marty, Anna Grimaldi and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful thoughts and suggestions.

designed and painted in 1985 by a team led by the British artist Jane Gifford, commissioned by the London-based El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) and funded by the Ken Livingstone-led Greater London Council (GLC). It depicts a scene from the civil war in El Salvador, envisioning the popular overcoming of domestic and international forces of repression – among which are included Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan – with symbolism of the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) subtly in the background of the Salvadoran people. Despite its poor present condition, the artwork survives, on the one hand, as testimony to an internationalist politics and remnant of Cold War solidarity with its implicit revolutionary associations at a key moment in El Salvador's history and, on the other hand, an example of the production of an artistic milieu at a conjuncture in the politics of London.

In contrast, the community education programme, Music for Hope, based in the Bajo Lempa in El Salvador but with a support network in both Catalunya and the UK, offers a different iteration of art-based solidarity that materialised after the civil war and in the context of an ongoing 'violence of democracy' (Montoya, 2018). Initially piloted in 1996 and formally established in 1997, it offered a creative outlet for young people suffering from the trauma of civil war. Its aims soon evolved into one of 'generating self-perpetuating, non-violent culture amongst young people in a national and regional context of ever-increasing social violence and criminality' (Music for Hope, no date).[5] Although only eleven years separates them, the apparent temporal and political differences may seem stark between a mural centring on popular anti-imperialism in the twilight of the Cold War and a prefigurative, community-focused and pedagogical music project established in the early years of neoliberal hegemony.[6] Certainly, much has been

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[5] Music for Hope (https://musicforhope.org.uk/) was founded by Katherine Rogers (a British musician) in 1996 – it began initially as a pilot project. After the success of the pilot project, she worked to raise the funds to make music education a more permanent part of Bajo Lempa life. She was helped by the generosity of a UK solidarity network that Katherine was part of, but also by the consistent support of solidarity partners from the community of Igualada in Catalunya. The administration of Music for Hope was carried out locally in the Bajo Lempa, but fundraising was continued in the UK and Catalunya via a small team of volunteers led by Rogers. In 2016 the UK branch of Music for Hope was formally registered as a charity (no: 1167556; https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5073909). It continues to be small in scope with six volunteer trustees, a UK-based coordinator and two more volunteers. This article will examine the early years of Music for Hope prior to it becoming a more formalised organisation and then registered charity.

[6] By prefigurative politics, we refer to the notion of ideology as immanent in a group or social movement's practice, so that the ideals and principles of the future society toward which a movement strives are enacted in its organisational forms and practice. This is
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made of the transformation of political imaginaries generated by the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of revolutionary and utopian politics and the advent of what Enzo Traverso calls 'left-wing melancholia' (Traverso, 2016). Such a historical break, of course, takes on its own unique dimensions in El Salvador, with the end of the civil war but the continuation of violence in other forms. And we may assume a connection between the historical break that separates these two art-based manifestations of international solidarity and the clear difference in form in which the political message is communicated. Nevertheless, this article will argue that these examples of culture-based solidarity remain linked by the mutual confrontation and resistance to civil war violence and its legacies through a radical vision of participatory politics. International solidarity was not merely memorialised but reactivated and reconfigured by Music for Hope in a way that continued to foreground collective agency through prefigurative practice.

This article foregrounds the notion of arts-based solidarity practices, a subject often left unexplored in the burgeoning academic literature on twentieth century international solidarity with Latin America, despite a widespread interest in political culture and art in the continent. In the case of international solidarity with El Salvador, the literature has a heavy US focus (Todd, 2017; Godfriend, 2018; Power and Charlip, 2009), and is often subsumed into discussions of solidarity with Latin America more broadly (Stites Mor, 2013). Non-US studies are few and far between (Janssens, 2020), and very little research exists on British solidarity with El Salvador (McIndoe, 2023). Certainly, the historiography on Latin America's Cold War has begun to foreground to a much greater extent the ways in which culture and cultural production became a crucial terrain for intense ideological and political struggles (Franco, 2002; Iber, 2015). Moreover, much has been made of the politicisation of 'all aspects of social and cultural life' from the 1960s in Latin America, with the new left's ethos and aesthetic permeating much of the political radicalism through to the 1980s (Gould, 2009).

Art and music have been allocated a privileged role in left-wing and popular political culture more broadly in the continent. The Cuban Revolution and the diffusion of its internationalism through the Tricontinental influenced the aesthetic and cultural forms of anti-imperialism across Latin America and more widely (Randall, 2017; Grimaldi and Gukelberger, 2023). Meanwhile, muralism as a democratic art form that combines aesthetics and social critique has occupied a symbolic place of importance, from the muralist movement in the Mexican

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commonly associated with movements such as the Zapatista Army for National Liberation, the alter-globalisation movement and Occupy. See for example David Graeber (2002) and Marina Sitrin (2006).

revolutionary period c.1921-55, with its three figureheads Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, to the *brigadas muralistas* that flowered in Chile during the 1960s and 1970s (Rochfort, 1993; Folfarait, 1998; Rolston, 2011). In El Salvador itself, street art has a history as a prominent form of political communication, social critique and memorialisation, as well as 'a legitimate voice of the masses' (Smith, 1994, p. 156). With the diffusion of repressive military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, art and music also became vectors of resistance and opposition. Notable here, for example, are the coded protests in Argentine *rock nacional* and Brazilian popular music's role as a terrain for contesting the dictatorship and hegemonic ideas (Wilson and Favoretto, 2015; Leu, 2006). At the same time, art and music could take the form of an exiled utopian politics, as in the international resonance of *Inti Illimani* and *Quilapayun*, who personified and communicated Chilean popular struggles, helping to transform Chilean popular culture. Subsequent to Pinochet's 1973 coup this art and music became the mouthpiece 'of a cruel historical defeat' (McSherry, 2017, p. 15). Art could simultaneously assume a testimonial and denunciatory role under authoritarianism, as in the case of Chilean *arpilleras*, many of which were exported through international human rights networks and helped establish a bond between solidarity movements and political prisoners (Adams, 2013; see also Marty, 2024 in this special issue).

This article builds on the growing literature on art and music in international solidarity by examining two expressions related to El Salvador either side of a distinct historical break. Various authors have examined how the end of the Cold War ushered in the decline of revolutionary imaginaries, transforming political subjectivities and cultural memory and generating new forms of organising. For example, the historical frames of martyrdom and heroism as components in the construction of cultural memory – crucial for the mobilisation of revolutionary and utopian projects – were supplanted after 1989 by apparently depoliticising discourses of trauma and innocent victimhood (Traverso, 2016; Jeffery and Candea, 2006).[7] Of course, local complexities and unique characteristics must be acknowledged, particularly in Latin America where the so-called Pink Tide partially revitalised transformative discourses. In fact, heroic discourses in countries like Nicaragua were never fully displaced, and its complex legacies have fed anti-authoritarian critiques of Daniel Ortega, the old leader of *Sandinismo,* through which many of the transformative hopes were previously channelled (Francis, 2012; Goett and Bran Aragón, 2021; Rocha et al, 2023). In El Salvador, the end of the civil war and the peace accords of 1992, together with the pragmatic metamorphosis of the FMLN into a democratic socialist party, coincided with and

[7] Trauma, for the purposes of this article, is taken to concern both individuals and communities andrelates to painful episodes that mark collective memories and contribute to the formation of identities. (Fassin and Rechtman, 2009).

was closely linked to the historical break of the end of the Cold War (Guardado Torrez and Moodie, 2020).

Analysing *Changing the Picture* and Music for Hope thus allows us to reflect on how this historical break helped shape differing arts-based solidarity responses to violence in El Salvador. This article outlines the former as an example of critical, democratic art that resonated with popular transformative horizons and intervened politically to denounce anti-imperialism and emergent neoliberalism. By highlighting imperialism and multinational capital, the mural connects the contexts of both El Salvador, as the site of transformative struggle against imperialist violence, and London, as one of the world system's economic centres where GLC-funded muralism was also immersed in a local battle against neoliberalism (see also Marty, 2024).

On the other hand, Music for Hope emerged as a community-based project that reflected a different historical moment, one of neoliberal consolidation and Salvadorans processing the trauma of the civil war. In this context of the mid-1990s, revolutionary politics as depicted in the mural was no longer a viable part of a present mobilisation against an ascendent neoliberal globalisation or a future horizon, but – as neoliberalism established itself as the hegemonic model of a unipolar world – represented a failed struggle of the past. Nevertheless, although neoliberal hegemony represented something of a displacement of the political from wider culture, the non-partisan nature of Music for Hope and its response to trauma should not be mistaken for a depoliticising tendency. Instead, the popular, participatory vision depicted in the mural is reassumed and reconfigured by an educational programme, whose politics of solidarity emerges as one of prefigurative, horizontal praxis that foregrounds an ethics of non-violence.

In exploring these two cultural expressions of solidarity either side of El Salvador's civil war and wider Cold War, the article makes two significant contributions. First, on a historiographical level, it begins to address a dearth in the research on El Salvador by building understandings of the international dynamics of the country's recent history, as well as the ways in which questions of violence and trauma were confronted through international solidarity. Such a perspective feeds into a growing body of literature that foregrounds Latin America's global Cold War (Field, Krepp & Pettinà, 2020; Van Ommen, 2023; Harmer, 2014; Booth, 2021). Thus, El Salvador's global dynamics can be situated not only in relation to US dominance – as important as that is – but also in a wider setting of transnational grassroots mobilisation that occurred in various ideological and organisational forms and iterations. The second contribution of this comparative analysis lies in the combination of cultural analysis, transnational history and political memory. The case studies presented demonstrate that artistic

expressions often form integral components of solidarity activism, through shaping communication strategies, memory construction and even community-building. Examining these cultural expressions tells us something deeper about solidarity politics themselves, particularly how they relate to international society, domestic politics and the wider historical moment. And in highlighting the significance of the end of the Cold War and El Salvador's civil war, the article explores how historical ruptures can reshape the political and organisational forms that transnational solidarity assumes.[8]

A Note on Methodology

This article uses data drawn from three different, yet interrelated, research strands. The first is an ongoing history of Music for Hope and the Bajo Lempa communities in which it operates; the second is a history of aid and solidarity connections between Britain and El Salvador; the third, a much smaller project, relates specifically to the *Changing the Picture* mural. Research data for the history of Music for Hope has been gathered over seven, month-long fieldtrips carried out since 2013. The researcher, Andrew Redden, became a volunteer for Music for Hope in 2013 and then a trustee in 2016 when it converted to a registered charity. This academic work engages Participatory Action Research (PAR), a research methodology common to studies of community-based organisations in Latin America (see particularly Winton, 2007). It draws primarily on both cumulative and longitudinal oral-history interviews with past and present participants of Music for Hope, as well as their family members and associates, and community leaders and elders and these interviews are both cumulative and longitudinal.[9] This article draws from a selection of relevant interviews from these field trips and will be engaging in qualitative analysis of this information.

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[8] It may well be that Nayib Bukele's regime (2019-present), situated as it is alongside closely related regional and global developments, heralds a new historical break. This is for other scholars to draw out once the dust has settled. In this context, this article might offer clues as to how a historical and cultural approach can help us understand the ways in which transnational solidarity continues to reflect, respond to and engage with the everchanging needs and cleavages of local and national communities into the present.

[9] Communities in the Bajo Lempa are highly organised and have a formal and democratic committee-based leadership structure. For the purposes of this article, 'community leaders' refers to those who are currently in leadership positions in the community. 'Community elders' refers to those who were adults and leaders when the Bajo Lempa communities were founded by returning refugees in 1991-2. The author's ongoing work with Music for Hope and his familiar presence in the Bajo Lempa communities has facilitated his access to willing interviewees.

The second investigation, on British-El Salvador aid and solidarity connections, triangulates government and solidarity-based archival sources and interviews with UK-based solidarity activists carried out between 2019-23.[10] Some of these archives were personal collections, others were private institutional archives (such as that of Music for Hope) whilst the remainder were in the public domain. In the process of conducting this research, the author, Emily McIndoe, also began volunteering with Music for Hope and has subsequently become a trustee. Again, following the methodology of PAR has proven mutually beneficial to the research and the charity.

The final strand of research contributing to this article – regarding the mural itself – was drawn from interviews by the authors Pablo Bradbury and Emily McIndoe (carried out in 2023) with the mural artist Jane Gifford, and the person who commissioned *Changing the Picture*, Chris Hudson.[11] These individual research strands were brought together by a public engagement activity – an open workshop held at St Alfege's primary school in November 2023 – involving an encounter between members of the public, representatives from Music for Hope, the mural artist team (Gifford and Hudson) about the mural, Music for Hope and El Salvador (past and present).[12] The connections made during the workshop discussion and in subsequent reflection gave rise to ideas that developed into this article.

Civil War and International Solidarity

El Salvador's political past has historically been defined by gross inequality, perpetuated by continued repressive military rule between 1932 and 1979 (Stanley, 1996; Williams and Walter, 1997; Negroponte, 2012; McClintock, 1985; Latin America Bureau, 1979; Dunkerley, 1982). State-sponsored repression escalated significantly during the 1970s, countered by the increasing mobilisation

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[10] See McIndoe (2023, pp.25-36) for a detailed discussion of the challenges and methodology relating to UK solidarity archives (particularly those that are informal or not curated), and oral history interviews with solidarity activists.

[11] Both Jane Gifford and Chris Hudson are open about their interest and participation in London mural projects and were reached through information gathered from a previous oral history project that Gifford participated in: 'For Walls with Tongues', https://www.forwallswithtongues.org.uk/.

[12] The event was advertised in the local Greenwich estate, in the school and on social media – all were welcome. It took place on 10 November 2023. The participant group was small (12 people) but friendly and open. The informal nature of the discussion opened up a number of useful avenues to explore further.

of popular movements and the establishment of an armed opposition movement (Byrne, 1996, p. 17). In October 1980, the five main revolutionary groups formed a coalition – the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) – which ‘accepted the use of arms as a possibility for revolution’; and although the coalition shared a Marxist analytical framework, and encompassed a spectrum of different political perspectives on the left, overall it ‘believed it was possible to achieve democracy, social justice and progress for the benefit of the popular sectors within the limits of capitalism’ (Allison and Alvarez, 2012, p. 95).[13]

The formation of the FMLN marked El Salvador’s descent into a bitter civil war in 1980. This conflict was responsible for over 75,000 deaths and around 1.5 million people (roughly 25% of the entire population) becoming refugees after being forcibly displaced internally and externally (Gammage, 2007; Menjívar and Gómez Cervantes, 2018). By far the majority of, and the most massive, human rights violations were committed by government (and government-sponsored) security forces – a situation which was undoubtedly worsened by US intervention, which began with economic aid in 1957 and continued to increase until the end of the civil war (Landau, 1993, p. 72 and p. 85).[14] In 1979, US aid to El Salvador amounted to around $89 million, but, following the outbreak of civil war, this figure had reached $523 million by 1981, which was also one of the worst years for human rights violations (Crandall, 2016, pp. 216-217). US intervention was heavily criticised by human rights campaigners and solidarity activists for prolonging the war and enabling the Salvadoran government’s widespread human rights abuses (Gomez, 2003, p. 112).

In Britain, the outbreak of civil war in El Salvador resulted in the ending of (already minimal) bilateral aid to the Salvadoran government. The violence and disregard for human rights was the focus of a wave of protests and activism from a cross-section of the British public, supported by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International.[15] This peaked in 1984, when, in response to the election of President Duarte – El Salvador’s first civilian president in fifty years – British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced that her government would be resuming bilateral aid to El Salvador, starting with £100,000 for civilian supplies and, more contentiously, military training scholarships for ‘one or two […]

[14] For one of the most notorious human rights violations committed by the Salvadoran state against its people, but certainly not the only one, see Binford (2016).

[15] Amnesty International published several reports on human rights abuses in El Salvador (Amnesty International, 1975; Amnesty International, 1984). For further reading on Britain’s response to the civil war in El Salvador, see McIndoe (2023).

suitably qualified Salvadoran officers'.[16] Despite human rights campaigners vociferously objecting to this announcement, the Thatcher government continued its support of the Salvadoran government for the rest of the decade, although, notably, it did not expand its aid programme beyond the 1984 announcement. British involvement in the Salvadoran conflict was not only limited to bilateral aid and human rights concerns, however; British international aid organisations, including CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), Oxfam, War on Want, and Christian Aid, organised campaigns and appeals to fund their work in Central America to help those displaced and affected by violence (O'Sullivan, 2021; MacDonald, 1990). In addition, the development of the El Salvador Solidarity Movement in Britain was essential in raising awareness of the conflict and rallying public support for the people of El Salvador. The movement consisted of three main organisations – the El Salvador Committee for Human Rights (ESCHR), the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) and the El Salvador Network (ESNET). While ESCHR and ELSSOC were both formed in the early 1980s following the outbreak of civil war in El Salvador, ESCHR took a non-partisan approach to campaigning on human rights in order to appeal to a wide cross-section of the British public, whereas ELSSOC was overt in its partisan support for the FMLN and its armed struggle (McIndoe, 2023, pp. 160-164). ESNET, in contrast, was a post-war organisation, formed in the 1990s which took a more personal, friendship-centred approach to solidarity. Despite their difference in approach, all three organisations embraced cultural expressions of solidarity with El Salvador; both ELSSOC and ESCHR utilised cultural events (art exhibitions, music tours, film showings) to emphasise the impact of human rights violations on the Salvadoran people. ELSSOC commissioned the *Changing the Picture* mural in Greenwich, for example, and Music for Hope was one of several ESNET member organisations and initiatives that emphasised cultural links as a means of cultivating solidarity.

Changing the Picture: ELSSOC and the Political Solidarity of Muralism

[16] Although Duarte was a civilian president, the Salvadoran military retained significant influence and power, with the Ministry of Defence, for example, remaining under the direct control of military officers linked to the High Command. Additionally, due to the difficulty of identifying suitable candidates for the scholarships that could be proven to have not been involved with human rights abuses, only one Salvadoran cadet received military training in Britain. Margaret Thatcher, 'Letter to President Duarte' 6th August 1984 pp.1-2. TNA: FCO 99-1936: Military Training for Salvadoran Officers.

ELSSOC was formally established in 1980 as a response to the FMLN-FDR's call for international solidarity.[17] The original aims of the campaign were to 'support the struggle of the Salvadoran people', denounce 'all intervention by foreign powers in the situation in El Salvador' and condemn the 'reformist façade of the Salvadoran government and continuing repression'.[18] ELSSOC was created as the British branch of the FMLN-FDR's international solidarity network, guided by Salvadoran FMLN-FDR representatives, and was a clear expression of partisan political solidarity, entirely transparent in its belief in the necessity of and support for armed struggle in El Salvador.[19] This was in stark contrast to the ESCHR, which existed alongside ELSSOC but remained determinedly non-partisan. Both organisations drew from both the methods and personnel of different branches of the Chile solidarity movement (the Chile Solidarity Campaign and the Chile Committee for Human Rights), established nearly a decade earlier (McIndoe, 2023, pp.156-60). In terms of structure, ELSSOC was based in London, and was supported by a number of local committees around the UK.[20] The campaign was divided into various smaller commissions, some of which were permanent bodies (including the Finance Commission, the Local Committees Commission and the Press Commission), and others were more transient, depending on campaign priorities and volunteer enthusiasm.[21]

The Cultural Commission was one of the more permanent aspects of the campaign, although its work and composition varied throughout the decade. Its overarching aim was to 'raise the profile of what was happening in El Salvador to a British audience' in the hope of reaching people who would not normally attend overtly political events.[22] In 1983, at ELSSOC's Annual General Meeting in

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[17] ELSSOC, 'El Salvador Solidarity Campaign – Objectives' 1980, p.1. U DX185-2-12: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) Part II, Hull History Centre Archives.

[18] ELSSOC, 'El Salvador Solidarity Campaign – Objectives' 1980, p.1. U DX185-2-12: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) Part II, Hull History Centre Archives.

[19] In September 1982, ELSSOC was requested to double its monthly donation, in order to fund improvements to the FMLN's weapons arsenal. FDR Commission for Finance, 'Letter to El Salvador Solidarity Campaign' 21st September 1982, pp.1-2. U DX185-2-12: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) Part II, Hull History Centre Archives. For more detail on the links between and control of ELSSOC by the FMLN-FDR see McIndoe (2023, pp.185-89).

[20] ELSSOC's membership was predominantly made up of British people with a strong interest in Latin America, although its strategy was driven by Salvadoran FMLN-FDR representatives in the UK.

[21] ELSSOC, 'Minutes of a Meeting of Activists' 7th March 1980, p.3. U DX185-2-12: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign (ELSSOC) Part II, Hull History Centre Archives.

[22] Interview with Chris Hudson, 2023; ELSSOC, 'Minutes of El Salvador Annual General Meeting held in Bristol on January 22nd/23rd 1983', 22nd January 1983, p.8. Hull History Centre, UDX185-2-12.

Bristol, the commission's priorities were identified as needing 'to get more English "cultural" people involved in solidarity work', as well as building closer links with ELSSOC's local committees by organising cultural events in their areas.[23] Chris Hudson, who led the Commission in the mid-1980s, recalled that the Commission 'translated Salvadoran rebel poetry, and published about six [poems]' and co-ordinated several British tours for the Salvadoran band *Yolocamba I'ta*, who were hosted by ELSSOC volunteers around the country.[24] Other work included supporting an exhibition of Salvadoran children's drawings in Islington Town Hall, which was opened by cartoonist Ralph Steadman.[25] In the available archival documents for ELSSOC, however, the Cultural Commission goes relatively unseen, with only a few scattered mentions of its activities. At the 1982 annual meeting, the Commission discussed its role in organising a festival in London, with the slogan 'For Self-Determination, Non-Intervention', and its development of the film *Decision to Win ('The First Fruits'),* which they hoped to show at Edinburgh Festival.[26] In 1983, the Commission reported its aspirations to produce a mural in Deptford, an area of South London, noting that it had approached the GLC for funding. After this point, the Cultural Commission's work ceased to be included in ELSSOC's records and the mural itself is notably missing from ELSSOC's subsequent bulletins and campaign updates.[27] This was despite the fact that the mural was produced with the help of GLC funding.

Hudson, himself a mural enthusiast, approached the artist Jane Gifford with a proposal to create the artwork. A team consisting of artists and members of the Cultural Commission met several times to discuss the content, while Gifford led the design. The wall on Creek Road was selected not out of any organic link with El Salvador or Latin America, but because one of the Cultural Commission's members knew the area and identified a suitable wall. After pitching the idea to

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[23] ELSSOC, 'Minutes of El Salvador Annual General Meeting held in Bristol on January 22nd/23rd 1983', 22 January 1983, p.8. Hull History Centre, UDX185-2-12

[24] *Yolocamba I'ta* was a Salvadoran folk group influenced by the Chilean *Nueva Canción* (New Song) movement. They formed in 1975 and used music to build international solidarity with El Salvador (Fairley, 1985). Interview with Chris Hudson, 2023.

[25] Interview with Chris Hudson, 2023.

[26] Updates about supporter activities were printed in ELSSOC's internal bulletin (*El Guanaco*) as opposed to the external ELSSOC newsletter, which are not available in existing archives but may be held in personal collections unknown to the authors. Consequently, to date it is unclear whether or not *The First Fruits* film was shown at Edinburgh Festival in 1982. ELSSOC, 'Minutes of Meeting of National Co-Ordinating Committee, April 5th, 1982', 5th April 1982, p.3. Hull History centre UDX185-2-12

[27] This is characteristic of ELSOC's archive as a whole. There are significant gaps and inconsistencies in the available documentation.

the Royal Borough of Greenwich, whose Labour council responded positively, the team proceeded to canvas local residents' opinions on the sketch. According to Hudson and Gifford, the colourful design and hopeful imagery were effective in gaining the consent of the building's occupants.[28] The GLC head of arts, meanwhile, agreed to provide modest funding, which would cover the mural's creation using emulsion paint, as well as the costs for a team of four artists.

In addition to the El Salvador solidarity context, *Changing the Picture* can be understood as emerging at the tail end of a broader exterior-wall art scene and wider cultural politics in London, beginning in the mid-1960s and ending with Thatcher's closure of the GLC (Wiedel-Kaufmann, 2020). Community arts projects began to flourish in the 1960s and 1970s, closely linked to the constellation of new left politics and aesthetics. Initially, much of the content of such initiatives confronted questions of class and the dynamics of inner-city community marginalisation. London murals were firmly embedded in this community arts milieu, and although Gifford had not previously created any overtly political work, she was no exception: 'I guess it was sort of like my tribe. It was like people working in that area were all pretty left and it was all combined with working in community groups, community arts, you know, there's community theatre going on'.[29]

Sam Wetherell (2013) claims that community arts underwent a process of institutionalisation through Arts Council and, from 1981, GLC funding. This institutionalisation included the gradual replacement of class-centred politics by an emphasis on ethnic, racial, gender and sexual community identity. Owen Hatherley (2020) alternatively situates the socially engaged mural scene and politicised arts in the first half of the 1980s, as intertwined with a novel iteration of municipal socialist politics. Ken Livingstone's GLC (1981-1986), 'the new left in power', foregrounded anti-racism and cultural praxis alongside class struggle, opening up the creative industries and institutional spaces to ethnic minorities and subcultural identities (Hatherley, 2020). Thus, by the 1980s, the new left had coalesced in an arts scene channelled both from above and below, from institutional networks with significant resources and from grassroots, community-based networks. Culture was a major vector of radicalism embedded firmly within anti-racist and anti-neoliberal politics.

Changing the Picture, therefore, was painted at a time when murals represented a democratic art form, deliberately public and outside the confines of enclosed galleries and private collections. Its form lent particularly well to social or critical themes, and the London mural scene at this time was 'engaged in a cultural revolution in an entirely changed world' (Kenna and Lobb, 2019, p. 6). Yet the

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[28] Interview with Chris Hudson, 2023; Interview with Jane Gifford, 2023.
[29] Interview with Jane Gifford, 2023.

changing world they had to engage with was not necessarily positive. Various murals at the turn of the 1980s, most notably the *Cable Street Mural* (painted 1979-1983) that depicted the famous local anti-fascist resistance against Oswald Mosley, appeared to respond to a renewed far-right presence and the racist narratives of Enoch Powell repackaged and assimilated into Thatcherism. Meanwhile, from the 1980s, and especially following significant GLC arts funding in 1983 designated for their 'Peace Year' campaign, London's murals featured recurring motifs of anti-war sentiments and, reflecting the mass mobilisations led by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, anxieties over nuclear apocalypse (Wiedel-Kaufmann, 2020; for the 'Peace Year', see Atashroo, 2019). This was especially the case with Brian Barnes' striking and ominous *Nuclear Dawn* (1981) in Brixton and *Riders of the Apocalypse* (1983) in New Cross, the latter of which featured haggard depictions of Ronald Reagan, Thatcher, Michael Heseltine and Yuri Andropov circling the planet on cruise missiles.

Figure 1. *Changing the Picture*, original design.

Changing the Picture, painted rather late on in this generation of mural artwork, thus occupies a place within an existing, politicised cultural movement.[30] However, the London murals tended to directly confront local cleavages of class, race and community, and its internationalism came through as one linked to Thatcher and other belligerent world leaders posing global threats. *Changing the Picture* distinguishes itself in two key ways. First, the mural highlighted British involvement in a specific conflict abroad – the Salvadoran civil war – locating this denunciation alongside its opposition to the forces of multinational capital that feature as economic agents of imperialist violence. And second, such a depiction of direct Thatcherite complicity in a conflict in Central America challenged the political subjectivity of London's politicised mural scene, much of which tended to foreground local community or history and anti-racism, or opposition to nuclear weapons as a global threat. *Changing the Picture*, in contrast, connects the London mural movement with a distinct form of transnational solidarity politics, which centred on the transformative mobilisation of people far away from the UK. Here, the Salvadoran people acted as a collective agent of liberation, in direct confrontation with capitalism and imperialism.

The mural is partitioned into two parts. In grey monochrome, a smaller section of the scene on the left hand side depicts the forces of imperialism and oppression. As a Salvadoran general operates an anonymous soldier as a marionette, three further figures reach out to control the puppet's cross brace: big business, represented by a man with a bowler hat, a cigar and dollar bills overflowing from his pocket; Thatcher, dressed up as Britannia, but holding a handbag and wearing a pearl necklace, a nod to imperialist nostalgia decorated with contemporary elite style; and Reagan, a sheriff with his sleeves rolled up, head cocked back and with a wrinkled grimace. Behind the latter line up symbols of multinational capital and the power of the metropolis: a robot, the Coca Cola logo and a skyscraper resembling the Chrysler building.

The larger portion of the mural is taken up by a colourful, idyllic rural community, and the backdrop is filled with El Salvador's volcanic mountains, a warm sky and fertile land. The community features people with modest clothes, sowing the fields alongside grazing brahman cattle, preparing food and working together. Some

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[30] The painted mural can be seen here: https://www.forwallswithtongues.org.uk/projects/changing-the-picture-exterior-mural-for-the-el-salvador-solidarity-campaign-1985/. The mural's current state can be seen here: https://alondoninheritance.com/london-photography/the-sad-fate-of-two-greenwich-murals/ (accessed 24/06/2024).

people overlook the scene from the top floor of the wooden structure of a cooperative, called 'Vida Nueva' (meaning 'New Life'), alluding to an optimistic, egalitarian political horizon. At the back of the cooperative can be made out a poster of Farabundo Martí, the hero of the FMLN, indicating the community's affinity with the revolutionaries. On the ground floor, a class is in progress in the community school, foregrounding the role of education in transformative politics that has been central to projects like Music for Hope. Most of the community members form a line that stretches out into the distance, collectively rolling up the grey map beneath the forces of repression and literally turning the page of history. This section of the mural therefore represents the people as a political subject.

Just as the style is figurative and explicit, the mural's politics are visible and simplified, with the clear message of Salvadoran masses working for peace against reactionary forces of oppression. The dualisms appear unambiguous: violence set against cooperation, ostentatious wealth against humble simplicity, multinational corporations against worker cooperativism, the agro-industrial complex against small-scale traditional farming and the metropolis against the rural community. By including Thatcher alongside Reagan in creating war, the design highlights the artwork's relevance to its audience and reasserts the formula of belligerent alliance featured in other London murals – but this time in a Central American context rather than either the UK or a global context. Thus, despite thematic links and broadly sharing the cultural and political space of a wider London mural constellation, *Changing the Picture* is somewhat unusual in bearing relatively little relation to the communal self-identity and heritage of its location, reflecting more closely that of Latin American transnational solidarity networks.

The mural's most striking and radical feature may lie in the designation of historical or political agency, which is clearly assigned to the Salvadoran people as a collective political subject. If Jacques Rancière (2013) is sceptical of critical art that seeks to mobilise an apparently passive audience, he also affirms that the aesthetic act is related to a political act, through which it disrupts the 'distribution of the sensible'. True politics, in this view, involves an act of 'dissensus' that consists in the excluded standing up for themselves, allowing a confrontation against an unequal order or consensus. *Changing the Picture* can be viewed within this conception of political aesthetics, partly as an intervention against Thatcherism and neoliberalism; locally, as part of a wider left-wing cultural movement in London and, internationally, in protest against the global economic model. However, at the same time, and more crucially, the ordinary distribution of political agency is inverted. The forces of imperialism and neoliberal globalisation, including the capital city in which the mural is painted, are overturned and rolled up by a poor population whose decisive weapon is popular, communal mobilisation. Thus, despite the context of an ascendant neoliberal globalisation, and the fact that the Salvadoran revolutionary struggle would only

a decade later become a memory of a faded past, transformative politics and an optimistic horizon remain central to the mural. Ultimately, however, it is the Salvadoran people who are the historical actors, and here they represent hope for the future.

Music for Hope: Trauma and the Reactivation of Solidarity in a Post-War Context

After the 1992 Peace Accords, which marked the end of the conflict in El Salvador, the El Salvador Solidarity Movement experienced something of an identity crisis. Soon after the Accords were signed, the FMLN suffered ideological divisions over its future direction, and those divisions were passed down to ELSSOC – which had always been staunch in its support for the movement – resulting in the campaign struggling to agree on how best to continue its work and, ultimately, splitting in two. ELSSOC continued after the split in a much smaller capacity, run by a handful of volunteers who remained committed to supporting the FMLN politically during its transition. The second group wanted to support the peace process in El Salvador more generally, focusing less on allegiance with the FMLN, and instead on standing in solidarity with communities and the Salvadoran people more directly – an initiative that quickly became known as ESNET. In contrast to ELSSOC, which had a clearly defined structure and hierarchy, ESNET was designed to be a network of organisations and individuals who supported the concept of solidarity based on personal friendships and mutual respect.[31] One of these organisations was Music for Hope, formed in 1996 as a collaboration between Katherine Rogers and young musicians from the Bajo Lempa, a tropical coastal region of El Salvador.

The majority of Bajo Lempa communities were founded towards the end of the civil war by returning refugees who had been forcibly displaced and living in exile in Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua.[32] The camps in Honduras (Mesa Grande and Colomoncagua) were established early in the war as ordinary people fled massacres carried out by state security forces (Cagan and Cagan, 1991; Todd, 2010). For the duration of the war, they were effectively kept under siege by the Honduran military. Although they attempted to grow enough agricultural produce to subsist on the tiny pockets of land they were allowed to access in and around

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[31] ESNET, 'El Salvador Network' *ESNET Bulletin*, June 1997, p.1. Liverpool Latin America Solidarity Archive (LLASA).

[32] Elisabeth Wood (2003) gives a complex analysis of the rural communities that existed in the Bajo Lempa and wider Usulután for the duration of the civil war and which survived to see the returning refugees augment their numbers.

the camps, they still depended heavily on international aid packages, particularly from the UNHCR, whose hierarchical nature caused tensions with other aid organisations and with the refugee communities themselves. Collective organisation was therefore crucial for survival (Cagan and Cagan, 1991, pp. 95-105).[33] Those in Panama, meanwhile, were extremely isolated and located in dense tropical rainforest – which, while a long way from conflict and military repression, presented serious problems in the event of logistics and medical emergencies.[34] Those in Nicaragua were much better supported by the Sandinista government. There, refugees were allowed to form cooperatives and learn from the Sandinista cooperatives already established. They were also given limited technical support.[35]

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought tremendous change for the refugees, as international funding that delivered food and medicines to the camps in Honduras and Panama declined markedly – to the point where those in the camps decided they had to return or risk starvation.[36] Bajo Lempa community members explained, 'there was nothing left for us there. We couldn't have stayed, even if we'd wanted to – which we didn't'.[37] The return to El Salvador of refugees from Honduras in waves over the course of 1989-90, gave encouragement to those in Nicaragua. The defeat of the Sandinista government in the 1990 general elections in Nicaragua, and the country's immediate shift to an IMF-backed neoliberal restructuring programme, gave Salvadoran refugees further incentives to leave, as it signalled that their welcome there was now over (Barba and Martínez, 1997, pp. 87-91; Barba and Martínez, 1999, pp. 77-80).[38] For all the communities in exile, meanwhile, there was an increasing awareness that El Salvador was finally on the brink of significant structural change. It was important, therefore, for them to be present so they could seize the opportunity, if not to rebuild the devastated country themselves, at least to continue to live in the communitarian way that they had been doing for the duration of their exile – this

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[33] Interviews with community elders, 2016. The names and precise communities of all Salvadoran informants interviewed for the purpose of this research have been omitted to protect anonymity. Todd (2010, pp.117-37) analyses the political frictions that existed between different aid agencies and the deftness with which the refugee communities mediated and engaged with these organisations.
[34] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2017.
[35] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2017.
[36] The decision to return was much more complex than we can describe here, with various factors influencing the decisions of the communities in exile, but in essence, the fast-changing international political landscape had profound local effects that accelerated their decisions and actions. See Cagan and Cagan (1991, pp.112-116) and Todd (2010, pp.190-220).
[37] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa 2019.
[38] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa 2019.

time, however, it would be with land that they could call their own and with the ability to sustain themselves.

As a result, the refugees insisted they were going to return together, in the communities they had formed in exile.[39] They had identified fertile and underused lands from large haciendas that they could populate and farm, including in the Bajo Lempa region (Todd, 1991, p.210). This was anathema to the right-wing ARENA government which considered them to be guerrilla supporters and who wanted them to return in small numbers under close military control.[40] As the Salvadoran government prevaricated and raised obstacles, the refugees moved to take direct action despite significant opposition from Salvadoran authorities, the Honduran military and the UNHCR (Todd, 1991, pp.212-216). When the UNHCR (incredibly) and Honduran military threatened to withdraw food and water for the refugees gathered at the border crossing unless they returned to the Mesa Grande camp, for example, they responded by declaring a hunger strike (Todd, 1991, p.215). For those in Nicaragua, this campaign for recognition of their right to return in community led them to occupy the Salvadoran embassy (Barba and Martínez, 1997, pp.96-97).[41] Even after arriving in El Salvador, their struggle was not over. Those from Colomoncagua, Honduras, returned to Morazán, an FMLN-liberated zone, but there was little available land to sustain so many returnees. Those who returned from Nicaragua were reluctantly granted a land-lease in rural Usulután by the Salvadoran government, but there was no water and the land was barren – it was obvious to the returned refugees they could not survive there. After taking collective decisions to move to the fertile and largely abandoned hacienda lands of the lower Lempa river in Usulutan, these recently returned communities broke through military roadblocks, cut down the scrub and founded their cooperatives in a network of communities along the river (Barba and Martínez,

[39] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2017. The reasons why these returning refugees established new communities in the Bajo Lempa rather than returning to their original communities are complex. They are explained in more detail in published testimonies such as Barba and Martínez eds., (1997) translated into English by the Nueva Esperanza Support Group (1999) and Arnaiz Quintana ed., (2012). As stated, the most cited reason is that the communities which had been formed in exile by refugees from diverse parts of El Salvador and overcome many hardships together wanted to stay together in community. Other factors include the fact that the lands that they once held were occupied by others and to go back and reclaim them would provoke conflict. Also, when they returned in 1991, El Salvador was still in a state of civil war. State forces of repression such as the army and state-sponsored death squads still operated in their places of origin.

[40] Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA).

[41] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2017.

1997, pp.106-116).[42] They supported each other and resisted ongoing military harassment intended to intimidate them and drive them out. They worked hard to self-fund and legalise their possession of the land they inhabited via the government body for land redistribution known as ISTA (the Institute for Salvadoran Agrarian Transformation). Some of the communities opted to keep the cooperative and communitarian model that they had learned and developed while in exile. Community members recall those early years and overcoming all the obstacles deliberately put in their path with emotion and pride.[43]

The returned-refugee communities did not always have a positive experience of working with hierarchical international aid agencies (particularly the UNHCR), however, this encouraged them to develop much more friendship-based horizontal relationships with smaller-scale solidarity groups who were keen to support the communities' needs as defined by the communities themselves (McIndoe, 2023, pp.202-210). In 1996, a young musician from the United Kingdom named Katherine Rogers, became part of a transformation between the UK solidarity network and El Salvador through Music for Hope. She visited the communities on the recommendation of family friends connected with ESNET and, while there, she became friends with a group of young people who had formed a band called *Lluvia de Esperanza* (Rain of Hope). These young musicians played music learned by ear with very limited resources and few instruments and Rogers began to join in their practice sessions. Shortly before she left, they performed together in a concert for the community. Describing the experience, Rogers recalls that 'the atmosphere was electric. I couldn't get it out of my head. I felt it was something really important that I couldn't let go'.[44] She recounted how she continued to turn over in her mind that, 'there's something here that seems really important, that these young people have recently emerged from a civil war [...] They're engaged in an act of resistance really. That's how I saw it'.[45] When asked if she could explain what she meant by this, Rogers continued, 'well it was a kind of act of: "We're here and… we may have been through hell but we're here and we're... we're using this music as a way of saying who we are. We're proud of where we've come from. We're proud of where we are"'.

This sense of music as an 'act of resistance' resonated strongly with Rogers' family background, as she explained how her parents and family friends had formed a political theatre and music company that was particularly active in the

[42] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2017. See also the testimonies in Ángel Arnaiz Quintana (2012).
[43] Interviews with community elders, Bajo Lempa, 2016 and 2017; Community workshop, St Alfege's Primary School, Greenwich, 10 November 2023.
[44] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.
[45] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.

trade union struggles of the 1970s and 80s. She described how she 'grew up with the sense that music can be something very powerful in struggle, both in terms of motivating people [and as] an active voice in shaping the future and having a role in the future and having a role in decision making. So it seemed to me that it kind of chimed with that'.[46]

This deep-rooted political interpretation of music as a powerful voice that shaped the future inspired Rogers to return to the Bajo Lempa. By the following year, she had raised sufficient funds for a pilot project to teach music to the young people of the Bajo Lempa community in which she stayed.[47] She recalled meeting the community leaders to discuss creating something more permanent as the pilot project drew to a close: 'They were a force to be reckoned with,' she laughed, and explained more seriously that, 'they were really concerned about young people losing their cultural heritage and history. And they were kind of quite forceful in saying to me, 'what can you do about this?'[48] She continued, 'that helped inform the kind of political dimension of the project that cultural political history is important to the communities and the communities wanted that to continue in the beginning with their young people. They didn't want that to be lost'.[49] From its outset, Music for Hope's methodology was one of horizontality and born out of a need expressed by the community leaders themselves. Horizontality, and the way it responds and adapts to local needs and circumstances, has remained central to

[46] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.
[47] At the time, the music popular amongst the returned refugee communities was *trova* – from the Latin American political-folk tradition of the Cold War period linked to the *Nueva Canción* movement in Chile, and the revolutionary folk music of Venezuelan artist Ali Primera and Carlos Mejía Godoy from Sandinista Nicaragua. Home-grown political folk groups connected to left-wing social and guerrilla movements included *Los Torogoces de Morazán* and *Yolocamba I'tá* (mentioned above). Cumbia (originally from Colombia but adapted throughout Latin America) was also, and still remains, very popular to this day. In the Bajo Lempa the two genres were frequently merged in the songs of the bands fostered by Music for Hope.
[48] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020. In the interviews we conducted, 'history' and 'heritage' were often used interchangeably by interviewees. Nevertheless, we can still detect subtle differences in meaning. 'History' appears to refer to the narrative of the past that creates the collective and individual identities of the communities and those who live within them. 'Cultural heritage', however, refers to traditional processes and practices that are shaped by historical identity as well as the tangible objects and experiences produced by these practices. These in turn, inform and construct 'historical identity'. Thus, the relationship between 'history' and 'cultural heritage' is symbiotic and circular. These are the definitions we are using for the purposes of this article.
[49] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.

its approach even as it has become part of the cultural heritage of the communities themselves.

As Music for Hope became embedded in the Bajo Lempa communities, other core values emerged alongside the foundational goal of 'cultural regeneration' through music. In part, this was a result of the traditional and horizontal teaching methodology in which students learned to play various instruments by ear, rather than classically trained to read sheet music. More advanced students would help teach younger, less experienced students, passing on the knowledge that they had learned from their teachers. This horizontality and the passing on of skills and knowledge to younger peers simultaneously reflected the communitarian values of the Bajo Lempa communities themselves. In turn, these values were further developed as Music for Hope became a familiar part of community life. As Rogers explained, 'the [communitarian] values during that period of actually developing the project over a year progressed a lot more because it was [...] also around building young people's capacity, their organisational skills, their leadership skills, their empowerment, their voice'.

Another important part of Music for Hope's approach was to encourage students to form bands that rehearsed and performed together as they progressed. This fostered the formation of social skills and friendships, in addition to musical coordination. Rogers continued: 'the band is much more of a kind of group activity. You have to learn to listen to each other, you have to negotiate, you have to have a discipline of working together on a common goal'.[50] An added bonus, of course, was that the bands could (and did) play at community events, transmitting the support they had been given back into their own communities. This simultaneously reinforced a healthy intergenerational relationship between young people, adults and community leaders. As Rogers elaborated, 'this is not only our young people keeping alive a musical culture. They're more engaged in their communities. They're able to give back to their communities. They're able to have a voice in the communities. They're a source of pride'.[51] This is demonstrative of Music for Hope's prefigurative approach, enacting in its organisational and pedagogical practice its communitarian and anti-authoritarian principles. Paula Serafini has argued that, in art activism, the tensions between aesthetic objectives and political strategy may be reconciled through a prefigurative approach that foregrounds ethics (Serafini, 2018). Music was understood in the Bajo Lempa and by Rogers as a constructive force, with musical teaching and the formation of bands intimately linked to building an egalitarian community.

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[50] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.
[51] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.

By 2006, less than ten years after the Music for Hope pilot, some of the project's first students had become established community music teachers – initially on a voluntary basis as they underwent more intensive, formal training in the capital city San Salvador, and later as they received a small, regular stipend from the funds Music for Hope raised by way of recompense. When interviewed together in 2013, they described how their perception of the original purpose of Music for Hope differed from that of its founder. Three of the teachers had grown up in the refugee camps, two of them had been born there. Another of the teachers, as a small child, was internally displaced with his family, then in the later years of the civil war, fought as a child soldier. One music teacher described how, 'When we returned to these communities, our only "light", let's say, was music. [...] This was an opportunity for us to forget certain memories of the war and also internal conflicts within our close families. It's helped us to alleviate and cure wounds that the war caused' (Music for Hope 01, 2013). Another added, 'I remember that at the time [the pilot project was set up], a large number of young people came to the community for music classes [...] and the idea was to get the armed conflict and everything they'd lived through during the war out of their heads and to create a different ideology and to try to teach music to these young people so that they could create a different culture from the problems that they'd been living through due to the armed conflict' (Music for Hope 02, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the language and focus of the music teachers' recollections of Music for Hope's main goal differed markedly from those of its founder as they all agreed on the project's therapeutic value to themselves and their colleagues and friends, all living with the trauma of violent conflict and forced displacement.

The teachers' memories suggested that trauma alleviation was intended from the outset, while Katherine Rogers considered it rather to be a subsequent added bonus. She did not set out with the intention of providing trauma therapy through music – this was beyond her expertise. Nevertheless, it makes sense that the initial benefits experienced by the first students of the project might be recalled as its primary goals years later. What we appear to be seeing is a reframing of Music for Hope by its participants, according to dominant discourses associated with the temporal period and circumstances in which it was created and developed. The foregrounding of trauma and victimhood was, indeed, a broader phenomenon that echoed the passing of the global Cold War. Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2007) argue that trauma passed from the confines of professional psychiatry and psychology to become embedded in everyday language, creating 'a new language of the event' (p.6). As such, trauma became a way to testify to and validate suffering. Moreover, the case of Music for Hope's participants confirms their claim that 'social agents are not passive recipients of the label "traumatized"', which is instead more often actively discussed or mobilised by social groups (p.

xi). For the Bajo Lempa community leaders, in dialogue with Music for Hope's founder, the conservation and celebration of cultural traditions that rooted the next generation of young people in their communitarian past was of primary importance – a past that also involved bitter struggle against the odds; yet for the young participants in the project, the principle goal was one of recovery from the traumatic legacy of that struggle so that they could move forwards into the future.

Perhaps the clearest example of the transition between temporal frameworks, from one of political struggle to the healing of trauma, can be seen in the testimony of the teacher who fought as a child soldier, when he told his life history in an individual interview some few years later. He described how, as a very small child, his family were forced to flee from where they lived due to a military counterinsurgency operation that was coming to burn down their village and massacre its inhabitants. Even after relocating to the Bajo Lempa, his family was subjected to repeated and extremely violent forms of intimidation by state security forces. He recalled how, after one episode in which a soldier shot dead his family's calf for no reason other than he had the power to do so, hate and rage became the emotions that motivated him: 'when you're young, your hate starts to build. Because of everything you see, you start to hate, and I said to my friends, when I'm older I'm going to join the guerrilla. And so I grew up in that environment [...] of pure violence. [...] With everything that was going on in my head I was filled with rage'. He joined up to fight aged only 11 or 12 which, given his statement 'when I'm older', provides a clear sense of how young he was when he first experienced being consumed by negative emotions as a result of the violence he had been subjected to.[52]

After he was demobilised towards the end of the war in 1991, he described how difficult it was to adjust to civilian life. If, for example, during the night a mango fell from a tree and crashed onto the tin roof of his house, he would wake up and find himself instinctively diving under the bed for protection, thinking it was the explosion from a mortar attack. His heart would be pounding and it would take him a few moments to regain his composure and realise that he was no longer in a war zone.[53] Conversely, he recalled his excitement, even while he was still grappling with this trauma, at being given the opportunity to learn music. This enthusiasm motivated him to the extent that he and his brothers would walk approximately eight kilometres along the main road from his community to attend classes. He even mentioned how music helped him forget about the fact that he received none of the benefits given to demobilised combatants as part of the 1992 peace accords agreed between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN; 'when

[52] Interview, Bajo Lempa, 2016. He could not remember his exact age at the time and moved between 11 or 12 at different points in the interview.
[53] Interview, Bajo Lempa, 2016.

you're playing music, the music enters you to such an extent that you practically don't remember it'. He then laughed dismissively and added, 'I don't normally talk about that'.[54] In a more serious vein, in a subsequent interview the following year, he described how learning music, playing in a band and writing songs helped him dissipate the feelings of rage and fear that had built up within him over the years. He commented on how, by teaching music, he now helps the next generation of young people experiencing similar types of emotions.[55] For him, music provided catharsis, just as it did for the other young people who participated in those initial classes in the Bajo Lempa, soothing the traumas caused by the violence and dislocation they had experienced over years of civil conflict.

If the memories of the teachers and Music for Hope's founder differed with respect to the initial and principal goal of the project – conservation and cultural regeneration versus catharsis and trauma alleviation – their memories did converge when considering the overall cultural impact of Music for Hope in the communities. The teachers described how music had evolved in accordance with the increased musical skills of the young people in the Bajo Lempa communities. This evolution reflected as much the horizontal and adaptable methodology of Music for Hope as it did the greater capacity of those trained within the project to perform to an ever higher standard. With respect to the former, Katherine Rogers explained: 'It's good to know your own traditions [...]. but also to respond to young people's interests because otherwise you'll lose them. It's no good saying, oh you've all got to do a Revolutionary song from the 1970s and 80s. It has no relevance to now, to young people'. She continued, 'When you work with young people you have to respond to their interests [...] For young people to really have a voice, they need to grapple with their own ideas and themes that they're interested in [...] They face different challenges. They've got different aspirations, different dreams, and I think Music for Hope has evolved with those dreams and with those aspirations'.[56]

This evolution of pedagogical methodology that chimed with the evolution of the interests and concerns of young people in the communities dovetailed into the increased musicality of the growing numbers of young people who passed through the project, learned to play musical instruments and performed in bands. The teachers recounted how Music for Hope has 'transformed the lives of the population, of the communities of the Bajo Lempa [...] now, there are many groups which play different types of music and which give another side to the

[54] Interview, Bajo Lempa, 2016.
[55] Interview, Bajo Lempa, 2017.
[56] Interview with Katherine Rogers, Manchester, 2020.

communities and which have contributed to creating a rural cultural identity' (Music for Hope 03, 2013). In this way, the origins of Music for Hope, its early primary goals, and its subsequent achievements come full circle, both rooting themselves in and contributing to the shared culture of the Bajo Lempa communities.[57]

The early years of Music for Hope demonstrate some of the ways in which international solidarity evolved in the context of a distinct historical break – the culmination of the Cold War and the Salvadoran civil war. If the solidarity of ELSSOC and the depiction of collective mobilisation in Changing the Picture reflected the final years of a period in which the revolutionary horizon was considered possible, Music for Hope emerged at a time that forced the initiative to confront the traumatic legacies of the civil war years. Although founded with a sense of continuity of political resistance in a new context, its focus soon became one of processing and healing the tragedy of conflict. Traverso (2016) asserts that after the eclipse of Cold War utopias, the attendant centring of trauma and victimhood brought about a preoccupation with the ghosts of a past and a retrospective view of the twentieth century, as primarily an age of war and tragedy. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Music for Hope was not characterised by a demobilising lamentation of failed revolution but continued to be driven by a constructive future-oriented approach. We might compare this with Traverso's suggestion of a 'fruitful melancholia', of 'rethinking a revolutionary project in a nonrevolutionary age (Ibid., p.15). Far from melancholic, Music for Hope was and continues to be resolutely optimistic; yet engaging with past suffering has been part of its practice. Working through the traumas of the civil war was a core, indeed indispensable, aspect of the community-building and pedagogical principles of Music for Hope, and its prefigurative and horizontal approach helped to unify and implement musical objectives together with its political ideals.

Changing the Picture and Music for Hope illustrate how cultural and artistic expressions of British international solidarity with El Salvador evolved in the context of a historical transition, but they are characterised as much by their connections as by their differences. Such connections were partly organisational: as has been highlighted, Music for Hope was established in close connection with ESNET, a post-civil war iteration of ELSSOC, the organisation that commissioned the mural. However, the two are also far closer politically than the

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[57] This further complicates the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between 'history' and 'cultural heritage' mentioned above as, while Music for Hope's initial goal was that of preserving, reinforcing and celebrating cultural traditions of the communities through musical education, its methodological evolution in line with the changing needs and aspirations of the Bajo Lempa youth have meant that over time Music for Hope created new practices and culture in the Bajo Lempa that have themselves become embedded as part of the cultural heritage of the communities.

shift toward a preoccupation with civil war trauma might indicate. While foregrounding trauma and victimhood has occasionally been associated with a certain depoliticising trend following the Cold War, Music for Hope cannot be cast as apolitical – even if ESNET did not retain the partisan politics of ELSSOC. Indeed, the initiative's musical pedagogy went hand-in-hand with its prefigurative politics of everyday community building. Moreover, the communitarian and critical pedagogical focus of Music for Hope was not a novelty in the post-civil war era, but in fact reproduced much of the major themes of *Changing the Picture*. Indeed, the rural community highlighted in the mural, including the cooperative and classroom scene, was the political horizon for which the collective organisation of the people mobilised. In a moving, recent encounter between one of the Bajo Lempa community members living in exile in the UK, the *Changing the Picture* artist Jane Gifford and ELSSOC cultural committee organiser Chris Hudson, the community member pointed at the mural designs and stated that 'this is an almost exact representation of the aspirations of our community when we were living in exile'.[58] Thus, rather than depoliticising, Music for Hope represents a community-rooted and prefigurative reformulation of international solidarity and of the politics depicted in *Changing the Picture*.

Conclusion

The comparison between *Changing the Picture* and Music for Hope enables us to draw important conclusions about international solidarity, cultural practice and the historical break represented by the end of the Cold War. In the first place, cultural or political art can and has formed a crucial yet under-recognised channel for international solidarity with Latin America. Such practices should be understood not merely as a tool or resource, nor simply a powerful medium through which solidarity politics can be communicated. Like other examples of cultural expression and practices of international solidarity, *Changing the Picture* and Music for Hope emerged closely in line with politicised cultural forms in Latin America itself: art and music. Indeed, as both the mural artist and a key figure in the commissioning of the mural recognised, muralism played an important role in Latin American and Salvadoran political art, while Music for Hope sought to preserve traditional musical practices and mobilise those traditions within a community-building project. At the same time, art activism in international solidarity can be closely related to the political cleavages and artistic forms of the sites from which it originates, especially when the

[58] Community workshop, St. Alfege with St Peter's Church of England Primary School, London, 10 November 2023.

primary audience are the inhabitants of those sites. This was the case for *Changing the Picture*, which was part of a wider artistic movement in London and embedded within the anti-Thatcherite cultural politics of the 1980s.

Secondly, *Changing the Picture* and Music for Hope also help us to understand the ways in which culture-based solidarity can reflect and respond to differing historical moments. We can consider such differences between frames of transformative struggle and those of trauma, as demonstrative of how culture reflect wartime and postwar political environments. However, it is also important to stress the wider significance of a global event alongside specific local conditions. Internationally, the historical break and the decline of a revolutionary frame following the end of the Cold War implied a shift in the relationship between political struggle and memory. With the ushering in of a global neoliberal hegemony, transformative or revolutionary struggle became associated not as part of a present or future political moment, but as evidence of a failed past. In the case of *Changing the Picture*, at the twilight of the twentieth century's revolutionary wave, the political interlocutor was the FMLN and the political aesthetic was the collective – almost heroic – power of a people to overcome the forces of imperialism, a rural community to roll up the metropolis and the global economic model of neoliberalism. With Music for Hope, the interlocutors were post-exilic returned communities reeling from the trauma of civil war. With the 1992 Peace Accords marking the end of the conflict, the postwar environment – as well as the reality of neoliberal hegemony consigning revolutionary subjects largely to a failed past – was crucial. In this context, music became a constructive channel for working through the past, but it also functioned as a prefigurative practice for the everyday politics of community building and for manifesting a more egalitarian and anti-authoritarian vision of the future.[59] Musical pedagogy, in this sense, can structure the participatory practice frequently at the heart of international solidarity politics.

These two examples should not only be understood as reflecting distinct moments and representing different formulations of the relationship between art and politics. Although different in form, the communitarian message of popular democracy in the mural is also articulated in new cultural forms by Music for Hope, particularly through the latter's artistic, pedagogical practice of teaching music to children and adolescents. Moreover, we can also see how participatory cultural practices have been used to confront trauma while also trying to retain

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[59] This article has only focused on Music for Hope's early years, but more recently, together with the people of the Bajo Lempa communities, it has had to respond to and navigate new social and political conditions, including the surging gang violence, the return of widespread paramilitary activities and the growing authoritarianism of the state. These changing conditions and adaptations will be the subject of forthcoming research.

elements of political resistance. With the decline of utopian politics and the shipwreck of failed revolutions at the end of the Cold War, debates about cultural memory have highlighted the foregrounding of victimhood in public discourse on the twentieth century and the prevalence of the frame of trauma in political culture globally. Political struggles of the past, in this sense, ceased to become incorporated into the transformative projects of the present. Nevertheless, Music for Hope is suggestive of how using the arts to simultaneously reinforce community cultural heritage while addressing historical trauma. At a time when the collective transformative politics of the Cold War appeared to have been defeated, projects like Music for Hope avoid merely memorialising the past by contributing to the reactivation and reconfiguration of international solidarity while functioning as a constructive and prefigurative community building project.

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(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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La Boca to La Stocka

Neil West

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Neil West [1]

La Boca to La Stocka

Abstract. In this short reflection piece, we hear from Neil West, who recently co-organised a project between artists in La Boca in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Stockport, near Manchester in the UK. The piece brings together anecdotes and personal photographs as documentation of collective, cultural political practice.

Resumen. En esta breve pieza de reflexión, Neil West, quien recientemente co-organizó un peoyecto entre artistas en La Boca en Buenos Aires, Argentina, y Stockport, en las afueras de Manchester, Reino Unido. Este artículo reúne anécdoras y fotografías personales como documentación de la práctica cultural y política colectiva.

Introduction

When I was sitting in a café in Buenos Aires in September 2022, a guy suddenly walks in. A sun reddened face; as a Brit myself, I suspected he might be English. A coffee and a chat later, I'm setting up a meeting between Pato, a local anthropologist and muralist, and Malcolm, a board member of the so-called Grit studios, a Stockport-based organisation dedicated to the support of artists in the Greater Manchester area. Almost a year later, five artists who spent many years turning La Boca, one of Buenos Aires low-income areas into a place prized for its street art with murals, figures, sculptures and colour, are on their way to Manchester airport.

As a semi-retired mental health specialist working for a non-governmental organisation focused on social development, I've been living in South America on and off for the past five years, I discovered the incredible work undertaken by Voluntario Global, back in 2019 where I learned about the

[1] Neil West is a social worker and volunteer for Voluntario Global (voluntarioglobal.org) who spends his time between Essex (UK) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). He formed an integral part of the commissioning, fundraising and executing the mural "La Boca to La Stocka" in Stockport (UK).

intertwining of art and politics–for example through song, poetry and murals–to create powerful imagery.

One of La Boca's major tourist spots is El Caminito, where the culture of the city is proudly emblazoned on every street corner, including the docks, football, poetry, folklore, music and dance. It is a place where the spirit of the people is shining out from the streets, with buildings traditionally painted with whatever "spare" paint was left over from the ships. I fell in love with this area on my first encounter. I am by far not the only one: La Boca attracts tourists from across the world. One of La Boca's main industries has thus become tourism, with its many restaurants, gift shops and buzzing market trades lining the streets.

Malcolm, the fellow Brit I'd encountered in the café, was as taken by the art as I, and we drew parallels to British towns and cities, the decline of industry and its vast dockland areas. Malcolm noted how wonderful it would be to have something like the art of La Boca in Stockport, a rundown and neglected town in the northwest of England. Stockport has a proud history of industry, music, and folklore. Malcolm's idea was to celebrate this cultural wealth in the same way as locals promoted it in La Boca, in the hope that some of the tourists from the more visited Manchester art trails would visit Stockport, which hitherto had remained in Manchester's shadow.

Figure 1: Valeria, director of Voluntario Global, and the author, Neil West, in La Boca.

Excited at the idea of this intercultural project, I spoke with Valeria, a director of Voluntario Global, who'd arrange murals and art works in Los Pibes, a community and cultural centre in a reclaimed warehouse in La Boca (see figure 1). Los Pibes is a symbol of the struggle of working people and exploitation of Latin America. It provides a kitchen, health care, training, boxing and hip-hop workshops as well as a computer repair shop. Voluntario Global recruits volunteers from around the world to support community projects in and around Buenos Aires, such as community kitchens, Kindergartens, English language schools and, of course, Los Pibes.[2] Volunteers come on to share their experiences and learn from the projects in a mutual exchange. Valeria, Pato, her 6 month old

[2] See the Voluntario Global website here: https://www.voluntarioglobal.org/en/ [last accessed 17/07/2024].

baby Cata, Malcolm and myself gathered to exchange ideas about the murals and images of political struggle and the power of collective action that surrounded us. How might we learn from this to inform a project?

… and a plan was born

The idea that quickly came to the fore was to bring and paint a mural from La Boca to Stockport, one that would reflect the essence of daily life in La Boca and to mirror similar accounts in Stockport. In terms of content, we envisioned La Boca's iconic bridge crossing the Riachuelo paired with the viaduct spanning the River Mersey in Stockport. This would exemplify the similarity of the two towns, and graphically bridge their distance across the Atlantic ocean in a spirit of solidarity and collaboration.

The Argentinian team consisted of Eva Maissa, an artist, teacher and muralists creating works in La Boca since 2010, Pato Salatino, an anthropologist, artist and muralist, Omar Gasparini, muralist, set designer, and teacher, Alejandra Fenochio, an award winning artist, who worked with the internationally renowned Luis Felipe Noe and Leon Ferrari,and Meli Lluvia, plastic artist, teacher and muralist (see illustration 2). Spanning three generations of artists (four including baby Cata), they came together to share food and wine and ideas while meeting with the team at Grit Studios online, 12000 km away in Cheshire. The ideas coalesced. Grit Studios proposed a 70 x15 metre concrete wall to become the canvas for the collective work in one of Stockport's many back roads. During that meeting, we also broadly agreed on a number of cultural themes: landmarks, such as Stockport's famous bridge, activities, such as tango, and symbols, such as the Argentine pot of mate tea. As a methodology, Grit Studios was to interview local Stockport residents to ask which symbols could represent their culture and history. The plan was that the mural's final design would incorporate cultural, political and historical images from La Boca coupled with those from the local Stockport community.

Figure 2: Mural detail: Heavy horses and industry

Figure 2: Mural detail: A woman sewing

Figure 4: The muralists: from left to right: Eva, Pato, Cata, Alejandra, Meli and Omar.

Financial Constraints

As a private initiative, covering the budget was a major concern. With just £20,000 for the whole project, flights alone would potentially take up a third of that sum. Then there was accommodation, materials, and, for any project like this, some level of payment to cover. The economic situation in Argentina has been extremely difficult; at the time, inflation was around 150% (at the time of writing, near 300%) so however important this intercultural collaboration was, the artists needed to compensate for loss of earnings back home.

Grit Studios applied for funding across a range of local government and charitable funds, and managed as best they could, taking the cheapest available routes – for three of them, this even meant a 45-hour flight via Addis Ababa!

From concrete to colour

Having arrived in one piece and greeted by unseasonal brilliant English sunshine, we weary travellers settled into settled into our red brick terraced house, warmly greeted by neighbours with donations of food, wine, and beer in abundance. After a day of recuperation, including a local tour of the area, a Victorian folly on the moor, and the local brewery with its heavy horses to pull the drays, that were to feature in the mural.

The wall had been prepared by local volunteers in advance. Local artists and businesses threw themselves into the project, providing ladders, scaffolding buckets and paint. They were invaluable members of the team, providing friendship and practical help each day.

Throughout that week, every day, the ugly grey wall was besieged by local men, women and children, lending a hand, painting, cleaning, chatting, or just watching in admiration as the surface was first slowly, then rapidly transformed. The wall's transformation from an ugly smear of pollution-stained concrete to a canvas of beautiful images of two worlds was a huge undertaking by any stretch of imagination.

On the La Boca side, there is Tango, beautiful colourful buildings and characters, including someone drinking mate, for which I happily posed for the preliminary sketch! There was also some of the wildlife of Argentina. On the Stockport side, based on the research by Grit Studios, there are symbols from the factories and clothing industry, the palatial Victorian buildings as well as the incredible heavy horses that worked the land prior to the steam age. Beneath the bridges is a football game, beloved by both Argentinians and the English.

Intercultural Differences

Transnational encounters often bear surprising insight into cultural differences. In the case of our guests, this was dinner time. Having lived in Argentina on and off for the past five years, I'd acclimatised to eating very late, but coming to the UK, to a town as large as Stockport it seemed that the big difference was the opening hours of restaurants! While in Argentina, an early dinner would start around 10pm (but usually rather at 11pm), in England, this would typically be at 6 to 7pm. The

only place we could find open was a Greek restaurant. But we had to order before 8.30pm as they closed at 9. Although we arrived shortly before closing time, the staff – with backgrounds from across Europe – were accommodating, they put on Latin American music, and with song and laughter, we concluded the night together. It was now very late, approaching 10pm– a truly exceptional night in North East England (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Culture shock: an 8.30pm dinner in Stockport (the middle of an Argentinian day) Left to Right, Pato, Alejandra, Neil, Meli, Eva, Omar and Alfie, a local business owner that provided so much support in terms of materials, time and encouragement.

Other than different daily routines, the contentious past of the Falklands War between Great Britain and Argentina in 1982 preoccupied the Argentinian artists. There were no signs of tension in Stockport whatsoever; for most Britons it is long forgotten. Instead, the hundreds of everyday interactions resulted in a

joyous atmosphere. In Argentina, the war and resulting anti-English sentiment is still omnipresent, with references promoted almost daily in local media and emblazoned on the sides of city buses. There is a difference of course, the reality for Argentines is that the Malvinas were taken from them–as the Encyclopaedia Britannica puts it "[s]eized in 1833, expelling the remaining Argentine occupants". The subsequent attempt to reclaim them cost 255 British and 650 Argentinian lives. You may spot the islands "hidden in plain sight," on the Argentine side of the bridge (see figure 6).

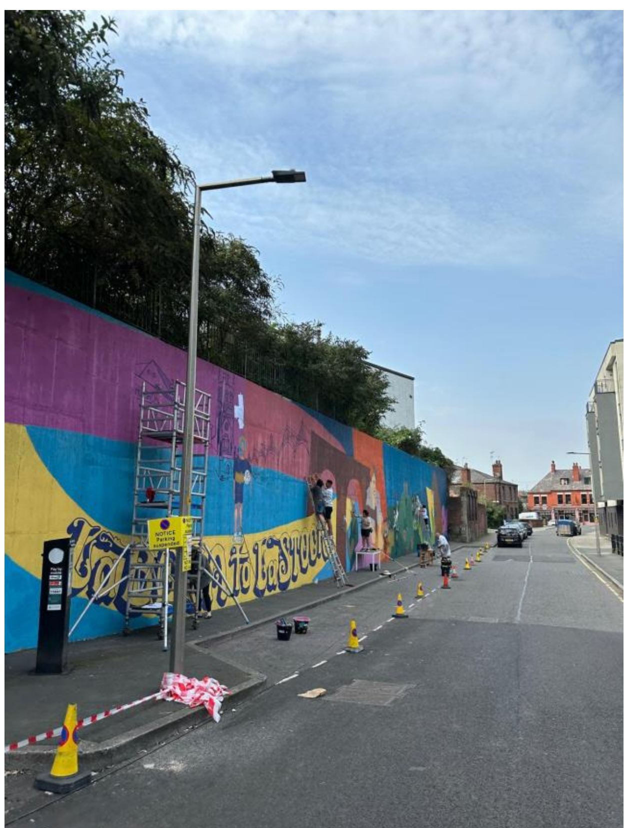

Figure 6: Slowly, the canvas comes alive

Figure 7: Almost done!

To conclude, a random conversation in a Buenos Aires coffee shop between two Englishmen thousands of miles from home, led to an idea, which led to a meeting, and over the course of only a year became a collaborative intercultural landmark on a quiet backroad in the heart of Stockport. We celebrated its inauguration with a performance of a local tango group (see figures 8 and 9). A mural depicting La Boca and La Stocka, the fruit of the hard labour of storytellers and muralists, local people and visitors – all of these took part to make this exchange a wonderful experience.[3]

[3] Here I include the Instagram accounts of those involved: @Gasparini.gaspa, @Melina.lluvia, @Patopintura, @Floresdeluna.pintura, @Alejandraderrocha, @Peoplewithgrit.

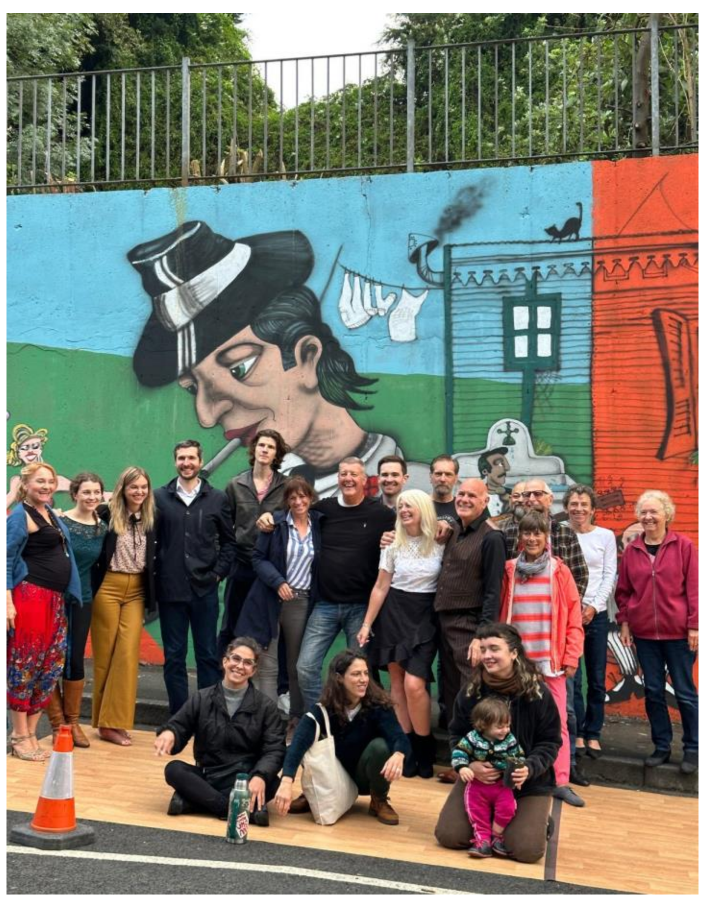

Figure 8: Local tango dancers at the mural's inauguration

stockport.gov.uk

Stockport as Town of Culture

As Stockport celebrates being this year's Greater Manchester Town of Culture...

Figure 9: Screenshot of Stockport Council website

ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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Chilean Muralism in Exile: On Solidarity and Transnational Memory

Cristóbal F. Barria Bignotti[1] and Sandra Rudman[2]

[1]Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile; [2]Universität Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany.

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Cristóbal F. Barria Bignotti[1] and Sandra Rudman[2]

Chilean Muralism in Exile: On Solidarity and Transnational Memory

Abstract. 50 years after the coup d`état in Chile, cities such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Leeds, Milan, Belgrade, Los Angeles, and Chicago, still display traces of Chilean exile on the walls of cultural centres, universities, theatres and other buildings. These are the remains of hundreds of murals, painted by brigades created by Chileans in exile to encourage their host countries to show solidarity with their resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship. The complex experience of Chilean exile and its long-lasting and intergenerational repercussions have only slowly been integrated into research and memory practices. This article examines three case studies of Chilean murals in exile as atypical forms of testimonial sources, with the aim of gaining insights into the multi-layered network of actors behind them, in particular into the testimonies of Chilean exiles and actors of international solidarity. It also explores the memorial dimensions of

[1] Cristóbal F. Barria Bignotti is a researcher, curator, and lecturer in Art History at Facultad de Artes, Universidad de Chile, Chile. He specializes in Latin American art, digital curation, sensory studies and art practices and human rights. He is currently a lecturer on the history of exhibitions and curating as part of the Curatorial Studies Diploma at the University of Chile. His postdoctoral research includes stays at the German Center for Art History in Paris (DFK 2021-2022), the Center for Cultural Inquiry at the University of Konstanz (ZKF 2022), and the Center for Sensory Studies at Concordia University in Montreal (2020). Email: cristobalbarria@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6568-5990.

[2] Sandra Rudman is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in Latin American and Francophone literature and cultural studies at the University of Konstanz, Germany. She is the coordinator of the KoLaF Konstanz Forum for Latin American Studies and member of the international research groups Postcolonial epistemic justice: Reparación y Restitución and Global Indigeneity and Land Struggle: Documentary Film for Sustainable Futures. She is co-director of the documentary film Muralismo Chileno en Exilio. Further research and teaching interests include new testimonial and memory studies, writings of the self, contemporary Latin American women writers, Congolese literature, literatura marrón and decoloniality, and theater and therapy. Email: sandra.rudman@uni-konstanz.de. ORCID: https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0003-2202-2385.

postephemeral murals and how these can function as carriers of a collective, transnational memory of Chilean exile.

Keywords: Chilean muralism, exile, solidarity, transnational memory, post ephemeral murals.

Resumen. A 50 años del golpe de Estado en Chile, ciudades como Ámsterdam, Frankfurt, Leeds, Milán, Belgrado, Los Ángeles y Chicago aún muestran huellas del exilio chileno en las paredes de centros culturales, universidades, teatros, y otros edificios. Son los restos de cientos de murales, pintados por brigadas muralistas creadas por chilenos en el exilio para animar la solidaridad en sus países de acogida contra la dictadura de Pinochet. La compleja experiencia del exilio chileno y sus repercusiones duraderas e intergeneracionales se han integrado lentamente en las prácticas de investigación y memoria. Este artículo examina tres estudios de caso de murales chilenos en el exilio como fuentes testimoniales atípicas, con el objetivo de obtener información sobre las múltiples capas de actores que hay detrás de ellos, en particular sobre los testimonios de los exiliados chilenos y los protagonistas de los movimientos de solidaridad internacional. También explora las dimensiones conmemorativas de los murales post-efímeros y cómo éstos pueden funcionar como portadores de una memoria colectiva y transnacional del exilio chileno.

Palabras clave: Muralismo chileno, exilio, solidaridad, memoria transnacional, murales post-efímeros.

Introduction

This article emerges from our ongoing interdisciplinary research project *Cartographies of Chilean Muralism in Exile*, which is digitally mapping the hundreds of Chilean murals created by exiled Chileans during the 1973-1990 military dictatorship, as well as the interconnected actor network behind each mural; consisting, first, of the *afectados* (Gatti, 2014), the actors affected by the state violence of exile; second, the local, national and international solidarity and human rights advocacy groups who played a key role in supporting the exiles; and, third, the local, regional, national and international organisations that have created programs to support the exiles (e.g. the Chile-Committees, the World University Service Chile Scholarship programme in the UK, the West-Berlin-based *Chile-Nachrichten*, and many more). The aims of the project are multiple

and include examining the role of the exile brigades, their operational dynamics, the solidarity networks involved, the circulation of protest iconographies, and the evolution of the murals' function and meaning over time, as well as to disclose the murals' polyphonous testimonials, examine their role as carriers of transnational, transcultural and multidirectional memory, and to fully grasp their potential as historical landmarks and memorials of exile. Methodologically, we draw on new testimonial studies, memory studies, digital humanities, art history, history of social movements, reception aesthetics, and more. To date, we have documented over 260 murals and we have conducted over forty interviews with former exiled muralists, exiles, and members of solidarity networks.[3] By no means does this article claim a final and complete analysis of the entire phenomenon, but is rather a presentation of work in progress.We begin from the observation that, fifty years after the coup d'état in Chile, numerous cities in Europe and across the globe still bear the visual legacy of murals created by Chilean exiles. Their presence often continues to resonate both with former Chilean exiles and with the surrounding community, as shown through initiatives in cities such as Belgrade, Milan, Leeds, Moirans, Bremen, Los Ángeles, and more, who have sought to protect and restore their local Chilean murals, leading to a reactivation and a renewal of their significance, and often to a reconnection of the networks that originally supported them.

In this article, we will argue that these initiatives have not only elucidated local commitments to the solidarity campaigns with Chile, but have also laid bare a *postephemeral* and a commemorative dimension of the murals. We will start by addressing the measured inclusion of the theme of Chilean exile in both academic research and memory practices. We will then look at the role of muralism in exile as a key element of the international solidarity campaigns for Chile, and address its dimensions of testimony and memory. We will then define the concept of the postephemeral mural and illustrate its characteristics by analysing three case studies from two different countries, and providing some preliminary conclusions on the scope of the research project.

[3] These interviews took place in the framework of the research project and the corresponding documentary film Chilean Muralism in Exile (2024) directed by Daniel Oblitas Baca and Sandra Rudman. We wish to express our sincerest gratitude to everyone who shared their story with us.

Chilean Exile in Research and Memory Practices

It has been noted that there is "a paucity of research on Chilean exile", especially within Chile (Hirsch, 2012: 48; Jedlicki, 2007: 88). Research on Chilean exile began outside of Chile, often conducted by Chilean exiled academics (Rebolledo González, 2006: 101ff.) and initially focussed mainly on psychological, sociological and political issues, addressing topics such as mental health, integration, solidarity networks and cultural production in exile (Adams, 2012; Angell and Carstairs, 1987; Bolzman, 1989; Cieters, 2002; Jedlicki, 2001; Kay, 1988; Munoz, 1980; Peris Blanes, 2009; Prognon, 2008; Sznajder and Roniger, 2007; Wright and Zúñiga, 2007). Within Chile, the psychological dimensions of exile began to draw attention as soon as the first exiles were allowed to return (Arnold and Haefner, 1985; Lira, 1982). Yet, a broader analytical perspective would only develop ten years later, after the beginning of the transition to democracy, spearheaded by the anthropological work of Loreto Rebolledo's (Rebolledo González, 2006; Rebolledo González and Acuña, 2001; Rebolledo, 2001).

In addition, memory practices in Chile have slowly seen the integration of the experiences and histories of former exiles.[4] Hugo Cancino noted that exile is "a matter officially forgotten and a mere subaltern part of collective memory of Chileans who lived the dictatorship within their country" (Cancino Troncoso, 2003: n.p). Loreto Rebolledo further pointed to the complete absence of Chilean exiles in the practices of memory-making: "El exilio no tiene fecha ni lugar donde recordarlo. No hay memorials, placas, museos, ni otros soportes materiales" (Rebolledo González, 2006: 13), which remained unchanged six years later, as attested by Isabel Piper Sharif's observation that sites of memory usually do not remember the exiled (Piper Shafir, 2012: 13).

An important development came in 2014, when Chile's flagship institution of memory, the Museo de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos (MMDH), dedicated the year to the topic *Asilo/Exilio*. Maria-Luisa Ortiz, head of collections and research at the MMDH, spoke of a "debt" to the exiles and

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[4] As a brain drain of leftist intellectuals and cultural workers took place, exile also generated a vast cultural production: the resistance shown in graphic art and literary magazines such as La Araucanía or El Rebelde was an early production of memory, and the exilic experience was a recurrent topic.
A particular reflexive and more intimate way of dealing with the experience of exile happened in poetry (Gonzalo Millán, *La Ciudad*, 1979), novels (Antonio Skármeta, *No pasó nada*, 1980; Virginia Vidal, *Rumbo a Ítaca*, 1987; Leonor Quinteros Ochoa, *Exilkind*, 2014), film (eg. Leutén Rojas Etcheverry: *Exilio. El peso de la memoria*, 2019), and graphic art (Eg. Guillermo Núñez). See also (Rebolledo González, 2006: 106ff.)

described the museum's role as follows: "como museo, sentíamos que teníamos una deuda en poder acoger lo que era esta memoria [del exilio]". She also spoke of exile as:

> un tema del cual los chilenos habíamos hablado muy poco también, en lo que era su profundo significado para tantas y tantas familias en este país, para la sociedad en su conjunto. Entonces empezamos con la idea de

comenzar a hablar del exilio, y abrir espacios de conversación, y asumir esta tarea como museo. (MMDH, 2016)

Figure 1: Brigada Pablo Neruda (1975). Inti-Illimani Quilapayún per il Cile, Afiche para el concierto Arena de Verona, Verona. CL MMDH 00000164-000001-000006, Fundación Museo de la Memoria y los derechos Humanos. Part of the exhibition Afiches de Solidaridad Internacional (MMDH, Santiago, 08.05.2014-28.09.2014).

Using a transgenerational approach, exiles, their children and grandchildren were invited to share their testimonies through a user-friendly multimedia format, while

several educational projects invited the public to join the dialogue (MMDH, 2014). In May 2014, the MMDH launched the exhibition International Solidarity Posters (figure 1) that shed light on the many solidarity campaigns with Chile and Chilean exiles. This was followed in October 2014 by the exhibition Exilio/Asilo, with twelve sections dedicated to key elements of the exilic experience, such as departure, expulsion and uprooting, international activism and condemnation, the second generation, and return. In addition, in June 2016, the MMDH launched the Oral Archive Voces del Asilo/Exilio, an online database featuring over sixty exile testimonies, which continues to be open to new contributions. Both the creation of these participatory oral archives and the integration of various elements from the aforementioned exhibitions into the permanent exhibition5 have marked the beginnings of institutional recognition of the theme of exile.6

In the framework of the activist turn in memory studies (Gutman and Wüstenberg, 2023), it has been observed that, in Latin America, "the shaping of collective memory around [its] legacy of violence is inseparable from activism" (Mandolessi, 2023: 295). As a research project on testimony and memory, Cartographies of Chilean Muralism in Exile also belongs to those "prácticas signadas políticamente, múltiples pero con una direccionalidad específica: la resistencia al silencio oficial" (Calveiro, 2006: 65). The murals painted in exile provided us with an opening to address a persistent difficulty that surrounds speaking about exile. Their disclosure will therefore contribute to integrating the collective, transnational memory of Chilean exile into both research and memory practices.

Chilean Muralism in Exile

The Chilean mural brigades constituted "uno de los fenómenos artísticos de mayor importancia en nuestra historia [de Chile]" (Ivelić and Galaz, 1988: 45), which

[5] This can be seen in room number 4 Condena Internacional, which is dedicated to the mobilisation of Chileans in exile, international solidarity, and the reprobation of human rights in Chile by the international community. Additionally, a world map showing the global distribution of Chileans in exile equally has also become part of the permanent exhibition.

[6] Often, the exiled communities have established their own platforms, e.g. Rayuela Kollektiv Berlin or Viena Chilena 73 – 23. See the contribution from Molden et. al. in this issue.

emerged as a "nueva forma de hacer propaganda política" (Sandoval, 2001: 27), as "herramienta de intervención política, […] de intervención coyuntural sobre un hecho de la vida pública" (Longoni, 1999: 23). Their urban disputes initially began during the 1963 presidential election campaign: supporters of the Christian-Democrat candidate Eduardo Frei Montalva had begun to paint star tags on the walls (Sandoval, 2001: 27). As a reaction, a group of supporters of the Unidad Popular created the acronym *Vota (V) por (X) Allende (A),* which became "el símbolo de la campaña presidencial de Allende" (San Julián, 2014: 2). In the decade leading up to Allende's election in 1971, the walls of public space gradually turned into a means of popular communication and contention (Arrate & Rojas, 2003: 557). Undoubtedly, the best-known brigades are the Brigadas Ramona Parra (BRP)[7], which emerged as militant propaganda groups of support for the Unidad Popular. As Ana Longoni explains:

> La línea muralista que inauguran las brigadas Ramona Parra es la del mural efímero, callejero, realizado por militantes (que no se consideran a sí mismos artistas) en condiciones de riesgo. Antes que de una manifestación artística, se trata de una intervención coyuntural sobre un hecho de la vida política. (Longoni, 1999: 23)

In addition to the ephemeral nature of murals, to which we will return later, Longoni also points out the risk involved in the activity itself. As brigades of oppositional political parties often clashed violently, techniques of the brigades were kept simple, effective, and quick, with a work team divided into *trazadores*, who outlined the letters and images; *fondeadores* who painted the background; *rellenadores* who filled the image; *fileteadores* who added contours; and *retocadores* who retouched it (Kunzle, 1978: 362f.).

After the election of Salvador Allende, it was the Brigadas Ramona Parra who took this practice to a new level: "la sacaron de su estricto encuadre propagandístico, para convertirla en un medio de expresión popular y colectivo" (Ivelić and Galaz, 1988: 288). With the coup d'état of 11 September 1973, the cultural project associated to the Chilean road to socialism came under attack; personal libraries were burned, and the offices of Chile Films, Quimantú editorial, Nueva Canción – or New Song – label Discoteca del Cantar Popular (DICAP), and others were destroyed in what is commonly known as the apagón cultural or

[7] Named after Ramona Parra, a young communist who died by police force during a protest at Bulnes Square in 1946. (Sandoval, 2001: 27)

[8] Ivelić and Galaz write: "dos días después de haber triunfado el pueblo en las urnas, apareció el primer mural en las calles de Santiago. Muy pronto siguieron otros. Hasta que en un par de semanas la ciudad cambió de fisionomía" (Ivelić and Galaz, 1988: 45).

el golpe estético (Errázuriz, 2012). The cultural manifestations related to the Unidad Popular were systematically dismissed or relegated to a position of resistance (Jara, 2021). With Operación Limpieza (Trumper, 2016: 3), the murals, considered "testigo[s] molesto[s]" (Núñez, 1993: 113) of the era of Allende and the Unidad Popular, were removed and the brigades were disarticulated. Their members were either arrested, forced to go underground, or into exile.

Both exiled artists and muralists, as well as individual exiles, formed new muralist brigades in their respective host countries. While the actions of the exile brigades had a direct formal relationship to the muralist tradition of the Brigadas Ramona Parra, many of the elements that defined the BRPs in Chile, in terms of imagery, modus operandi and spatiality, changed in exile. The modus operandi of the Brigades now followed almost exclusively legal channels9, as the brigades now only painted upon invitation. These invitations often came from solidarity groups who then discussed the location, design and necessary administrative procedures with their local councils, and provided the brigades with official support in the form of transport, materials, scaffolding and an honorarium that was exclusively earmarked for Chile. Approximately twenty brigades were formed, several of which were founded around a former member of a muralist brigade. The Brigada Ramona Parra of the Netherlands, for example, was founded by Jorge 'Kata' Nuñez, a former BRP leader in Valdivia, and Eduardo 'Mono' Carrasco, a founding member of the Brigada Ramona Parra who played a leading role in the Brigada Pablo Neruda in Italy. Many other brigades were made up of exiles with little to no muralist experience, such as the Brigada Salvador Allende in Frankfurt or the Brigada Elmo Catalán in Rotterdam.

Murals in Exile as Vehicles of the Chile Solidarity Campaigns

The Chilean exile brigades played a pivotal role in the solidarity campaigns for Chile by painting hundreds of murals all over the globe. They directed a struggle for Chile's freedom, driven by a testimonial urge to denounce the coup, continue the legacy of the Unidad Popular, and motivate spectators' solidarity. However, the painting of murals rarely happened on its own. The event often took place in

[9] One exception is the mural at Bielefeld University, which was secretly painted overnight by the Salvador Allende Brigade in December 1976. After the initial shock of the university administration, the mural was allowed to stay and eventually became the first mural in Germany to be placed under heritage protection in 2015.

the context of a broader solidarity event or a *peña* to raise funds for Chile, featuring other activities such as performances of Chilean New Song, *arpilleras* and art prints sales, screenings of Chilean documentaries and films, dance and theatre, and tastings of Chilean *empanadas* and red wine (Wright, 2014). When the painting of a mural was the main activity, it nevertheless fostered a vibrant atmosphere of collectivity, enriched by the presence of spectators, shared food and live music performances.

The connection between Chilean New Song and the muralist brigades in exile was of particular importance. Patrice McSherry has argued how the musicians of Chilean New Song were "unofficial 'ambassadors' of the Allende movement" that "helped to generate and sustain the support and solidarity of masses of people" in exile (McSherry, 2017: 15). Such was the case of Inti Illimani, who were exiled in Italy and were often accompanied by the local Brigada Pablo Neruda who painted murals during their concerts (see also: Gregoretti, 1976). In our interviews with Horacio Durán from Inti Illimani and Hector 'Mono' Carrasco from the Brigada Pablo Neruda of Italy, both recalled the concert in honour of Victor Jara in the Arena of Verona, on 6 September 1975, as one of the most remarkable events of the time. Durán spoke of Quilapayún and Inti Illimani playing "un concierto absolutamente e*spectacular,*" in the presence of Joan Turner de Jara and the Brigada Pablo Neruda (Durán, 2022). 'Mono' Carrasco vividly recounted the dramatic climax when all the lights went out, everyone fell silent, the various panels were gathered together, and one huge mural was unveiled. He spoke of 20,000 people releasing:

> un gruñido de león, un estruendo, la gente gritaba, cantaba, se abrazaba. Fue muy emocionante. Yo creo que eso también es una de las cosas que quienes estuvimos en eso no vamos a olvidar nunca. […] Y yo te diré sinceramente, yo creo que después de eso, ya no fuimos los mismos. […] E incorporamos en los conciertos del Inti Illimani en Italia, esencialmente los murales. (Carrasco, 2022)

The concert in the Arena of Verona can be established as the moment when Inti Illimani and the Brigada Pablo Neruda of Italy began a lasting alliance. That the *spectacular* and multisensorial nature of these events was of particular importance for their long-lasting impact, was shown in our conversations with the former members of the solidarity movements (Schaap, 2022; Schwab, 2022). In our interview with sociologist Jan de Kievid, former national coordinator of the Chile Committee in the Netherlands, he explained how remarkable it was that so many people in the Netherlands knew about what was happening in Chile:

> This was because of the music groups and because of the empanadas. Because of the posters and perhaps first and foremost because of the murals. A lot of people recognised them and almost everyone in the

> Netherlands knew more or less what they were. There were only 2,000 Chileans in the Netherlands, and they were very active and visible. And this is what promoted the solidarity. If you started to talk to people about Chile, they always mentioned that they had seen a Chilean music band on the market square, or that they had seen a mural. They did not always understand its meaning, but it appealed to something they knew about. (our translation, de Kievid, 2022)

His observation shows how a lasting impact was created through the eventful and collective character of Chilean New Song, muralism, graphic art, and more, and how this produced a widespread and visual awareness of the Chilean struggle. In particular, it shows that the muralist brigades in exile were important agents of the Chilean struggle and in fostering solidarity. This becomes obvious in the murals themselves.

Observing the characteristics of the mural's iconography, two thematic lines come to the forefront; the denunciation of the coup and the dictatorship, on the one hand, and the dissemination of revolutionary spirit, including the political programme of the Unidad Popular, on the other. Denunciation is often depicted through images of military violence10 and of the complicity of the US11. The dissemination of revolutionary spirit and admiration for Salvador Allende are also recurrent topics12, while the Mural of Leeds13 reproduces program point 36 of the Unidad Popular Trabajo Para Todos. Often, the murals also incorporate local elements, such as the host countries' national flag, Dutch windmills14 or the local rural landscape15. On several occasions, the mural generates solidarity between the Chilean struggle and a local one: the Mural at San Bartolomeo in Galdo16, for example, thematises the 1957 "March against hunger" carried out by the local

[10] See: Mural Bielefeld 1976, Brigade Salvador Allende Frankfurt; Mural Foggia 1976, Brigada Pablo Neruda of Italy; Mural Amsterdam 1981, Brigada Elmo Catalán

[11] See: Mural Utrecht 1977, Brigada El Frente

[12] See: Mural Stockholm 1978, Hernando León; Mural Milan 1975, Brigada Pablo Neruda Italia; Mural Vienna 1980, César Olhagaray; Mural Leeuwarden 1987, Jorge 'Kata' Núñez; Mural Saint Martin d'Heres 1974, Brigada Salvador Allende Paris

[13] This mural is an independent initiative carried out in 1976. It reproduces a mural originally painted in Santiago de Chile, whose image also became the official correspondence header of the Chile Solidarity Campaign in the UK. See the contribution from Martinez Relano in this issue.

[14] See: Mural Purmerend 1979, Brigada Ramona Parra from the Netherlands), city towers (Mural Tilburg University 1979, Brigada Ramona Parra from the Netherlands

[15] Mural Santo Stefano Ticino 1976, Brigada Pablo Neruda from Italy

[16] By the Brigada Pablo Neruda from Italy, 1976

population. Another example are the murals of the Brigade Luis Corvalán, which often evoke the dark figurations of Chilean and German concentration camps17. The brigades thus called for solidarity by solidarising with the histories of violence in their host countries. Therewith, the murals already reflect their own shift from agents of solidarity towards agents of memory, and of a multidirectional memory in particular (Rothberg, 2009). Within Rothberg's "axis of comparison (defined by a continuum stretching from equation to differentiation) and […] axis of political affect (defined by a continuum stretching from solidarity to competition […]) " , the murals generate a relationality to evoke solidarity between different stories of violence (Rothberg, 2011: 525).

While Chilean New Song and the murals in exile both operated as vehicles for solidarity with the Chilean struggle, the latter bears the unique aspect of leaving behind material residue. The murals marked the very location where the solidarity event took place for quite some time, many until today, a topic we return to later on.

The Multiple Wounds of Exile

After examining more than 600 images of the murals, we made the striking observation that only one of the 262 murals identified so far refers explicitly to exile. We were able to define several implicit or allegorical references, such as the symbol of the globe or the representation of both Chilean as well as local figures (e.g. Mural of Villamar 1976, Alan Jofré), however, only the mural in Pessac, France (1982) depicts exile explicitly. It shows the image of a man leaving the *cordillera*, following the arrow of the French flag with a suitcase that reads *exilio*. A further sequence of the 120-metre-long mural also depicts the *retorno* to Chile.

Exile is the implicit ontological condition for the genesis of these murals; however, it is also largely a conceptual and figurative indeterminacy within its iconography (Iser, 1972). It requires an epistemic disposition on behalf of the spectator, a "perturbation" (Schwab, 2012: 8) even, to detect and question the indeterminacy. What perturbed us was why exile remained an indeterminacy in the first place. Is there a link between the absence of exile in the murals, the paucity of research in exile, and its slow integration into memory practices? And can we access these voids through the postephemeral murals?

To elaborate upon these questions, it is first and foremost pertinent to establish that exile was not a "side-effect" of the dictatorship, but rather, alongside

[17] See: Mural Bremen 1976, Mural Kassel 1977

eradication and torture, one of military dictator Augusto Pinochet's main tactics of repression, particularly during the first phase of the regime between 1973 and 1976 (Nicolas Prognon, 2013). It has also been called "uno de los mecanismos principales de silenciamiento de la oposición" (Lastra, 2017: 122). On the one hand, exile aimed to expel *ideas*, the UP's vision of a third way to socialism, as well as cultural and artistic production and practices (Errázuriz, 2009). On the other hand, exile brutally shattered families by expelling *people*. They were labelled by the military dictatorship as "enemies" and "traitors to the fatherland," a stigma that was mediated through popular condescending expressions such as *el exilio dorado* or the *beca Pinochet* and that was even reiterated by a minority of opponents of the regime (García, 2014; Paredes, 2016; Rebolledo González, 2006: 16; Rojas, 2019). In our interview with Boris Eichin, a former exiled muralist of the Brigada Salvador Allende, he says:

> Yo creo que no se entendió el exilio. Es un problema complicado porque la dictadura trató de mostrar al exilio como una gente que se aprovechó. Que trató de aprovechar una situación política, una situación económica para vivir mejor. Y entonces ellos nos llamaron el exilio dorado. Cuando nunca fue un exilio dorado. El exilio es una cosa muy compleja. […] Y entonces siempre aquí se habla del exiliado: "Ese fue un fresco. Ese fue alguien que se aprovechó." Cuando la verdad que no es así. El exilio tiene sus partes buenas, pero también es sufrido. […] Es algo complicado. Y no se habla mucho del tema. (B. Eichin, 2022)

He points directly to the relationship between stigma, the complexity of the exile experience, the difficulty of speaking about it, and the broader incomprehension around it. The persistence of stigma has been addressed in both testimonial literature and research (Fajardo, 2021; Paredes, 2016), and has only recently begun to be challenged. Chilean exiles were not considered part of a hero's narrative, unlike for example the exiles of Fidel Castro's Movimiento 26 de Julio, who were regarded as "fighters for freedom in the homeland" (Sznajder and Roniger, 2007).

In addition to being affected by these stigmas, many exiles felt an enormous sense of guilt for having lost their battles at home, as well as for having survived (Jedlicki, 2001: 4f.); "por haberse ido, por no estar en el lugar de la lucha" (Rebolledo, 2001: 601). Both Jedlicki and Rebolledo observed how this led[18] to "une militance frénétique", "una militancia exacerbada" (Jedlicki, 2001:

[18] To unpack the entire complexity of this dynamic would go beyond the scope of this article, but we would like to point to Elisabeth Lira who also adds the factor of fear of
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5; Rebolledo, 2001: 601), and how the main narrative of this militancy was the collective struggle for a free, socialist Chile. What Jedlicki has called the *hierarchy of victimhood* is an inherent mechanism of classification that operated among victims of the dictatorship, and often relegated the exiles towards minimising their particular victimhood in all its complexities, towards a silencing (Jedlicki, 2001: 5; Rebolledo, 2001: 602). This silence was inscribed into the body and commonly manifested in the long term through ruptures or illness (Jedlicki, 2001, Ibid.), as well as through suicide (Bravo, 2022; Heinsohn, 2022). Exile became, in fact, almost impossible to speak of. Similarly to the state violence of torture, it is to be considered a case of *lo indecible* (Peris Blanes, 2017: 78; Pizarro Cortés, 2017: 23).

Almost all our interlocutors have expressed their difficulties in talking about these circumstances. Some preferred to turn the conversation towards the solidarity they had received, or towards their activities as militants. All our interviewees articulated particular concerns about the wounds that their exile has inflicted onto the next generations (Espinoza, 2022). This was also enhanced by the paradoxical experience of the return (Bolzman, 2002; Jedlicki, 2007). In this regard, one of our interlocutors expressed; "yo me sentí exiliada volviendo a Chile" (Rojas, 2022), while another stated feeling like "un extraño más" and eventually opted to live very remotely, "al campo, a la montaña" (Núñez, 2022). The complex phenomenon of returning from exile has been conceptualised politically in terms such as post-exile (Roniger and Sznajder, 2009) and poetically in the neologism *desexilio* (Benedetti, 1985). Many of our interlocutors have developed their own terms: Ethel Eichin calls it "una enfermedad auto-immune, que no es tratable" (Eichin, 2024b). She poignantly expressed that the emotional depth of exilic experiences often goes unheard and, without proper acknowledgment, risks fading into oblivion:

> Si hay algo que no se rescató de nuestra vida, en estos 50 años, es la parte emocional y la parte más profunda de la vivencia desde la mirada de cada uno. A nadie le importó escucharnos. Nadie ha preguntado el por qué, nadie ha preguntado ¿qué viviste? […] Si no nos preguntan, todo eso se va a olvidar. Se va a perder en la historia. No todos en las familias hablaron y contaron lo que vivieron. Y a su vez, hay muchas historias vividas que uno omite al contarlas, para no provocar más dolor en los que vienen detrás de nosotros, a nuestros hijos, porque nosotros les traspasamos en el ADN de nuestros hijos, todo lo que nosotros vivimos. (E. Eichin, 2024b)

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thinking that all would have been in vain; "no pueden perder el significado principal de todo lo ocurrido" (Lira, 1991).

She illustrates how, while one might manage to live with the exilic condition, it never really comes to an end, particularly as it is transgenerationally passed down to the children and grandchildren of exiles. While time[19] has proven to be an important factor to start speaking about exile, Ethel's words reflect a wish for a framework to share her story, a space where her testimony is recognised, and where a reparative connection with the presence may be established. We argue that a cartography of postephemeral murals can be one step towards such a framework.

Postephemeral Murals as Carriers of Testimonies and Agents of Transnational Memory

Recent studies on the role of agency in transnational memory politics look at how "the interplay of local, national, regional, international, and global dynamics—and the agents that shape them—result in the emergence of transnational memory spaces" (Wüstenberg and Sierp, 2020: 4). Other studies have approached the agency of non-human actors in constructing memory, particularly in terms of "artefactbased engagements with the past" (Grimaldi and Gukelberger, 2023). While we indeed look at the agency of the multilayered actor-networks behind the murals, we have also discerned a certain agency of the murals themselves. In the framework of Chilean new testimonial studies (Pizarro, 2021; Santos Herceg, 2019), we considered these cultural artefacts first and foremost as "fuentes testimoniales atípicas en el momento de reconstruir lo pasado" (Montealegre Iturra, 2019: 286) carriers of a multitude of polyphonic testimonies - explicitly in their iconography, and implicitly through all participants involved –, however, we would like to think about how their material presence also exercises a certain agency.

Earlier, we introduced Ana Longoni's notion of the ephemeral, interventional character of the murals of the Brigadas Ramona Parra in Chile (Longoni, 1999: 25). Camilo Trumper even locates their political significance "in [their] very ephemerality" (Trumper, 2016: 94). Nevertheless, differently from what happened in Chile, where only one of hundreds of murals survived the censorship of the dictatorship (Olmedo Carrasco, 2012: 309), in exile many of the

[19] Our interlocutors have expressed that events such as the 30th, 40th, 50th commemoration of the coup, and in particular the *estallido social* and the process of the new constitution, were factors that have instigated their confrontation with their histories of exile.

murals have survived for several decades, and some have even gained patrimonial protection. We would therefore like to propose the concept of the postephemeral mural.

In the context of Chilean murals in exile, we propose the concept of postephemeral murals when, (1) a mural has resisted its common ephemeral character and remains materially present, whether it is fading, in good condition, restored, or protected[20], (2) there exists a material reproduction of a disappeared mural near its original location, e.g. through a photographic exhibition[21] or a banner[22], and (3) when not only the object, but also the experience of the mural surfaces through memory practices (e.g. the interview above recalling the mural of Verona 1975, Brigade Pablo Neruda Italy; or the short story containing an ekphrasis of the mural of Bochum 1982, Lautaro Díaz).

The postephemeral dimensions of murals, then, recall the residual aspects of the mural event: the traces on the walls on the one hand, and the affects, sensations, memories, life stories and testimonies on the other. Thinking in terms of postephemeral murals enables us to understand their agency in the processes of reactivating solidarities, accessing exilic experience and practicing the transnational memory of exile. It allows us to observe how they operate within the city and the community, and how they can prompt processes of transnational memory space-making and place-making (Badescu, 2020).

In the following sections, we present three distinct case studies on three murals, each illustrating different aspects of how postephemeral murals exercise various forms of agency. The case study of the mural at the University of Konstanz is extensive because we have been involved in its restoration and memorialisation processes, making it a prototype study for our research. The case studies on the Mural of Osdorpplein and Purmerend are shorter, but will act as a point of comparison by showcasing the diversity of the mural'spostephemeral dimensions.

Case Study I: The Mural at the University of Konstanz (1977), Germany, Brigade Salvador Allende

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[20] See: the mural at the University of Konstanz 1977, Brigada Salvador Allende; mural of Villepreux 1977, Brigada Pablo Neruda.

[21] See: the mural of Bremen University 1976, Brigade Luis Corvalán.

[22] See: the mural of the Documenta 6 in Kassel 1977, Brigade Pablo Neruda Germany.

The mural at the University of Konstanz (figure 2) was painted by the Brigade Salvador Allende on 25 April 1977, during a concert by the exiled folklore ensemble Quilapayún and the local Chilean-German choir, *Singegruppe,* in the main Audimax auditorium (Quilapayún, 1977). During Quilapayún's performance, the brigade painted the mural on two canvases, which together measured 1.70m by 8.10m. At the end of the performance, the mural was hung on the wall opposite the Audimax, where it remained for more than four decades. It figuratively represents the global struggle for freedom of the Chilean people, personified by a female figure with a bare chest, her floating hair forming the Chilean flag, and symbols such as the clenched, oversized fist, a white dove and a globe.

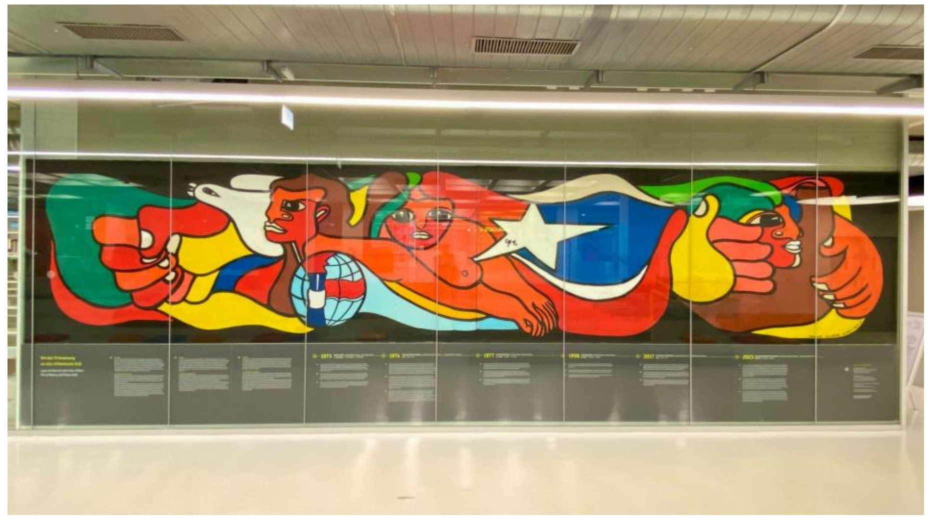

Figure 2: Brigada Pablo Neruda (1977). Untitled. University of Konstanz, Germany. Photo: Sandra Rudman.

The initiative to create a Chilean mural at the University of Konstanz came from a group of Chileans in exile that arrived in Konstanz as early as July 1974, who had been assigned to work or study at the university: philosopher Eduardo Arancibia Délano, professor of statistics Alicia Domínguez Diaz, sociologist Mario Durán Vidal, biology teacher Maria Francisca Marín, lawyer Francisco Otey, professor of education Angel Pizarro, and doctoral student in chemistry, Benjamín Suárez Isla. They were supported by the local Chile Committee Konstanz, the general student's committee Allgemeiner

Studierendenausschuss (AStA), Amnesty International, and several other solidarity groups and individuals who had been lobbying the university and their local and national government institutions for residence and work permits. The exiles worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the dictatorship in Chile, organising local demonstrations, debates and film screenings, while Benjamín Suarez also founded the *Singegruppe* choir and toured the entire state of Baden-Württemberg to inform and mobilise the local population through concerts of New Chilean Song.

The Salvador Allende Brigade was founded in Frankfurt am Main in 1976 by Chilean exiles Boris Eichin, Ethel Eichin, Iván Quintana Loreto, Waldo Rodríguez and Loreto Villela. During the 1970 Chilean presidential campaign, the four siblings of the Eichin family had already been involved in tagging the streets in support of Salvador Allende (Eichin, 2022). Ethel Eichin had at that point been a member of the Brigada Ramona Parra for a few months, having already painted a mural with Alejandro 'Mono' Gonzalez when she was only thirteen years old. The family had to go into hiding immediately after the coup, as their father was on a list of people to be arrested, and their brother Vladimir was imprisoned in the Estadio Nacional. Ethel was fifteen when she went into exile, her brother Boris was seventeen. After a short time in Argentina, they arrived in Frankfurt am Main on 8 December 1973. They painted their first mural in Frankfurt in 1974, on the wall of the University College for Social Work, at the initiative of their cousin Enrique Eichin. It was only about two years later that Boris Eichin decided to form the Brigade Salvador Allende. He had been visiting his brother Vladimir who, after his liberation from the Estadio Nacional, found exile in the Democratic Republic of Germany. While there, he ended up hosting César Olhagaray[23], an artist and former member of the Brigada Ramona Parra. Eichin was fascinated by Olhagaray's mural drawings and began to redraw them (Eichin, 2022). Months later, he began experimenting with his own designs and founded the Brigada Salvador Allende. By 1980, they had painted around 100 murals on the walls of youth centres, theatres, churches and universities in various cities in West Germany and the former GDR, as well as in France and Switzerland. They were also invited to Kassel during Documenta 6, to paint with the Brigada Pablo Neruda from France together with professional artists Gracia Barrios, Guillermo Núñez, José Balmes, José Martinez and José García.

Forty years after its creation, the mural they painted at the University of Konstanz was still hanging against the wall of the auditorium where it was conceived, but its history had been forgotten. This caught the attention of a PhD

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[23] César Olhagaray painted artistic murals, notably on the wall of Berlin in 1990, and formed Salvador Allende Brigade in France, or the Otto Nagel Brigade in Berlin.

candidate, who began doing archival work together with her students, reconstructed the actor-network and history, and locating some of the former exiles, brigade members, and time witnesses. With the financial support of the university and of the former Chile solidarity network, Boris Eichin and his son Andrei came to Konstanz to restore the mural. The musically underscored inauguration was attended by other family members, as well as by members of the local Chilean community, former actors of the solidarity movement, scholars of memory studies, and the university rector who had supported hosting the Chilean exiles at the time.

The restoration and preservation processes have given certain artistic and political value to the mural, but have also created a time and space for the recognition and remembrance of its collective history, and for sharing biographic and transgenerational stories of exile. In his speech at the inauguration, Eichin underlined the surprising longevity of the mural and the importance of the solidarity network:

> Me siento orgulloso y contento a la vez, de estar en esta ciudad , en la Universidad, con ustedes desde mi lejano país, celebrando los 40 años de un mural, que se suponía de corta vida, pero que ha sobrevivido gracias al esfuerzo e interés de muchos por preservar parte de la historia de un movimiento solidario con la lucha de un pueblo por sacudirse de las cadenas de una dictadura sangrienta. (B. Eichin, 2017)

The memorialisation process continued to take shape in October 2023, when the university hosted the *Jornadas: Reflexiones a 50 años del Golpe de Estado in Chile*. In a ceremony during the conference, the Mural of Konstanz was declared a Site of Memory of Chilean Exile by the Ambassador of the Republic of Chile in Germany, Magdalena Atria, and the Rector of the University, Katharina Holzinger. It was moved to a new location at the entrance of the university library, accompanied by a timeline to explain its history and introduce spectators to the network of actors behind it. Three of the former exiles in Konstanz attended in person: Benjamín Suárez, Francisco Otey and Francisca Marín, as well as the latter's daughter. In his speech, Benjamín Suárez highlighted the many individuals who were involved in assisting the Chilean exiles in Konstanz. He meaningly attributed to the mural "que ha sido preservado gracias a una misteriosa memoria colectiva," a call to engage in the necessary exercise of memory work, which he described as "inseparable de la preservación de los derechos humanos de todas y todos" (Suárez, 2023). Later, Suárez called his journey to Konstanz "un viaje muy sanador […] que me permitió cerrar en paz varios círculos pendientes y me permitió agradecer en persona a quienes me ayudaron hace 49 años" (Suárez,

2023). Suárez therewith significantly interweaves the individual affective experience of the memorialization process with insights on the contemporary, symbolic meaning of the mural as a space to engage with memory and human rights. His friend Francisco Otey perceived the mural with more tempered feelings, as the very place and artefact are still inseparable from the trauma of exile:

> Yo lo ví, pero no me produjo nada, interno. No sentí nada. […] Después […] pasaba por ahí y lo veía y no sentía nada. Después [hoy] cambia un poco la visión en el sentido de que tú eres parte de eso, aunque no sientas nada, eres parte de eso. Yo soy parte de la entrada de la universidad, porque me acuerdo, y el recuerdo es esto, el exilio, el 11 de septiembre. Recuerdo un trauma.

He had been reluctant to attend the commemoration ceremony, however, it was important to attend for the sake of his wife Francisca Marín and their daughter. Ethel Eichin was not present in person, but in a later interview she shared the importance of the commemorative and transgenerational dimensions transmitted through the mural:

> Me emociona absolutamente saber que se restauró el mural de Konstanz, y que hoy tiene un espacio tan importante en la universidad, que puede ser visitado por las personas. Me emociona saber que aparece ahí mi nombre y el de otros compañeros. Dentro de las compañeras que participaron ahí, Loreto falleció hacia un año. Yo creo que nunca supo alcanzar saber que este mural todavía está ahí y existe. Emociona saberlo porque las nuevas generaciones en Alemania podrán ver algo que pasó hace tanto años atrás, y ahí están las 50 años. El tema que una quiere cerrar y no puede cerrar. Es un orgullo que mi hija haya podido verlo y sobre todo mi nieta, hayan podido estar en Konstanz, y hayan visto el mural así como lo hicimos.(E. Eichin, 2024a)

The official recognition of the mural as a site of memory of Chilean exile, by both the local authorities in Konstanz and the official representative of the Chilean state, was a solemn event, underscoring the local and transnational acknowledgment of the complex life stories and testimonies of those who arrived as a result of the state violence of exile. This case study therefor exemplifies how the postephemeral mural exercised agency, moved local and transnational actors, reactivated and expanded the former solidarity network, and instigated a memorialisation process that consolidated the mural as a transnational memory space. Through its iconography, the mural testifies as a historical witness to the collective narrative of the Unidad Popular's aspirations and the brutal end it faced. The process of memorialization and transnational memory space making,

however, was shaped by going beyond the collective testimony and by disclosing the individual testimonies on solidarity and exile.

Case Study II and III: Murals of Purmerend (1979) and Osdorpplein (1981), Brigada Ramona Parra Holanda

The murals at Osdorpplein near Amsterdam and in the nearby municipality of Purmerend were painted by Brigada Ramona Parra from the Netherlands, established by Jorge “Kata” Núñez in 1977 in Rotterdam. Kata Núñez had been the “trazador negro” of the Brigada Ramona Parra in Valdivia, which was the reason he was arrested in 1974 and convicted to a prison sentence of twenty years (Núñez, 2022). After two years, the Supreme Decree 504 of the Ministry of Justice allowed the commutation of his sentence to fifteen years of expulsion.

The Brigade Ramona Parra in the Netherlands initially attracted many volunteers, but due to Kata's requirement for serious commitment, a dedicated core team remained, including Marijke van Meurs, Carlos Oyarzún, Victor Hugo ‘Masca’ Valenzuela, Mirthe Longhuizen, Ingrid Huisman, Silvia Pastén, Mireya Merino, and Carolina Díaz. As a group, they painted over sixty murals, and over the years, Kata Núñez developed his artistic style and continued to work independently.

By 1973, solidarity with Chile in the Netherlands had reached extraordinary proportions, due in part to the left-wing government that took office in May that year and maintained close relations with Chile. The government was led by Prime Minister Joop den Uyl of the Labour Party, with Social Democrat Jan Pronk serving as Minister for Development Cooperation. Both had attended the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held in Chile in April 1972. Jan Pronk was fascinated by the “progressive social economic policy with democratic means” (Pronk, 2016: 80) of the Chilean government and, when he returned to his country, co-founded the Chile Committee Netherlands (CKN) in order to support “Allende’s socialist experiment” (ibid.). The day after the coup, Pronk cancelled all development aid to Chile and the government obliged its ambassador in Chile to receive refugees in order to organise their transfer to the Netherlands (Brouwer *et al*., 2013: 54), where approximately 2,500 Chilean refugees would find asylum.

Rotterdam, the hometown of the Brigada Ramona Parra, had a particularly strong connection to Chile due to the work of mayor Andre van der Louw, a member of the New Left Party of Labor (PdvA) who has been called "vocero de la causa chilena en Holanda" (Perry Fauré, 2020), along with his collaborator Saskia Stuiveling. In 1977, he founded the Salvador Allende Cultural Centre, which became a central space for both cultural and educational initiatives for Chilean exiles, as well as the Institute for a New Chile, a key platform for discussing political transference for Chile (Perry, 2017). The Rotterdam Art Foundation (RKS) also became involved with the Chilean case through its Townpainting program to promote urban visual art (Thissen, 2007: 16). During the 1974 Venice Biennale, titled Freedom for Chile (*Libertà al Cile*), Rotterdam artists met the Chilean artists of the Brigades Luis Corvalán[24] and Venceremos[25], and invited them to visit Rotterdam on the occasion of the manifestation *Por la Solidaridad Antifascista* in 1975. The Brigades were commissioned to paint several murals, including the well-known Chilean Tower Communicatiezuil and the columns at the Zuidplein Metro station (Thissen, 2007: 17). The columns are still partly present today and were restored in 2005 by Jorge 'Kata' Núñez and Juan Heinsohn Huala, a Chilean exiled painter, poet, former muralist of the exile Brigade Elmo Catalán and long-time coordinator of the Salvador Allende Cultural Center.

Both the Chilean murals of the local Brigada Ramona Parra, as well as the works of the commissioned town-painting programme, generated a particular and long-lasting impact of Chilean muralism in Rotterdam. Art historian Siebe Thissen has argued that it spawned a revival of mural painting, as the work of the Chilean brigades in exile influenced "socially committed artists of Rotterdam such as Will Rockx, Joop van Meel and Hans Abelman" in terms of subjects, political conscientization of street art, and techniques (Ibid., Bajema and Plasschaert, 1999: 8). Thissen states that the Chilean legacy in Rotterdam is "a durable one" that has initiated a new school, and labels Kata Núñez *the godfather of the Street Art* (Thissen, 2022).

We will now look into two murals of the Brigada Ramona Parra in the Netherlands, starting with the mural in Purmerend. The mural was painted in September 1979 on the wall of the Karrekiet sports hall on Salvador Allende Avenue, at the invitation of the Chile Committee Purmerend (figure 3). In our interview with Meindert Schaap, a long-time volunteer at the Wereldwinkel Fair

[24] The Brigada Luis Corvalán was founded in 1974 in Grenoble, and consisted of José Balmes, Gracia Barrios, Guillermo Núñez, José García Ramos, José Martínez Sotelo, Irene Domínguez, and Cecilia Boisier. It would later become the Brigada Pablo Neruda.
[25] Around Miguel García.

Trade Shop and a former member of the Chile Committee and the Nicaragua Committee in Purmerend, he recalls the initiative as a cheerful happening, a collective work of setting up the scaffold, Dutch and Chilean women making empanadas together, and a band playing music. He also remembers the discussion in the municipality about the mural's design, where one oppositional voice demanded an apolitical painting with local elements (Schaap, 2022). The mural is about twenty metres long, and depicts several faces in the characteristic BRP style, surrounded by the Dutch and the Chilean flags, as well as a guitar, Dutch windmills, the coat of arms of Purmerend, and fish, alluding to the nearby North Sea. A darker part represents the terror of the coup.

In 2021, two councillors from the leftist parties PvdA and Democrats 66 heard the story of the mural during an event honouring the long-time volunteer work of Meindert Schaap. They were also aware, however, of a new urban plan that included the demolition of the sports hall. In response, they put forward a motion to preserve the mural, which the municipality unanimously accepted. The municipality is still deliberating different preservation methods, ranging from conserving the entire wall to reproducing the painting elsewhere, and has consulted Kata Núñez and Juan Heinsohn about the matter.

Figure 3: Brigada Ramona Parra (1979). Untitled. Karrekiet sports hall, Purmerend, the Netherlands. Photo: Sandra Rudman.

Another case is the Mural “Chile Vencerá” on the Osdorpplein in Amsterdam Nieuw-West (figure 4). It was painted in 1981 following a design by Kata and with the participation of Marijke van Meurs, Carolina Díaz, Beto Olivarez, Mireya Merino and Silvia Pastén. The painting, measuring 20 x 3.4m depicts the struggle for a free Chile, a manifestation with the sign “No al fascismo,” several faces alluding to the classic BRP style but with a more complex colour palette, a bleeding dove of peace, the Chilean flag, a guitar, a horse and several exotic birds. In October 2018, the mural surprisingly resurfaced when an adjacent building was demolished to make way for a new residential project - an event that was reported in Chilean media such as El Mostrador and La Tercera. One project manager of the real estate company in charge recognised the historical importance of the mural, as well as its contemporary meaning for the neighbourhood that is home to many migrants and cultures. With the aim “to transfer its meaning to future generations” (MRP, 2023), they tracked down Jorge ‘Kata’ Núñez, and commissioned the restoration of the mural with support from Kroonenberg Group and the municipality of Amsterdam. The mural was restored in July 2022 by Kata, Juan Heinsohn Huala, and his daughter Lisa Heinsohn, and was thoughtfully integrated into the new building.

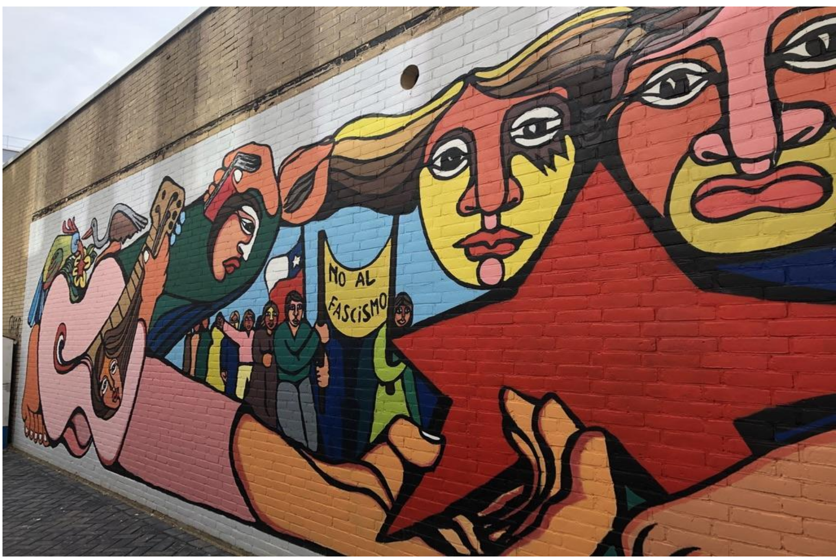

Figure 4: Brigada Ramona Parra (1981). Chile Vencerá. Osdorpplein, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Photo: Sandra Rudman.

These case studies highlight different dimensions of postephemeral muralism. They illustrate the dynamic and multi-scaled nature of how postephemeral murals evoke agency and mobilise diverse actors across different levels. In the Osdorpplein case, a preservation initiative was spearheaded by actors of the private sector who recognised the mural's historical and contemporary significance. They engaged both institutional and community actors by securing financial support from the government and involving muralists, their families and former solidarity networks in the project. The Mural of Purmerend presents two different preservation efforts, the ivy overgrowth taken care of by local volunteers, and the threat of demolition being handled by politicians after casually hearing the murals’ story. Both arbitrary and formal factors lay at the base of how the murals exist or perish, and of a possible transition of their communicative memory towards an institutionalised form of transnational cultural memory. A final postephemeral aspect emerged in a new local school of muralism in Rotterdam: their work came to shape the cityscape under the influence of the Chilean exile brigades in the Netherlands.

Concluding Remarks

The phenomenon of Chilean muralism in exile embodies polyphonous testimonial dimensions, aspects of transnational, transcultural, and multidirectional memory, and the potential of the murals to become historical landmarks and transnational sites of memory of Chilean exile. After situating the Chilean muralist brigades as significant political and artistic militant groups of the Unidad Popular, we showed how this muralist practice evolved in exile, where over 20 muralist brigades – and several individual muralist painting initiatives – advocated for Chile’s freedom, becoming significant agents of solidarity. We have exposed how the multisensorial atmosphere of the muralist actions resonated profoundly with the host communities, generating a broadly anchored conceptual and graphic awareness of the Chilean struggle.

Furthermore, we investigated the remarkable longevity of the murals in exile, including several restoration and preservation initiatives, leading to our coining of the notion of postephemeral muralism. This concept helps to understand the murals’ agency in reactivating solidarities, symbolic resignification, accessing the exilic experience, and fostering transnational memory practices of exile. It allows us to study how murals operate within communities and urban spaces, potentially instigating processes of transnational memory space-making and place-making (Badescu, 2020).

Our case studies on the murals at the University of Konstanz, Osdorpplein and Purmerend have elucidated diverse ways in which postephemeral murals exercise agency. Primarily, their material presence instigates the possibility of their memorialisation. These are defined by factors such as “individual agencies intersecting through encounters, intentional or not” (Badescu, 2019), the engineering done by “political power and institutions” (Badescu, 2020), “location, funding, and activism” (Lazzara, 2011: 61), and “social mobilisation for heritage” (Garcia Canclini, 1999: 22).

The case of the mural of Purmerend has shown that individual agency and political mobilisation for heritage draws attention to the many “slumbering” cases; murals might still be present, but they are fading, while others risk disappearing or being demolished.

The case study on the commemorative process of the Mural of Konstanz has also shed light on the circulation of a transnational and transgenerational memory of exile, as it became a place where the memory of the exile community and their descendants resides, and where these complex and diverse stories and transnational identities find validation and remembrance. This also became clear in our interviews with former exiles: the murals guided us from the narrative of its collective, iconographic testimony towards the more intimate life stories and personal testimonies of the exilic experience. The cases of Osdorpplein and Konstanz exhibited a particular integration of the second and third generations of exiles’ offspring, highlighting that the memory of exile necessarily remains a memory in transit, not only travelling across national borders between home and host countries, but also between generations who often circulate between Chile and the host countries of their parents and grandparents.

The preservation and restoration of these murals underscore their historical significance and the cultural memory of the mural on a local scale. However, it also potentially transforms them into a space of transnational memory, allowing for the recognition and integration of the testimonies of exile in commemorative practices, tackling the disintegration we have discussed. As a cultural artefact created by Chilean exiles in a context of international solidarity, we can indeed come to understand these murals as “transnational memory spaces” as defined by Jenny Wüstenberg: “instances or processes of remembrance anchored – through agency – in concrete locations and extending beyond national borders, [whose] memory does not make sense without the linkage to the other side of the borders.” (Wüstenberg, 2020: 9) However, as she furthermore remarked: “[t]ransnational memory spaces are certainly grounded in concrete locations, but they are made meaningful through cross-border linkage and through the practices of transnational agents” (Ibid.: 4). In order for this to happen, the memorialisation process has to make the shifts from the local to the transnational

by integrating the transnational actor networks, and link the past, present, and future generations by integrating the transgenerational scales of the exilic community.

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ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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“Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised”

Viena Chilena 73 | 23: an archive for the intergenerational memory of the Chilean diaspora in Vienna, Austria

Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres & Marcela Torres-Heredia

Viena Chilena 73 | 23 collective

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

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Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres and Marcela Torres-Heredia[1]

"Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised". Viena Chilena 73 | 23: an archive for the intergenerational memory of the Chilean diaspora in Vienna, Austria

Abstract. As part of this special issue, we invited Viena Chilena 73 | 23, a project initiated to record and articulate the history and memory of Chilean exile in Austria and Austrian-Chilean solidarity during the 50 years since the 1973 military coup in Chile. This contribution pieces together elements of the project website, extracts of their archival work and reflections from the project collective.

Resumen. Como parte de este número especial, invitamos a Viena Chilena 73 | 23, un proyecto iniciado para registrar y articular la historia y memoria del exilio chileno en Austria y la solidaridad Austriaca-Chilena durante los 50 anos que siguieron al golpe militar de 1973 en Chile. Esta contribución reúne elementos del sitio web del proyecto, extractos del trabajo de archivos y reflexiones del proyecto colectivo.

Introduction

The title of this piece, "Equality, freedom, solidarity – the issues on which I was raised" was retrieved from a biographical interview with a Viennese woman in her early thirties, born to parents who had escaped the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile as children. This interview pertains to the collection of a community archive, created in a joint effort of grassroots activists, community members and engaged research principles. United under the name of project Vienna Chile 73 |

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[1] Berthold Molden, Rayen Cornejo Torres, and Marcela Torres-Heredia form part of the Vienna-based Viena Chilena 73 | 23 project (https://www.vienachilena.org).

23, our group took the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Chilean coup d'état on 11th September 1973 as an opportunity to reconstruct and reflect on the trajectory of Chilean exile and migration to Vienna. Thus, our project is a participatory research intervention into migration history that both embodies and explores the spaces of solidarity between Austria and Chile. Sponsored by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria (Zukunftsfond der Republik Österreich) and the City Council of Vienna, the project set out to create an online archive for the community's history and memory. It was carried out by a working group of community members, researchers and artists, and was eventually handed over to the Association for Austrian-Chilean Memory Culture (Verein zur Förderung österreichisch-chilenischer Erinnerungskultur), which was specifically created for this purpose.

The project took place between March and November 2023. Its methodology was based on oral history and participatory methods with the goal of developing a collective articulation and empowering self-representation. It was designed by historian Berthold Molden, with historian Rayen Cornejo conceptualising its oral history compartment, while cultural anthropologist Marcela Torres coordinated community mobilisation. Every step was taken in intense collaboration with representatives of the Chilean diaspora, namely Gabriela Jorquera, Andrés Peña and Miguel Peña. The project produced a digital archive (bilingual in Spanish and German) and a digital exhibition (in German).[2]

Viena Chilena 73|23 was created in response to the desires articulated by members of the community, and it could only be realised as an active endeavour from within this community. Thus, the initial effort consisted of mobilising community participation, not exclusively in terms of interviewees and providers of archival documents, but also as Citizen Scientists participating in knowledge production. For example, the project included instances in which members of the community became familiar with the oral history methodology, and later, some were able to participate in the interview transcription process. This contribution enabled us to generate reflective instances and knowledge production practices of and with the community. The Association, Comunidad Chilena en Austria, also played an important role in the entire process of mobilisation.

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[2] The exhibition was created by the artist Marika Schmiedt and features a special part on solidarity. Just like the archive, it is accessible at https://www.vienachilena.org [last accessed 17/07/2024]. It was designed by graphic designer Dominik Hruza, who also built the data bank.

The Archive

The main requirement of the digital archive was its simple navigation and low-threshold interface, both for administrators and for users. One of the archive's most notable features is its collection of 14 biographical interviews, offering a unique insight into the experiences of Chilean women. These interviews provide a valuable addition to accounts of the Chilean diaspora and Austria-Chile Solidarity, which had previously neglected women's perspectives. Given the significant impact of generational specificity on this experience, the project concentrated on examining the nuances of various historical periods within the Chilean community in Vienna. In light of the aforementioned considerations, the research group was divided into four generational categories for the purpose of conducting the interviews. During this process, it became evident that it was challenging to differentiate the experiences of the various generations due to their heterogeneous composition. However, these categories were designed to encompass the general traits of segments of the community. Accordingly, the first generation was characterised by leaving Chile as adults due to the political unrest that began in 1973. The second generation were those who left Chile as children. The third generation consisted of people born into families in exile in Austria. It was also considered necessary to include a fourth "generation" of women; those who migrated from Chile to Austria after the end of the dictatorship, for an array of reasons. This interview sample design was chosen to reflect the heterogeneous composition of the current Chilean community in Vienna.

Furthermore, the archive holds a blend of other documents representing the intergenerational experience of exile and other forms of migration. Each item comes with a brief statement from the donor about its personal significance. These documents include several types of materials: IDs, migration-related paperwork and other official documents, personal photographs, historical photographs (e.g., courtesy of the Picture Archive of the Austrian National Library), newspaper and other media clippings, pamphlets, political posters and personal correspondence.

While the exhibition offers a certain historical narrative, the archive's organisational structure is deliberately open. At least in its initial phase, we have renounced the use of specific tags to categorise the significance of any mnemonic uttering and document. Instead, users approach all transcripts, captions, etc., of the archive either through browsing or, within each interview transcript, with a full-text search along self-defined search terms. The archival materials allow for addressing various issues related to migration, exile and diaspora. By way of example, we have selected the topic of this issue: solidarity.

Solidarity between Chile and Austria

It is evident that the concept of solidarity has been a constant presence in our project. Even more so, it stands for a core value and connecting thread for most members of Vienna's Chilean community. Austria's original asylum policy was based on the solidarity of its socialist government with the overthrown People's Front (Unidad Popular), led by former President Slavafor Allende. Beyond this institutional level, there was a bottom-up solidarity from Austrian NGOs as well as individuals. Soon a specific Chilean solidarity organisation was founded, providing the blueprint for similar associations focused on other Latin American societies (such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, etc.). Moreover, solidarity was a strong, cohesive force within the community, albeit increasingly heterogeneous.

Articulations of this phenomenon can be found in many documents of Viena Chilena 73 | 23. To begin with, the virtual exhibition features a chapter dedicated to practices of Austro-Chilean solidarity, recapping its institutional history and illustrating it with a series of posters, photos, press clippings and other documents (Viena Chilena, 2024).

Figure 1: Excerpts from the virtual exhibition

The archive itself offers many references to the subject of solidarity, as the opening quote demonstrated. It reflects the position of a politically active woman of the third generation, whose values were strongly influenced by the political legacy of her parents and grandparents, as well as experiences of solidarity in her life. Both of her parents came to Austria as children, accompanying their politically persecuted parents. She was socialised in the proximity of Austrian social democracy, where she emphasised solidarity in an

intersectional manner. However, this is but one example: solidarity came up in several interviews, and, depending on the speaker, it was possible to detect differences in the meaning and significance attached to the term.

Solidarity also emerged as a theme in several photos and other documents that community members contributed to the project. The following selection showcases some aspects addressed in these materials.

Figure 2: Concert by Ahora, a Chilean folk band playing at Stadtfest (1980). Pictured (from left to right): Nano Orellana, Jorge Orellana, Manara Cañete, Patricio Cañete. Photographer unknown.

Figure 3: “Solidarity with Chile” at the annual festival of the Communist newspaper Volksstimme (the Volksstimme-Fest), Prater Gardens, Vienna (date unknown, estimated between the late 1970s

Figure 4: “Village of Solidarity”at the Volksstimme-Fest Prater Gardens, Vienna. A co-organizer told us the following about the event: “Sale of arts and crafts, the profits were sent to Chile. Empanadas and Sangría were for sale, there was a barbeque, 200 pork chops per day. We took turns in guarding the tents and the equipment. The Solidarity Village was organized in a circle and in the middle, there was a stage where different Latin American bands played. One band from Chile was called Ranquil.” Photographer: Luis Villaroel.

BUNDESMINISTERIUM
FÜR
AUSWÄRTIGE ANGELEGENHEITEN

GZ. 31.08.68/37-IV.2/84

Wien, am 22. Mai 1984
Tel. (0222) 9615, KL 820 DW
Frau AR Kühn

Sehr geehrter Herr Notari!

Bezugnehmend auf Ihre kürzlichen Vorsprachen beehrt sich das Bundesministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten mitzuteilen, daß der Militärgerichtshof von Chile am 9. Mai 1984 die Enthaftung der letzten noch in Untersuchungshaft befindlichen Funktionäre der Fraktion der Sozialistischen Partei "Convergencia 19 de Abril" beschlossen hat. Unter den nunmehr Enthafteten befindet sich auch der Führer der Parteifraktion, Juan de Dios GUTIERREZ Soto.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen
Für den Bundesminister:
i.A. FABJAN

Herrn
Dante NOTARI

Wien

Figure 5: Official response to the request for support of the release of the Chilean political prisoner Juan Gutiérrez: "A triumph of the solidarity shown by the Austrian government" (1984). Person mentioned: Dante Notari Santos. Author: Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

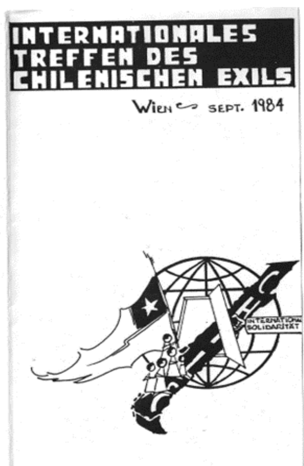

Figure 6: Invitation to the International Encounter of the Chilean Exile, Vienna (1984). As community member Manuel Pinto, who contributed to this pamphlet, put it: "This was yet another flank to fight the dictatorship." Artist unknown.

Figure 7: Camping with the Rote Falken [Red Falcons, the youth organization of the Austrian Socialist Party], (September 1982). One of the then-boys who participated in these summer camps told us: “We were a group of approximately 30 boys and girls from Chile, between seven and fifteen years old. We were there for two or three weeks. It was very nice, a solidary encounter, they treated us very well.” Photographer: Carlos Yañez Carreño.

Figure 8: Anti-Fascist memorial ceremony, Vienna (17 February 1982). Pictured: Galvarino Gómez, the representative of the Partido Comunista de Chile in Austria; Luis Corvalán, Secretary General of the Partido Comunista de Chile; and Bruno Furch, a member of Austria's Communist resistance against Hitler, a former fighter in the Spanish Civil War, and Vice-president of the Frente de la Solidaridad con Chile. Photographer: Franz Hausner.

Outreach

While Viena Chilena 73|23 catered to a need of the community itself, i.e., to provide a platform to have their experience of exile recorded and available, the process always involved a dimension of outward representation. The history of Chilean exile was to be included in Austria's broader historical canon, just as migration memory, in general, should become part of national cultures of remembrance. The results of the project were first presented in a community event hosted by the Austrian Institute for Latin America as part of Vienna's adult-education institution, Wiener Volkshochschulen, in November 2023. The project was also covered by Austrian media catering to Latin American communities, and around the actual anniversary of the coup, in September, there was general media coverage of the project and some of the interviewees. The project was also represented at a commemoratory exhibition in Chile (see Museo de la Memoria, 2024). Since then, Viena Chilena 73|23 has been invited by critical, activist-curatorial platforms such as the program "before it gets better…" at the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (Volkskundemuseum, 2024), to artistic-activist research symposia such as "Pass(ed) On" at the University of Arts Linz (Kunstuniversität Linz, 2024). There is also an ongoing exchange with migrant collectives intervening at the intersections between public life, arts, politics, and knowledge production, e.g., at the Museum of Migration (Wienwoche, 2023). Within the academic realm, a first Master's thesis based on Viena Chilena 73|23 is currently in the making at the University of Vienna, and the experience will be conveyed in university classes and adult education events in the future.

On the importance of living archives

All these activities constitute outreach formats, interlacing the memory of the Chilean diaspora with other parts of Austrian society. One of the aims is to show how the legacy of solidarity can be a powerful reminder of a living, open democracy. The archive itself has also been conceived as a living thing – its contents are meant to be continuously expanded by the Chilean exile community. Furthermore, an extended version of Viena Chilena's design is currently being realized as "Viena Latina – VIELAC" (cf. Viena Latina, 2024), a project carried out by the Austrian Institute for Latin America, Wien Museum, and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and funded by the EU-program "Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme." In conclusion, the objective of Viena Chilena 73 | 23 has not been to merely document a part of Austrian and global history, but to create a platform of collective historical self-representation and mnemonic articulation for the Chilean community of Vienna. As a participative form of engaged research,

this project–just as Viena Latina–aims for empowerment and self-determined knowledge production in a post-migrant context.

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ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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Decolonising Solidarity?

50 years of the Transnational Mapuche Advocacy Network

Sebastian Garbe

University of Applied Sciences Fulda, Germany

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

It intends to serve as a platform for testing, circulating, and debating new ideas and reflections on these topics, expanding beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries of Latin America - Abya Yala. We hope to contribute to connecting ideas, and to provide a space for intellectual exchange and discussion for a nascent academic community of scholars, devoted to counter-balancing mainstream understandings of development.

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Sebastian Garbe [1]

Decolonising Solidarity? 50 Years of the Transnatioanl Mapuche Advocacy Network

Abstract. While the 50th anniversary of the coup d'état against the government of Salvador Allende in Chile invites us to reflect on past and current experiences of solidarity between Latin America and Europe, the present contribution seeks to foreground the rather overlooked international solidarity efforts of and with the indigenous Mapuche. As a result of their forced exile to Europe after 1973, Mapuche activists began to organise themselves as a diasporic community in Europe and to form a transnational advocacy network in support of their people. This contribution aims to showcase how international solidarity of and with the Mapuche in Europe evolved over time, how they relate to non-indigenous, Chilean solidarity networks, and which underlying Mapuche notions of solidarity they reactivate in order to weave their transnational advocacy network. Therefore, this article seeks to make a contribution to critical understandings of solidarity and the hierarchies and differences involved in transnational solidarity action.

Keywords: decoloniality, Chile, Mapuche, solidarity, indigeneity.

Resumen. Mientras que el 50ª aniversatio del golpe de estado en contra del gobierno de Salvador Allende en Chile nos invita a reflexionar en experiencias de solidaridad pasadas y presentes entre America Latina y Europa, esta contribución busca poner el foco en los esfuerzos de solidaridad generalmente ignorados de y con el pueblo Mapuche. Como resultado de su exilio forzado hacia Europa luego de 1973, activistas Mapuches comenzaron a organizarse como una comunidad de diáspora en Europa y a formar una red transnacional para apoyar a su gente. Esta contribución tiene el objetivo de demostrar como la solidaridad internacional

[1] Sebastian Garbe is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Email: sebastian.garbe@sk.hs-fulda.de. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3786-609X

Mapuche en Europa evolucionó con el tiempo, cómo se relacionó con redes de solidaridad Chilenas no indígenas, y cuáles eran las nociones de solidaridad Mapuche que fueron reactivadas para tejer su red de apoyo transnacional. De esa manera, este articulo busca hacer una contribución a los estudios críticos de solidaridad y las jerarquías y diferencias presnetes en la acción solidaria transnacional.

Palabras clave: decolonialidad, Chile, Mapuche, solidaridad, indigeneidad.

Introduction

It seems to be an historical coincidence that, on the day of the military coup in Chile, led by Augusto Pinochet on September 11, 1973, the portrait of an indigenous woman headlined the cover of the weekly newspaper, *Chile Hoy*. Margarita Paillán, a Mapuche woman, mother of seven children, and someone who at the time was called a 'peasant leader', had travelled to the country's capital, Santiago de Chile, to denounce the persecution and torture of peasants and Mapuche people at the hands of the Chilean military in the Chilean South, the ancestral heartland of the indigenous Mapuche (Zerán, 2023). So, what does this coincidence tell us about the military coup in Chile, the persecution, murder, and forced exile of hundreds of thousands of Chileans, as well as the outstanding global solidarity movement with Chile after 1973? First, the story of Margarita Paillán seems to challenge the dominant timeline of the military dictatorship, dating from 1973 until 1989, as the repression against peasants and indigenous people in Chile was already spreading throughout the country before the military coup. Second, the prominence of a Mapuche woman on the cover of that newspaper highlights the fact that indigenous people were not only protagonists of the revolutionary developments in Chile until 1973, but also racialised targets of repression following the coup. Both the different timeline of state violence experienced in Wallmapu and the protagonism of indigenous organising urges us to reconsider our understanding of 1973: it requires us to interrogate why there is only a marginal place for indigenous actors and victims at the 50th commemoration of the coup and the global solidarity movement with Chile that followed.

The present contribution takes this absence as a point of departure to tell the story of the indigenous Mapuche solidarity movement that originated after 1973 in parallel, but also separately to, the Chilean diaspora and its solidarity network. By considering Mapuche actors as the 'forgotten victims' of the

dictatorship as well as the 'forgotten protagonists' of international exile and solidarity, this contribution discusses the conflicted relationship between (non-indigenous) Chileans and (indigenous) Mapuche within transnationalised expressions of solidarity, in which colonial relations between both groups are reproduced and challenged. Finally, within that context, Mapuche actors contribute notions and practices of solidarity from an indigenous background, enriching and challenging hegemonic and Western ideas of solidarity.

The following article seeks to analyse the transnational advocacy and solidarity network of the Mapuche people as part of their decolonial struggle for autonomy, territory, and plurinationality in contemporary Chile. The Mapuche are the largest indigenous group in Chile and, according to the latest census, about 10% of the population identify themselves as Mapuche (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2017) – although recent studies show that Chileans increasingly identify themselves as indigenous (Centro de Estudios Interculturales e Indígenas, 2020: 9). Particularly since the formal return to democracy in Chile in 1990, the Mapuche struggle for the decolonisation of their territories, for political autonomy and ecological justice, and against state repression and persecution has become increasingly prominent both nationally and internationally. They employ a vast set of political strategies with different degrees of organisation to fight for their recognition as an Indigenous nation, for political autonomy and self-determination, or for the return of their ancient territory in the Chilean South, the Wallmapu (Pairican, 2014).[2] Among these strategies is the transnationalisation of their struggle by making their demands and the human and Indigenous rights violations by the Chilean state internationally visible and weaving relations of solidarity beyond Wallmapu (Garbe, 2022; Habersang and Ydígoras, 2015). This includes transnational networking, diaspora organising and the employment of a variety of protest strategies. This contribution therefore engages with a relatively small field of critical Mapuche studies beyond Chilean academia (Bauer, 2021; Haughney, 2006; Kaltmeier, 2004; Richards, 2013), of which only a few have focused on the trans- and international outreach of Mapuche mobilisation (Garbe, 2022; Habersang and Ydígoras 2015; Salas Astrain and Le Bonniec, 2015).

My research methodology follows activist and committed research approaches (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Juris and Khasnabish, 2013), which enable an ethnographic approach to transnational spheres of Mapuche advocacy. Between 2014 and 2017, I participated in a total of nine Mapuche solidarity events in Europe and conducted 17 guided interviews with Mapuche and non-Mapuche actors. On two trips to Chile, I critically discussed the transnational solidarity

[2] Although the ancient territory of the Mapuche encompasses the Southern parts of today's Chile and Argentina, this contribution foremost engages with the Chilean context.

activism with a total of 33 interlocutors and engaged myself as a human rights observer on the ground. With this approach, I conducted research both 'in' and 'on' solidarity: I actively engaged in transnational Mapuche advocacy as a non-Indigenous supporter, while at the same time seeking to ethnographically grasp the diverse forms, encounters, understandings and practices of transnational Mapuche activism. This methodological approach demanded constant reflection, as well as questioning my own role as a non-indigenous supporter of the movement, opening new, yet conflicted spaces of analysis and reflection (Garbe, 2023).

Decolonizing Solidarity Studies

In this contribution I propose analysing the transnational activism and advocacy of/with the Mapuche through the conceptual lens of (international) solidarity by engaging with a growing and exciting field of (critical) solidarity studies (Busen and Wallaschek, 2022; Stiehler et al., 2023; Susemichel and Kastner, 2021).

General definitions of solidarity are based on the assumption that solidarity always involves a certain degree of cohesion between group members, with specific normative goals (Bayertz, 1998a: 11–12). Thus, solidarity mediates between the community and the individual; it is a form of community formation and entails positive moral obligations (Scholz, 2008: 18–19).[3] The political notion of solidarity that this article engages refers to international or intranational alliances within political, socio-cultural or ecological struggles (Süß and Torp 2021; Behr 2022) , in which the involved actors come together in the pursuit of a specific goal, usually against a political antagonist (Bayertz, 1998; Scholz, 2008). Such an understanding of solidarity usually describes the experiences of international or domestic alliances among and between collectives that share a particular political ideology or class position. Yet, there is a certain tendency within solidarity studies to assume a commonality of the involved actors and leave the involved differences unacknowledged (Susemichel and Kastner, 2021; Zablotsky, 2023). In contrast, I argue that it would be more productive to focus

[3] A widely accepted conceptual refinement of the different dimensions of solidarity further differentiates solidarity as a) a moral and universal idea, b) civic obligations, state responsibility and care within the modern nation-state, c) a term that describes social and communal bonds, and finally d) political solidarity in the struggle for social justice (Bayertz, 1998a; Scholz, 2008).

on what happens to political solidarities when the actors and groups involved do not share the same background, vulnerability, privilege or access to resources.

There are at least three thematic and theoretical fields in which the limitations and possibilities of solidarity across and beyond difference is debated: critical historiography, particularly that with an interest in anticolonial resistance and alliances, Black and Third World feminism, and, finally, post- and decolonial theory. To begin with, there are exciting historical investigations on expressions of solidarity and political alliances in the recent decades and centuries between groups and actors beyond difference. What these cases show is that actors and groups unite across racialised, colonial or ethnic differences, or differences based on citizenship or class in order to fight colonial forms of exploitation and domination (Featherstone, 2012; Gandhi, 2006; Gopal, 2019; Linebaugh and Rediker, 2013). In particular, expressions of solidarity with revolutionary movements across Latin America in the 20th century demonstrate how actors from the Global South have shaped creative understandings and practices of solidarity, fostering relations of South-South solidarity across differences (Stites Mor, 2022; 2013; Stites Mor and del Carmen Suescun Pozas, 2018). Focusing on the differences within solidarity relations helps us to recognise the agency of those groups who are the actual political protagonists in a common struggle, but who have often been silenced or forgotten – for example, students from the so-called 'Third World' during worldwide student protests of the 1960s (Hendrickson, 2022; Seibert, 2008; Slobodian, 2012). These examples not only bring such silenced and forgotten actors into the archive of historical experiences of solidarity, but also enrich the debate by including different forms of organisation and practices of solidarity, political analyses from a different perspective or other focal points of the struggles. The case of the transnational advocacy of and with the Mapuche conveys how Mapuche actors themselves are the protagonists of the transnationalisation of their struggle who shaped international solidarity networks through their ideas and concepts.

One of the most challenging and productive contributions to the debate on solidarity, its universal conceptualisation, and its limitations and possibilities both across and beyond difference comes from critical feminist theory. Black feminists and feminists from the Global South in particular, such as bell hooks, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, have questioned the universality of womanhood and gender-specific experiences in different contexts (hooks, 1986; Davis, 1983; Lorde, 2019; Mohanty, 1988). In this tradition, supposedly universal experiences are deconstructed as particular positionalities and interests. From this feminist critique follows the claim that, instead of perpetuating the "myth of equality" (Zablotsky, 2023: 112) within solidarity studies, recognising both "the historical and experiential specificities and differences […] as well as the historical and experiential connections […] from

different national, racial, and cultural communities" (Mohanty, 2003: 242). Only by recognising this difference would it be possible to consider solidarity not as an already given universal, but as a shared site of political struggle on which competing or complementing meanings of universality, as well as equal access to resources and the creation of shared commons, can be negotiated (Butler, 2000; Hark et al., 2015; Zablotsky, 2023).

Finally, post- and decolonial critiques have begun to complicate notions of solidarity across difference because of their situatedness within colonial and racist structures – rather than outside of them (Mohanty, 2003). They contributed, among other things, to understanding how notions of entire regions or societies in the Global South are influenced by colonial representations (Said, 2003), or how even well-intentioned advocacy reproduces paternalism and silences subaltern voices (Alcoff, 1992; Spivak, 1988). Therefore, solidarity can even reproduce these structures of colonial and racist inequalities as long as it is "non-performative", that is, if it does not change the conditions under which solidarity relations occur, nor redistribute material resources (Ahmed, 2004). In the context of this post- and decolonial critique, few empirical studies have taken up the challenge of empirically examining specific expressions of (international or intranational) solidarity and transnational alliances with a focus on the racialised and gendered differences between the groups and actors involved (Conway, Dufour and Masson, 2021; Land, 2015; Mahrouse, 2014). And despite the recent resurgence of theoretical and political interest in solidarity, there is little ongoing research that emphasises the epistemic and critical potential of practices of solidarity and mutual aid by subaltern or affected actors, groups, and grassroots organisations.

This last argument points towards the possibility of decolonising solidarity studies. By engaging with practices and ideas of solidarity that are developed by subaltern, racialised or discriminated groups, particularly those that are nurtured by non-Western, or indigenous traditions of thought, it becomes possible to counter the underlying Eurocentrism within solidarity studies.[4]

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[4] This would be the case, when, for example, experiences, practices, and ideas of solidarity are limited to the Christian, white, and male experience within the modern-nation state in the Global North. There is a certain tendency in solidarity studies, particularly within social and moral philosophy, to foreground such a Western and European genealogy of solidarity (see for example Brunkhorst, 2002; Grosse Kracht, 2021; Bayertz, 1998b). Ironically, what these perspectives do not seem to consider is that European philosophy since the Enlightenment "was produced in a regime of global synchronicity" (Conrad, 2012: 1014–15) and heavily influenced by Islamic, Chinese, or **

Instead, a decolonising perspective on solidarity would take those differences and inequalities, which are the result of racial social stratification within colonial modernity (Mills 1997; Quijano 2014), as a point of departure, engaging with ideas, perspectives and practices of solidarity that have been historically marginalised and delegitimised within a "coloniality of knowledge" (Lander, 2005). To decolonise solidarity studies therefore requires seeking out an "transcultural translation" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010: 17–36) between eurocentric and non-Western conceptualisations and practices of solidarity, without ignoring their asymmetrical relation or appropriating subaltern knowledges to hegemonic spaces. Bringing these reflections back to my ethnography on Mapuche solidarity networks, the practices and ideas of solidarity deployed by the Mapuche within their advocacy network are a valuable contribution to this dialogue.

The Transnational Mapuche Advocacy Network in the Making

This section explains how Mapuche organisations and communities in Wallmapu and via diasporic groups have managed to transnationalise their struggle and situate it beyond the constraints of their domestic conflict with the Chilean state. What is noteworthy about these experiences is that international solidarity with the Mapuche has been and still is mostly among the Mapuche themselves, especially due to their diasporic experience in Europe[5] since 1973 in parallel but also separately to the (non-indigenous) Chilean diaspora and its solidarity network. This means that the international solidarity of and with the Mapuche is the result of the socio-cultural dynamics of their society, particularly its transnationalisation since the 1970s. The following section will mostly focus on diasporic solidarity efforts in Europe, although Mapuche organisations in Wallmapu have also had a crucial role in internationalising their struggle and building alliances beyond Chile.[6]

Native American traditions of thought (Dussel, 2000; Graeber and Wengrow, 2024). What this would mean for the concept and idea of solidarity, is yet to be investigated.

[5] It needs to be mentioned that the Mapuche exile is not limited to this region and, for example, today there are Mapuche advocacy groups in Canada and Australia.

[6] Despite the Pinochet dictatorship, many new Mapuche organisations were founded in the 1980s, especially in urban areas. They organised political and socio-cultural resistance against the dictatorship, often abandoning their previous affiliations within the (mostly left-wing) party spectrum and began to forge alliances with other actors and organisations at an international level. In 1975, for example, a Mapuche representative, Melillan Painemal, was elected Vice President of the *Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas* **

The repression and persecution under Pinochet's military dictatorship forced many Mapuche to leave Chile. A significant Mapuche diaspora emerged, defined as "the population forced to leave Wallmapu, their national territory, for political and economic reasons" (Marimán et al., 2006: 261).[7] While a total estimate of 260,000 people with different socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic background left Chile and migrated to approximately 60 different countries (Rebolledo, 2010: 165), data on Mapuche exile remains scarce. There are at least 50 known biographies of Mapuche who emigrated to Western European countries between 1973 and 1978, to take up residence in Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland and the Netherlands (Chihuailaf, 2002). Other studies speak of "hundreds of Mapuche" who were imprisoned during the dictatorship and then went into exile, but do not provide exact figures (Rebolledo, 2010: 181). Most of the exiled Mapuche were political leaders or active in peasant or student organisations as well as workers' and teachers' unions (Chihuailaf, 2002: 169). In that regard, it is also important to note that a still unknown number of Mapuche children were forcibly removed from their families in the 1970s and 80s and put out for (illegal) foreign adoptions, who also became part of the diasporic community.[8]

The diasporic experience of the Mapuche in Europe changed their own perception of the socio-cultural situation of the Mapuche in Chile. Godofredo Cotrena, for instance, was an active member of the left-wing revolutionary land movement and Mapuche organisations before and during the dictatorship. During his exile in Belgium in the 1980s, he realised that the Mapuche and non-Mapuche exiles from Chile were treated in the same way as 'regular' migrants, without taking into account the intersectional discrimination faced by the Mapuche (as exiles, leftists and indigenous people) (Rebolledo, 2010: 181–85). In exile, he

(CMPI) based in Canada. Mapuche organisations from Chile also participated in the founding of the *Consejo Indio Sudamericano* (CISA) in Cuzco, Peru, and contributed to the development of common positions on anti-capitalist and ethnonational demands in 1980 (Marimán et al., 2006: 236).

[7] It is worth noting that due to the colonial experience in Chile, the Mapuche diaspora can be defined as all Mapuche who live outside their historical territory, meaning in other parts of Chile and abroad . In this article, I use the term Mapuche diaspora in the narrower sense of the word, to refer to those who define themselves as Mapuche and live permanently in "external" (Rebolledo, 2010) or "second exile" (Chihuailaf, 2002: 169), i.e., outside the nation states of Chile and Argentina.

[8] A recent study counted 488 children whose family and ethnic origins remain unclear (López, 2018). However, due to the socio-economic backgrounds of the mothers, it can be assumed that a considerable number of these illegally adopted children were also abducted from Mapuche mothers.

became aware of the normalised racism towards the Mapuche in Chile. He also recounted understanding that political parties (of the left) in Chile did not really understand the particularity of the indigenous or ethnic experience in their country.[9] Ultimately, in the diaspora, the experience of discrimination was transformed into pride of being Mapuche and created a sense of community among the Mapuche in exile. In this way, the Mapuche diaspora made an ideological shift towards a neo- or pan-indigenist ideology, similar to what was happening among Mapuche organisations in Wallmapu around the same time. The reason for this shift was the shared experience as an indigenous diasporic group, which contributed to a critical awareness of the colonial constitution of Chilean society.

An organisational milestone for the first generation Mapuche diaspora in Europe was a meeting of around twenty-five Mapuche exiles in London from 25 to 28 February 1978, during which participants positioned themselves as an autonomous political actor of the Chilean diaspora (Chihuailaf, 2002: 170; Rebolledo, 2010: 182). They hereby created a space to gather and exchange experiences of the repressive reality under the dictatorship and the discriminatory and racist structure of Chilean society. Ultimately, the meeting was the founding moment of the *Comité Exterior Mapuche* (Exterior Mapuche Committee, CEM), the precursor of today's organisational forms among the Mapuche diaspora. They published information in Western European newspapers and magazines, but also in publications of the (non-indigenous) Chilean diaspora, as well as in radio and television programmes. They also established their own means of communication and began to disseminate information in several self-published bulletins (Chihuailaf, 2002: 170-74).

The diasporic experience of the first generation of Mapuche in Europe represents an important precedent for the transnationalisation of their struggle. They developed a sense of community and belonging among themselves, while at the same time developing increasingly critical ideas about their situation as a colonised and discriminated collective in Chile. On this basis, they organised independently from political parties, Chilean exiles and European organisations, and began to form a solid organisational structure in the diaspora instead. What is more, they succeeded in transculturalising the European solidarity scene by importing their political ideas and forms of organisation, particularly their cultural politics of autonomy,[10] from Wallmapu to Europe (Rebolledo, 2010: 183; Garbe,

[9] "I realised that the left-wing parties, the Unidad Popular and, of course, all the other parties as well, did not understand the indigenous problem " (Godofredo Cotrena in Rebolledo, 2010: 184).

[10] The cultural politics of autonomy are rooted in the historical experiences of the Mapuche society and their struggle to maintain their autonomy during the Spanish invasion and later
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2022: 101–42) When the CEM ceased its work in the mid-1980s, the Mapuche diaspora partially disintegrated, but until the early 1990s it increasingly organised itself on a national level in the respective countries to which its members had migrated (Chihuailaf, 2002: 176).

During my ethnographic research in Europe between 2015 and 2018, I visited and joined several solidarity events that were organised by members of the first and second generation of the Mapuche diaspora with the support of European NGOs. Members of the Mapuche diaspora in Europe form the organisational core of current socio-political and cultural solidarity efforts in Europe. It is remarkable how the Mapuche diaspora in Europe organises solidarity events independently and on their own terms, even if they are supported by other non-Mapuche organisations, groups, and activists. For example, they receive logistical or financial support from NGOs and individual non-indigenous activists are invited to participate. This means that the Mapuche (the diaspora or delegations from Wallmapu) are the protagonists of these events. They decide whom to invite, who would deliver talks and what the schedule should look like. Other solidarity actors, such as myself, are invited to these events and may be asked to take on certain support tasks, such as translating press releases, doing the grocery shopping or helping out in the kitchen.

The organisational forms and political strategies of today's second-generation Mapuche diaspora are a direct result of the experiences of the first generation that came to Europe from 1973 (Rebolledo, 2010: 185).[11] The political strategies of the first generation of the diaspora, such as the cultural politics of autonomy policies, were passed on directly to the second generation, sometimes

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the Chilean state as well as their general socio-political organisation, in which territorial units and communities seek to maintain their autonomy from each other. Today, most of the relevant and visible Mapuche organisations and communities share the struggle for autonomy, and, more recently, for self-determination and plurinationality, as a shared horizon for social change. Ultimately, autonomy is a central political and philosophical concept debated within contemporary critical Mapuche thought (Llaitul and Arrate 2012; Marimán, 2012; Tricot, 2013).

[11] Second generation Mapuche in Europe are mostly the children of those refugees/migrants who came to Europe in the 1970s. They were born in Europe and therefore claim a hybrid identity that is nurtured by their indigenous heritage, their place of birth, and a rejection of being subsumed as Chileans. Today’s solidarity events organised by the Mapuche diaspora reflect this hybridity through their multilingualism (Spanish, Mapuzugun, and the respective mother tongues of the second generation, such as Dutch, French or German). Besides one ethno-biography about the Railaf Zuñiga family, who left Chile during the dictatorship in the 1970s and settled in the Netherlands (Casagrande, 2015), there is no research available on the second Mapuche generation.

within the same family structures. On several occasions, the Mapuche diaspora, which today coordinates solidarity with Wallmapu, explained to me how their parents trained them politically and taught them how to organise solidarity actions with Wallmapu in Europe. They emphasised that one of the most important lessons was how solidarity in Europe can be organised autonomously and independently of non-Mapuche organisations and people.

Similar to the 1970s and 80s (Kaltmeier, 2004: 365), the Mapuche diaspora today serves as a contact point for Mapuche representatives and delegates who travel to Europe to provide information about the situation of the Mapuche in Wallmapu at conferences, international organisations, smaller workshops or individual solidarity events. Jaime Huenchullán, a *werken*[12] of the autonomous community of Temucuicui, recognises the important role of the Mapuche diaspora in the transnationalisation of their struggle. He stated that, during his visits to Europe, he particularly appreciates the enthusiasm and logistical support of his "Mapuche brothers and sisters" (Radio Mapuche, 2015). The Mapuche diaspora is in close contact with Mapuche organisations and communities from Wallmapu, and thus supports the organisation and coordination of their visits to Europe. Activists from the Mapuche diaspora invite the delegations from Wallmapu to their homes, translate their speeches and organise most of the logistics. Of strategic importance are the solidarity groups of the Mapuche diaspora that live in cities where the headquarters of international or supranational organisations are located, such as Geneva or Brussels. The presence and support of the Mapuche diaspora provides representatives of Wallmapu with a space that is independent of non-Mapuche organisations and actors. The Mapuche diaspora thus guarantees that the delegations can maintain their cultural politics of autonomy, even when abroad.

One major difference to the first generation is that contemporary solidarity efforts of the second generation are characterised by a strong female presence, and many Mapuche women are protagonists of solidarity efforts. Therefore, the diagnosis that "women played a substantial role in the development of a reconstruction process of Mapuche society" (Leiva Salamanca, 2015:kl 168) also applies to the Mapuche diaspora in Europe.[13] This is because Mapuche women in Europe today not only play a prominent role in public solidarity events, but also recreate cultural practices such as preparing food (*zeuma iyael*) or talking together while drinking mate tea (*matetun*). In this way, Mapuche women in

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[12] A Mapuche communities' spokesperson.

[13] Similarly, the multifaceted ways by which Mapuche women recreate cultural practices in the home in Santiago and how these enable the articulation of place identity in culturally modified post-migration urban spaces" (Becerra et. al., 2017: 14), for example in Santiago de Chile, might also be observed for the diasporic context in Europe.

particular are responsible for the "meanings, images, memories, wisdom, customs, and practices that constitute the basic inputs to recreate cultural practices." In doing so, they "help maintain social configurations and ways of inhabiting public and private spaces that emphasise community solidarity, indigenous knowledges, and reciprocity" (Ibid., 14-15).

The prominent role of Mapuche women in public solidarity events organised by the diaspora intervenes in Europe's political arena , a historically male-dominated space, by denouncing human rights violations or demanding indigenous and especially indigenous women's rights (Richards, 2005). At the same time, their visibility rejects eurocentric and colonial ideas about indigenous cultures and societies as male-dominated and patriarchal, whose women must be rescued by white men (Spivak, 1988). Thus, the struggle of Mapuche women can be seen as part of a dynamic in which, in recent years, black and indigenous women from Latin America in particular have become internationally prominent figures in ecological struggles, their communities and the struggle for alternatives to neoliberal and patriarchal capitalism in the region.[14] The success of their resistance was reflected in the fact that they soon became the target of state repression or death squads (Hiner and González, 2023; Richards, 2005: 208–9). In the context of Wallmapu, the spiritual leader *machi* Francisca Linconao and community activist Macarena Valdés became symbols of indigenous, feminist and ecological resistance in the Global South.

Decolonising Solidarity?

The making of transnational advocacy of and with the Mapuche, especially through the efforts of a Mapuche diaspora living in Europe, shows that there is a continuity of relations of solidarity between Chile and Europe that is different to and hidden from more prominent solidarity efforts with 'the Chilean people'. Therefore, Mapuche solidarity activism has inscribed a difference and heterogeneity into the entanglements of solidarity between the two geographies, Chile and Europe, as well as introducing indigenous, Mapuche elements into the involved practices of solidarity. The effort of claiming their difference within solidarity action and the indigenisation of practices of solidarity are important

[14] Prominent cases include the murder of Honduran activist Berta Cárceres in 2016 and the assassination of Rio de Janeiro city counci lor and queer feminist activist Marielle Franco in 2018.

elements of how Mapuche advocacy decolonises relations of solidarity in the present context. This final section of the paper develops this argument further.

From the beginning of this piece, the story of Margarita Paillán has shown that a wave of repression had already reached Wallmapu and its indigenous population even before September 11, 1973. For the Mapuche, repression also continued after the dictatorship ended and Chile returned to formal democracy in 1989. The indigenous population living in Chile, especially the Mapuche, continued to suffer from and mobilise against state repression and persecution (Pairican, 2014). This means that, while the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, including the suspension of basic democratic and civil rights, was a historical exception for most sectors of Chilean society, it is rather another chapter in the asymmetrical, colonial history between the Chilean state and the Mapuche people. The different timeline of the Mapuche concerning the repressive reality in Wallmapu reproduces a crucial element of colonial imaginations and knowledges, in which indigenous realities have been relegated to an historical past and their coevalness denied (Fabian, 1983; Quijano, 2014). A critical, decolonising account of solidarity would need to address this "allochronism" (Fabian, 1983: 32) within international solidarity efforts, meaning that the repression of the Mapuche did not cease with the end of the dictatorship.

Actors of the transnational advocacy network of and with the Mapuche strategically pursue this approach. They embed the criminalisation, persecution, and violence against the Mapuche in Wallmapu within a more general and comprehensive critique of the military dictatorship in Chile from 1973 to 1989. The structural violation of human rights during the dictatorship has been widely recognised nationally and internationally and has been historically addressed by the Chilean state, for example through the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation. From the perspective of the Mapuche and their solidarity actors, however, this "dictatorship has never ended".[15] Alex Mora is Mapuche and has lived with his family in Cologne, Germany, for many years, where he is active in regional solidarity action with Wallmapu. An important motivation for his solidarity activism was the fate of his brother, who was tortured and killed during the dictatorship. He also experienced police violence himself when the Chilean police raided his house and beat his brother in front of his eyes. Alex Mora's personal history shows how an already recognised framework of injustice in relation to the dictatorship serves to legitimise his own solidarity activism with the Mapuche. He also experienced first-hand how discrimination and repression unfold on a daily basis in Mapuche communities such as Temucuicui, and how this is similar to the repression under the dictatorship.

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[15] Alex Mora, personal interview with the author, 28/11/2015.

Therefore, this framing becomes a powerful tool for transnational alliances to hold the current Chilean state accountable in light of past human rights violations. This strategy aims to counter Chile's self-portrayal as a defender and guarantor of human rights that has come to terms with its dark past. Jaime Huenchullán, *werken* of the autonomous community of Temucuicui, explains that international solidarity has a subversive potential because “they [the Chilean political elite] don't want their image to be stained”.[16] This particular strategy is an example of “frame amplification” (Snow et al., 2008: 257–58) in which an interpretative frame of a particular situation (e.g. the dictatorship and its crimes) is actualised (e.g. that the dictatorship never ended) and its memory strengthened (e.g. that similar offences are still being committed). On the one hand, more people within Chilean or international civil society can be reached. On the other hand, the positive post-dictatorial image of the Chilean state can be called into question, allowing activists to demand compliance with human rights, particularly the rights of the indigenous population .

Such a frame amplification has also been mobilised amongst the Mapuche participants during the popular rebellion in Chile in 2019, the so-called *estallido social*. While multiple and diverse social sectors of these protests framed their resistance as part of the struggle against thirty years of neoliberal democracy, Mapuche demonstrators positioned their own against 300 years of coloniality. At the same time, the fierce government repression of the *estallido* reminded many Chileans and international observers of the darkest years of the Chilean dictatorship. The images of the military police patrolling the streets of Santiago de Chile during curfew hours caused international and domestic outrage. But while these weeks brought back traumatising memories for a whole generation of Chileans, repression and human rights violations had never really ceased in Wallmapu. In other words, “everything we have seen since October [2019] in the centre of the cities (militarization, repression, assassinations, etc.) has had the Araucanía region as its laboratory, from 1997 to the present” (Zapata, 2021: 146). The success of such a frame amplification during the *estallido* can be exemplified by the fact that the *wenufoye*, the Mapuche national flag and a “symbol of ideological decolonisation” (Pairican, 2019), as well as the face of Camilo Catrillanca, a young Mapuche who was killed by the police in 2018, were prominently displayed during the manifestations.[17]

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[16] Personal interview with the author, 20/03/2016.

[17] For a further discussion on how the ‘Mapuche issue’ gained visibility during the *estallido* see Gordon-Zolov and Eric Zolov (2022).

The "colonial difference" (Mignolo, 2000) of the Mapuche within the international solidarity efforts with Chile and Wallmapu is a terrain of constant negotiation and contestation. For example, despite the Mapuche diaspora's crucial role in current solidarity efforts in Europe, there is a struggle to recognise their efforts as Mapuche. For example, in a public interview with Andrea Cotrena, a Mapuche woman living in Belgium, during a solidarity event in The Hague, the interviewer refers to her as part of the "Chilean delegation" (TeleSur, 2015). Andrea Cotrena rejected this categorisation and introduced herself as a Mapuche woman living in Belgium. This is significant, as she explicitly refused to be subsumed under Chilean ethno-nationality. With her contribution, Andrea Cotrena also challenged essentialising ideas that the Mapuche identity is fixed to a specific territory. Instead, she insisted on the continuity of the Mapuche struggle within the diaspora, linking her endeavours to those of her father, a renowned Mapuche leader: "The struggle continues", she stated (TeleSur, 2015). At the same time, she positioned herself as a member of a collective by speaking in the first-person plural. In doing so, she established a translocal connection between the Mapuche in Wallmapu and in the diaspora, but also a continuity between her parents and her own generation.

There is thus a struggle on the symbolic level within international solidarity efforts, in which Mapuche activists criticise those attitudes and discourses of non-indigenous people who want to subsume the Mapuche under a (Chilean or Argentinian) nationality. Such practices are an expression of the nationalist paternalism of non-Mapuche Chileans or Europeans, which is now being reproduced in solidarity work. This critique was articulated during my ethnographic research by several Mapuche solidarity actors living in Europe. In one extensive conversation, Llanquiray Painemal, a Mapuche woman and political activist living in Berlin explained this problematic constellation.[18] Particularly on a discursive level, she pointed out that white Chileans often talk about indigenous people in a possessive way, and "say, for example, 'oh, our Mapuche'". Her critique also applies to the fact that, on several occasions, non-Mapuche Chileans have shown up at solidarity events in Europe with a Chilean national flag without realising that "the Chilean flag has a colonial history". In contrast, the Mapuche flag, according to Llanquiray Painemal, has the "meaning of an anti-racist, anti-colonial struggle".

Nationalist and paternalistic appropriation is also expressed through experiences in which "they [the Chileans] want to speak for you, but don't want you to speak" or claim to be the "representatives of the Mapuche in Europe." These acts are, by no means, limited to the symbolic realm, but can have very

[18] Personal interview with the author, 16/06/2017. The following quotes are retrieved from this interview.

concrete material consequences. For example, non-Mapuche actors and organisations receive donations or funding for supporting 'the Mapuche cause' but manage those funds without necessarily being accountable towards their indigenous partners. Mapuche communities and organisations in Wallmapu seem to be aware of this danger, and therefore demand transparency and accountability not only from NGOs but also from members of the Mapuche diaspora. Andrea Cotrena[19] revealed that "people there [in Wallmapu] think that we [the Mapuche diaspora] are making extra money [...], taking advantage of the Mapuche name and things like that".

Maybe the most important intervention in the struggle over representation by the transnational solidarity efforts of the Mapuche is that they seek to challenge and transform the racialised stereotype of the Mapuche as domestic terrorists. Since the late 1990s, right-wing media, such as the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio*, have openly and directly associated the political mobilisation and resistance of Mapuche communities and organisations with criminal, terrorist, violent and aggressive acts (Kaufmann, 2010). These discourses are widely accepted in Chilean society and, as a result, the causes of the conflict in Wallmapu are attributed solely to the Mapuche. In particular, the term "Mapuche conflict" was introduced in this context, thus unilaterally attributing responsibility for the conflict in Wallmapu to the Mapuche. One expression of this discourse is the association and equation of the Mapuche mobilisation with armed insurgent organisations such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, the Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain or even internationally-operating terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda (Cayuqueo, 2012: 74–76; 110–12; Kizugünewtun Independencia, 2017). These discourses not only criminalise the political expressions of Mapuche society, but also contribute to legitimatising their repression and persecution based on the Anti-Terror Law 18.314, a legacy of the dictatorship. Therefore, a central goal of the Mapuche is to challenge this negative stereotype in Chile and beyond.

Hence, decolonising solidarity is not only about claiming an indigenous difference within the political practice of international solidarity efforts, but also about introducing indigenous (Mapuche) elements into the different symbols, practices and understandings of solidarity. To begin with, the international solidarity efforts of the Mapuche are not limited to advocacy work within supranational organisations or collaborating with human and indigenous rights NGOs. The common solidarity endeavours of the Mapuche diaspora are inextricably linked to the feeling of being part of and belonging to the Mapuche

[19] Personal interview with the author 06/06/2017.

community. This contributes to rebuilding the social fabric and cultural traditions of the Mapuche abroad. Not only do m any of the solidarity events organised by the Mapuche diaspora have a political dimension, but they also serve to celebrate the survival of Mapuche culture, to revive, remember or restore it as part of a broader decolonial struggle (Smith, 2008: 142–63). For example, activists from the Mapuche diaspora wear their traditional clothing and jewellery, use Mapuche instruments like the *trutruka* and *kultrun*, and openly display the wenufoye, the Mapuche flag, at solidarity events. Solidarity events are also organised according to certain Mapuche rituals and begin, for example, with the short welcoming prayer, *jejipun*. The celebration and display of Mapuche cultural symbols is an essential element of community-building within the Mapuche diaspora. These efforts not only shift cultural symbols into the European context, but also reaffirm the social fabric of the Mapuche diaspora, reactivating cultural traditions in a transnational sphere, and transculturalising typical Western iconography of international solidarity.

Moreover, a widely practised Latin American protest tactic of indigenous origins has been transferred to the European context: the so-called *funa* (from the verb *funar*, which in Chilean Spanish is a synonym for ‘protesting against someone’), which originates in post-dictatorial Chile. At that time, human rights organisations and relatives of the dictatorship’s victims began to denounce suspected or known human rights violators, perpetrators or complicit politicians in public, who have not been prosecuted and were able to move on with their lives after the dictatorship ended. To *funar* someone would mean to show up at their homes and workplaces and set up small manifestations on a regular basis in order to disrupt their daily lives, by standing in their way, whistling and shouting at them, chanting slogans of the human rights movement, and holding up the portraits of the victims. A *funa*’s aim is also to inform bystanders, neighbours, and co-workers about the committed crimes and hereby making the denounced people’s post-dictatorial lives increasingly difficult. In that way, for example, the denounced person no longer appears at their workplace, or moves out of their homes. This type of manifestation therefore manages to publicly name those responsible for human rights violations, insists on their judicial prosecution, and remembers the dictatorship’s victims. Interestingly, the word *funar* originates from Mapuzugun, and can be translated as ‘to make something go bad’. This protest tactic was used by the Mapuche and Chilean diaspora in Europe to protest at Chilean embassies and consulates. The tactic became particularly significant when activists accused former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet of her government’s human and indigenous rights violations. This was particularly prevalent during her frequent trips to Europe in her last term in office (2014 to 2018), when demonstrations were organised against her on several occasions, for example in Stockholm, Geneva, Cologne and Leuven.

International solidarity requires constant negotiations and meetings, not only with political antagonists but also among allies. Being in dialogue has been introduced to me as a central cultural technique by Jaime Huenchullán, *werken* of the autonomous municipality of Temucuicui, by emphasising that the Mapuche have always been a “very open people for dialogue.”[20] For him, the willingness to engage in dialogue with non-Mapuche is a historical constant of his society. Consequently, the historically and cosmologically rooted ideas of dialogue can be understood as a central cultural technique of the Mapuche for the current framework of international solidarity. First, the importance of conversational practices within Mapuche culture is visible on a small scale through the practice of *matetun*, collective mate-tea drinking, which is “gregarious, relaxed, affectionate, and empathic gatherings that involve discursive practices” (Becerra et al., 2018: 13–14).

In addition, the concept and function of a dialogue is described by the Mapuzugun term *ragiñelwe*, which can be translated as ‘space of the middle’. *Ragiñelwe* is “a cultural expression whose function is to mediate between the parts concerned”, for example “between people where a certain type of alienation has created a certain imbalance” (COTAM, 2003: 1166). The institution of *ragiñelwe* initiates a dialogue between the parties concerned in order to restore the balance. This willingness to engage in dialogue can also be found, for example, in the socio-political institution of *trawvn*, a space and moment of self-organised encounters with dialogues, open decision-making and transparent agreements (Nahuelpan, 2016: 114). In the institution of the *koyang*, which has since been translated as *parlamentos*, bilateral negotiations between the Mapuche and the Spanish colonial powers between the 17th and 19th centuries , the dialogue between the involved parties was highly relevant to diplomatically resolving conflicts (Contreras Painemal, 2010: 52–55). What is important about such notions of dialogue is that they require a previous negotiation about the terms of the conversation. Representatives of the Chilean government have repeatedly failed to provide spaces in which a dialogue between Chilean and Mapuche representatives can take place on a neutral and horizontal basis.

Finally, Mapuche actors introduce understandings and conceptualisations of solidarity that are different to Western ideas of solidarity and reactivate an indigenous cosmology. During my ethnographic fieldwork, several Mapuche interlocutors were reluctant to frame the struggle in support of their people, be it in Wallmapu or in Europe, as solidarity, and were critical of the eurocentric

[20] Personal interview with the author, 20/03/2016.

underpinnings of that concept. The internationally renowned Mapuche poet Rayen Kvyeh expressed this critique the following way:

> The Western concept of solidarity is when you give something to someone. We do not give something to someone, we share. You share the pain, you share the land, you share the food, you share love, beliefs, the struggle of belonging of being Mapuche – that is solidarity. It is not that you give the other [something]. Mapuche solidarity does not have a price, it does not have a currency. It does not translate into currency. It does translate in facts, in care, in love, in work, in being there. That is solidarity.[21]

She hereby associates the Western concept of solidarity with paternalistic and hierarchical relationships. Instead, according to her interpretation of Mapuche cosmology, solidarity is part of belonging to a group and takes place within the communal life, as a member of this community. This understanding of solidarity therefore cannot be detached from the social context in which they take place and is linked to a specific collective. This conceptualisation of solidarity is not exclusive but demands the establishment of sustainable, intimate and reciprocal social relations *before* engaging in a common political struggle. Such an understanding of solidarity can be expressed with the Mapuche principles of *keyuwvn*, working together, and *mingako*, collective work in the community. With these principles in mind, it becomes clearer why the Mapuche diaspora in Europe puts such a strong emphasis on community building within their common solidarity efforts and 'weave' non-indigenous supporters into their social fabric.

Conclusion

In the context of the 50th anniversary of the military coup in September 2023 in Chile, this article aimed to foreground the rather overlooked and hidden solidarity efforts of and with the indigenous Mapuche, and to discuss how it evolved over time. In doing so, it sought to reinscribe indigenous agency, protest strategies, and visions of solidarity into the memory and legacy of international solidarity between Latin America and other parts of the world. The international advocacy efforts of the Mapuche hereby weave relations of solidarity beyond the colonial constraints of the Chilean nation-state and decolonise dominant understandings of solidarity. This includes, on the one hand, claiming an indigenous difference within the very political praxis of international solidarity, particularly within the (post)colonial relation between Mapuche and non-indigenous Chileans. On the other hand, it means introducing indigenous, in this case Mapuche, elements into different symbols, practices and understandings of

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[21] Personal interview with the author, 01/03/2016.

solidarity, which urges us to think of solidarity beyond eurocentric categories, and on the basis of different cosmological and epistemological perspectives.

Indigenous biographies, such as the story of peasant leader Margarita Paillán or Mapuche solidarity activist Alex Mora, show there is a different timeline of repression and persecution for Mapuche people in Chile. While the suspension of basic democratic and civil rights during the dictatorship was a historical exception for most sectors of Chilean society, it is rather another chapter in the asymmetrical, colonial history between the Chilean state and the Mapuche. Also, the repression during the *estallido social* in 2019 was for many Mapuche yet another episode of colonial violence, the only difference now being that it was brought to the countries' capital. To scrutinise the colonial difference within relations of solidarity between Latin America and other parts of the world is not only insightful for the case of the Mapuche, but would also help to articulate a critique of the colonial relations between progressive governments and indigenous minorities in other parts of the continent. Historically, this might concern the problematic relationship between the Sandinista government in the 1980s and Nicaragua's indigenous Miskito minority in the Caribbean coast, or contemporary conflicts between state-led extractivism and indigenous mobilisation against it. At the same time, highlighting the indigenous, Mapuche influence within the history and legacy of solidarity with Chile shows how different mediums, practices and strategies are mobilised within solidarity action. In the present case, this includes indigenous symbols and practices such as traditional Mapuche clothes and rituals, protest tactics such as the *funa*, political strategies of dialoguing, and finally alternative understandings of solidarity through Mapuche notions of *keyuwvn* and *mingako*. Such cultural resources have not only contributed to understandings of solidarity with Chile, but also make it more diverse and transcultural. Finally, the evolution of transnational advocacy of and with the Mapuche, especially through the efforts of a Mapuche diaspora living in Europe, shows that there is a continuity of relations of solidarity between Chile and Europe that is different to and hidden from more prominent solidarity efforts with 'the Chilean people'. This helps to explain the fact that the 50th commemoration of the coup d'état and the celebration of 50 years of solidarity with Chile in different countries in 2023 sadly was lacking an indigenous, Mapuche perspective. Bringing the history and the different timeline of the Mapuche and their solidarity efforts into the discussion therefore might contribute to creating a shared transcultural memory, in which both the atrocities of the dictatorship and of continued colonial violence in Wallmapu are recognised.

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The Semiotics of Solidarity: Reinterpreting Artefacts of Latin American Resistance in Contemporary Leeds

Anna Grimaldi & Richard G. Smith

University of Leeds, UK

University of Liverpool, UK

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Anna Grimaldi[1] & Richard G. Smith[2]

The Semiotics of Solidarity: Reinterpreting Artefacts of Latin American Resistance in Contemporary Leeds

Introduction

On September 9th, 2023, students from the University of Leeds attended the annual vigil and march to commemorate those who struggled for a better future under Chile's civil-military dictatorship of 1973-1990. The event, organised by first- and second-generation Chilean exiles, took place in Sheffield, recently recognised as a 'City of Sanctuary'.[3] The day before the march, the students were invited to deliver one of their poster-making workshops with the third generation of Chilean exiles – children of those who either accompanied their parents in exile to the UK, or who were born there. Maria Vasquez Aguilar, organiser of this

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[1] Anna Grimaldi is a Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Leeds, UK. Her research looks at the formation of transnational networks of solidarity with the Global South. I am particularly interested in how Latin America, including Brazil, contributed to this phenomenon during the latter half of the 20th century through exile solidarity and human rights advocacy. Orcid:

[2] Dr Richard G. Smith originally trained as a chemist before a career in consumer product innovation took him all over the world, including three years living in Buenos Aires and many more working and travelling across the length and breadth of Latin America. Subsequently, he studied Spanish, French and History at the Open University and obtained an MA in Latin American Studies from the University of Liverpool in 2016. His PhD, awarded in 2022 and also from Liverpool, concerned the student opposition to the Pinochet regime in Chile. He was a Visiting Fellow at CLACS, University of London (2022-23) and, as well as continuing his doctoral research interests, he is part of a project digitising a collection of political posters in Santiago, and one exploring music, migration and identity with Chilean exiles and other migrant communities in Liverpool. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5894-4600.

[3] *Sheffield City of Sanctuary*, https://sheffield.cityofsanctuary.org/ [accessed 25 December 2023]

yearly gathering and co-founder of the Chile Solidarity Network, had seen the Leeds University students' poster-making workshops online, and saw an opportunity to encourage the younger generations to explore their own solidarities with the past.

This paper examines reinterpretations of solidarity with Latin America through a student-led project at the University of Leeds. The project, 'Thinking Inside the Box: 1973' (hereafter, TITB), was a collaboration between the University of London – specifically, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the London School of Economics – and the Universities of Leeds and Liverpool in 2023. The broader framework of TITB seeks to generate liberatory and transformative learning by approaching the educative process with students as co-creators and co-curators of knowledge. The approach draws from decolonial theory by seeking to challenge the hierarchical practices of mainstream education in which the teacher imposes knowledge on the student. In dialogue with Freirian concepts of collective interpretation and 'conscientisation' (Freire, 1968), scholars and students involved in the project used archives to run a series of events and public engagements. It connects students to each other and to a range of archival materials, broadly themed around 20th century Latin America, to inspire them in designing, developing and delivering an output of significant impact by engaging with local communities; in this case, the Chilean diaspora of the dictatorship. The project promotes the co-curation of knowledge, teaching and learning, and supports students to practice autonomy in their journeys of content and skills acquisition (Grimaldi, Carvalho and Natale, 2022; Grimaldi and Rofe, 2023).

The project's first iteration took place in 2021, at King's College London University, and focused on the Latin American Political Pamphlets Collection in the Senate House Library in London (Grimaldi, Carvalho and Natale, 2022). The next year, the project grew to involve collaborators across an additional four institutions, including other London institutions as well as the Universities of Leeds and Liverpool. The project also expanded to include two new archives: the Popular Music Archive in Liverpool, and 'Memories of Resistance', an archive of the graphic resistance to repression in Chile from the Centro Cultural Tallersol in Chile.[4] Coinciding with the upcoming 50th commemorations of 1973, TITB became a timely opportunity for an appropriately themed student-led archival project. At the University of Leeds, students used their experiences in the archive to design and run a series of learning activities and public-facing events to explore

[4] Hosted by the UCLA Library's Modern Endangered Archives Programme https://meap.library.ucla.edu/projects/memories-of-resistance [accessed 11 November 2023]

the themes of hope, struggle and solidarity, proposing their project as an act of solidarity with past struggles in the context of 1973.

Despite what the title suggests, TITB:1973 moved far beyond commemorating the fifty years that have passed since the Chilean military coup d'état of 1973. First, we acknowledge that 1973 was a pivotal year in many contexts across Latin America, particularly in the Southern Cone. In Chile, 1973 witnessed the overthrow of democratically elected President Salvador Allende, and the installation of a regime that tortured and killed tens of thousands. In Uruguay, the year was pivotal in the dismantling of parliament and the establishment of an authoritarian regime; in Paraguay military officer Alfredo Stroessner was suspiciously re-elected for the fourth of seven times; and in Argentina, 1973 saw the re-election of President Juan Domingo Perón, recently returned from a lengthy exile following the military overthrow of his own regime in 1955 (Patto Sá Motta, 2023).

Second, we understand 1973 to reflect a specific political moment in which, under the shadow of the Cold War, hopes for socially conscious models of development and a more equal future were met with state terror as it became the new politics of rule. In this sense, the pivotal year 1973, is not a fixed, chronological point in time, rather, it is the expression of a particular political tension with a recognisable series of implications. Constitutional politics were dismantled, and states of exception were declared and imposed; political rights were removed from those who might challenge those in power or legitimately question their authority. Cultural and artistic forms of resistance were repressed through censorship and the targeting of artists. Already-marginalised groups, such as the rural and urban poor and indigenous groups, bore the brunt of modernisation projects and economic failings, becoming further marginalised. The all-too-broadly-defined 'Left' was declared an internal enemy and became the main victim of state terror, political imprisonment, torture, disappearance and exile. The year 1973 thus also represents the repression of freedoms – freedoms to think, assemble, hope, dream, imagine, speak of and build a better future. In this sense, it can be said that Latin America of the 20th century suffered not one but multiple 1973s.

Archives, Performance Theory and Semiotic Multimodality

The international solidarity that emerged in response to these many '1973s' has been closely studied by following the activities of activists, exiles and their transnational advocacy networks (Sikkink, 1993). Although solidarity for Latin America began as early as 1964 with the Brazilian military coup (Grimaldi, 2023; Rollemberg, 1999), 1973 saw its significant expansion and intensification,

in particular in Chile, which catalysed a wave of new strategies and expressions of solidarity. Dedicated groups gathered data on human rights abuses, petitioned local political actors, rallied support from unions and other social justice organisations, and raised awareness through publications, press conferences, performances, public protests, and many more (Livingstone, 2018; 2019; 2020; Camacho Padilla, 2009; 2011; Quadrat, 2008; Christiaens, 2013; Green, 2010; Chirio, 2005; Schneider Marques, 2015; Rodio & Schmitz, 2010).

Almost everything we know about solidarity in the 1970s has been drawn from (or has since become) an archive. Historians have worked with correspondence, political ephemera, newspaper clippings, photos, posters, government documents, interviews and testimonies, and more to build up the rich narratives and fine-grained pictures we now have of the groups and individuals that made solidarity activism happen, the networks and alliances they forged and moved through over time, and the pivotal moments they experienced as they met challenges and overcame them.

These archives are a critical resource, particularly as the opportunities to gather new first-hand accounts are quickly disappearing. Over the past 30 years, multiple archives have been created from the testimonies of opposition activists in Latin America, as well as the perpetrators of human rights abuses themselves. To name but a few examples, in Brazil, the project titled 'resistir é preciso' has collected and digitised an archive of video testimonies, printed magazines, and posters of resistance to the Brazilian military regime of 1964-1985.[5] In Chile, important sites where detainees were imprisoned, tortured and murdered, such as Villa Grimaldi[6] and Londres 38[7] are maintained as places of reflection and memory, while the Museum of Memory and Human Rights is curating an oral history archive[8] of testimonies by cultural workers who resisted the Pinochet regime, and the evolution of the visual and sonic landscape of the 2019-20 social explosion has been captured in an audio-visual installation.[9] 'A Museum for Me' is a virtual and physical focal point created by human rights researchers, museologists, NGOs, artists, and community-based activists in Colombia and the UK where "victims and survivors of the armed conflict take centre-stage; their representation (or

[5] *Resistir é Preciso…*, https://resistirepreciso.org.br/ [accessed 21 November 2023]

[6] *Villa Grimaldi Corporación Parque por la Paz*, http://villagrimaldi.cl/quienes-somos/directorio/ [accessed 11 November 2023]

[7] *Londres 38: espacio de memorias,* https://www.londres38.cl/ [accessed 11 November 2023]

[8] *Resistencia Cultural en Dictadura: UNAC/ Coordinador Cultural*, https://testimonios.museodelamemoria.cl/category/archivo-oral/coordinador-cultural/ [accessed 4 July 2024]

[9] *Palimpsesto: Muros del Estallido*, https://palimpsesto.info [accessed 11 November 2023]

indeed, invisibility) is scrutinised and re-cast; gendered or identity-based forms of violence – and resistance – are revealed; and stories of the silenced are communicated gently or broadcast loudly, through myriad, life-affirming, cultural and social forms of truth-telling and creative peace-building."[10] Following the return to democracy, in 1983, the testimonies and stories of victims of the Argentine military dictatorship were collated during a truth and reconciliation commission and published as 'Nunca Más' – 'Never Again'.[11] More recently, archives around the 'Condor Trials' (Lessa, 2022) have been created to examine the transnational dimensions of human rights abuses across multiple countries.

The collation of archives from above and below, and the way we deal with them is fundamental to how the past is interpreted, framed and understood. The creation, collection, organisation, and framing of archival materials can provide a detailed picture of a past that might otherwise have been lost. Many of the regimes in place explicitly targeted cultural production and intellectual debate by censoring content, destroying printed materials and artworks, and banning political ephemera. In many cases, these regimes have additionally sought to destroy and deny access to evidence of their own activities, particularly in relation to the torture, murder, and disappearance of citizens. While civil society has often been at the forefront of gathering, organising, collating, analysing, presenting and disseminating evidence and data in relation to past human rights violations, politically powerful elements of the former regimes continue to represent a threat:

> "The different attempts to reactivate this disruptive power have been interrupted by the continual overlap of diverse mechanisms: the inoculation of collective memory from State systems; the defensive oblivion assimilated by civil society; the depoliticisation of subjectivities in restructuring neoliberal economies; the aestheticisation of counterculture, etc." (Longoni, 2016, p. 26)"

The regrouping of fragmented and dispersed pieces of the puzzle through the archives and oral (micro)histories thus allows us to create more detailed and multidimensional pictures of repression, resistance and solidarity. Whether from

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[10] *Learning Space for Me*, https://www.amuseumforme.org/learning-space-for-me/, and *A Museum for Me*, https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/transforming-conflict-and-displacement-through-the-arts-and-humanities-film-programme/a-museum-for-me/ [both accessed 11 November 2023]

[11] *Informe "nunca más" Comisión nacional sobre la desaparición de personas (CONADEP) - Argentina.* - http://www.derechoshumanos.net/lesahumanidad/informes/argentina/informe-de-la-CONADEP-Nunca-mas.htm [accessed 4 July 2024]

above or from below, activists and researchers, and some state actors, from Latin America and from all over the world, have worked to establish the ‘truth’, be that to produce a national collective history, prosecute some perpetrators, locate the disappeared, or devise reparation schemes. The establishment of a ‘truth’ by a state is a particularly complex process. Creating a collective narrative of the past requires some histories, truths, and memories to be omitted. In the context of truth and reconciliation commissions, the victim-perpetrator narrative implies that those who died or were silenced by a regime were somehow ‘defeated’. Likewise, and as pointed out by Torelly (2018), the militant Left is often portrayed as having been misguided, naively hopeful and too idealistic, despite having good intentions.

The establishment of hegemonic narratives by elites can deny the agency of grassroots activists, whose prefigurative political projects and social movements are often overlooked by such narratives, "forestalling any elaboration upon continuities with the socio-political struggles against structural violence today” (Grimaldi, forthcoming). In this context, a decolonial approach can help us to reconceptualise the archive, not only as a source of static collective memory and truth surrounding a time-bound historical event or experience, but of living resistance to ongoing struggles against authoritarianism and neoliberalism. It would mean rethinking the archive and its existence as something that actively resists as much as it passively evidences state violence (Cesar, 2016: 68). We can challenge the condemnation of resistance and solidarity to the past by approaching the archive in a way that reactivates, as opposed to compartmentalises, “the dialectic of revolutionary thought” (Traverso, 2017). Here, we engage with Diana Taylor’s concept of ‘repertoire’ to theorise a performance of the archive (Taylor, 2003) that “open[s] it up to acquiring new interpretive meaning and, perhaps, inspiring new political action” (Grimaldi, forthcoming).

Recent methodological approaches in the historiography of Cold War Latin America have highlighted the agential potential of visual artefacts of solidarity and resistance (see for example Esch, 2018; Stites Mor, 2018; 2022; Maasri, 2009), as well as the possibility of their reactivation as drivers of political thought and action in the present (Grimaldi & Gukelberger, 2024). In particular, posters and artworks have served as a distinct lens for re-examining the history of solidarity with Chile in countries such as Belgium, Sweden, France and Italy (Christiaens, 2018; de Kievd, 2013; Goff, 2007; Goñi and Cabranes, 2020; Camacho Padilla and Cristiá, 2021; Orzes, 2022). Generally speaking, in the context of the UK, comparable research has been far more sparse, and is largely focused on mapping out the key networks and actors through which solidarity with Chile was organised, such as students, the Left (Perry, 2020), the Labour Party and related workers’ movements (Hirsch, 2016; Livingstone, 2019), as well as the solidarity movement’s strategic engagement with the language of human rights

(Bowen, 2019), and the importance of music to the movement (Carrasco and Smith, forthcoming; Arredondo, forthcoming; Cohen, Shaw and Smith, forthcoming).

The decade preceding the fiftieth anniversary since the military coup of 1973 has undoubtedly seen rising scholarly interest in exile experiences and solidarity in the UK, which has emerged through doctoral research, memory work and community-facing projects being carried out by second generation exiles.[12,13] Chilean exiles in the north of the UK have received particular attention from researchers (Reithof and Smith, 2023), but also in film, such as the 2018 film, *Nae Pasaran!* (Bustos, 2018), and the recent documentary *Chileans of the North* (Paul, 2023). Likewise, 2023 prompted a number of local explorations of the artefactual histories of solidarity, such as at the Manchester People's Museum[14] and Sheffield Museums.[15] This research therefore contributes to highlighting the agency of UK-Chilean solidarity activists through reinterpreting how solidarity unfolds in the present in relation to artefacts of the past.

Attention has also turned to developing analytical frameworks for the production of political artworks and artefacts themselves (Vergara-Leyton, Garrido-Peña and Undurraga-Puelma, 2014; Osses and Vico, 2009; Valdebenito, 2010). Building on this direction of enquiry, Cristi and Araneda, in their work on Chilean graphic resistance, advocate a framework that incorporates their socio-political dimensions. Their approach to visual artefacts "focuses on the production process as a political practice, rather than only on the explicit political content of a graphic piece" (Cristi and Araneda, 2018, p.69; see also: Cristi and Araneda, 2016). These works have also pointed to the circular temporality of artistic practices, which have remerged through more recent waves of student activism in Chile (Cristi and Araneda, 2018; Becerra and Stull, 2010).

This article contributes to expanding the application of semiotic analysis beyond the graphic image to also examine the sociological conditions from which the

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[12] Vasquez-Aguilar, Maria. (2023). *You're Practically British!*, https://resistancerightsandrefuge.uk/maria-vasquez-aguilar [accessed 4 July 2024]

[13] *Your Testimonies*, https://resistancerightsandrefuge.uk/testimonies [accessed 4 July 2024]

[14] *Chile Solidarity Campaign – 50th Anniversary Archive Open Day*, *https://phm.org.uk/events_new/chile-solidarity-campaign-50th-anniversary-archive-open-day/* [accessed 4 July 2024]

[15] *Chile: 50 years of Solidarity and Resistance*, https://www.sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/chile-50-years-of-solidarity-and-resistance/ [accessed 4 July 2024]

artefacts and their visual language materialised. We incorporate the definition of graphic communication as a reiterative political practice, and seek out the reactivation of solidarity through a performative engagement with the archive. To guide our analysis, we draw from approaches of multimodality and semiotics. Multimodality "attends systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of making meaning" (Jewitt, 2015, p. 69). The multimodal lens can be used to conceptualise semiotic materials as configurations of "the actions, materials and artefacts we use for communicative purposes" (van Leuven, 2005, p. 285 cited in Jewitt, 2015, p.72). As an approach, it involves a close reading of the different modes available in an artefact, including visual, typographic and design elements, as well as bodily gestures, positions, postures and the use of objects (Jewitt, 2015, pp. 79-80). Complementarily, social semiotics examines "the production and dissemination of discourses across the variety of social and cultural contexts within which meaning is made" (Jewitt and Henriksen, 2016, p.145). It draws on visual and textual modes, but also works across them through things like composition, design, colour palette, style or genre, and gender. We bring together these approaches and concepts from decolonial interpretations of the archive, performance theory and semiotic multimodality through the pedagogical framework and projects of Thinking Inside the Box.

The present paper therefore has three aims. First, to expand on the historiography of UK-Chile solidarities in relation to visual and social semiotics; second, to evaluate collective, present-day reinterpretations of solidarity through material artefacts and archival collections; and, third, to reflect on the transformative potential of critical pedagogies. To do this, we reflect on TITB: 1973 as it manifested at the University of Leeds between October 2022 and September 2023. In this paper, we analyse three phases of the project: establishing the foundational principles and message of the project, researching and designing the project activities, and delivering the project outputs through exhibitions, workshops and online publications. Each of these phases engaged archival materials an (re)interpreted solidarity of the past in distinct ways, which we examine in relation to existing historiography, visual and semiotic analysis and pedagogy. We draw on the relationship between an archive and its performance and attempt to understand how memorialisation and/or the reactivation of past solidarities can takes place. Drawing on elements of participant observation, ethnography and auto-ethnography, and understanding students and academic staff alike as learners, participants and co-researchers, we draw from fieldwork and meetings in both formal and informal settings, as well as collaborative documents and group chats to document the project.

Choosing Hope, Struggle and Solidarity

The first milestone took place in early January 2023, when students explored the books, pamphlets, posters, vinyl sleeves, and cassettes in the Robert Pring-Mill Collection of material linked with 20th century 'protest' music in Latin America and the Caribbean in the University of Liverpool's Popular Music Archive (Riethof and Smith, 2023). Before this visit, the students' background reading had largely been concerned with human rights abuses under military and authoritarian rule. The archive, however, was replete with brightly coloured images, celebrations of music and culture, and lyrics that transmitted hope.

Robert Pring-Mill (1924-2005) spent his academic career at the University of Oxford, researching and lecturing on Hispanic and Latin American literature. He first visited Argentina, Uruguay and Chile as an undergraduate in 1949 (Higgins, 2007). In Chile, he encountered the poetry of Pablo Neruda, a Communist Party senator who was then on the run. This sparked a life-long interest in socially committed poetry. In 1968-69, he took a sabbatical from Oxford and travelled from Mexico to Chile and back by Land Rover, at times accompanied by his young family. His intention was to study Neruda's poetry, and especially his encyclopaedic paean to Latin America, Canto General. He thought he could not properly understand that work without fully understanding its political, social and cultural contexts (Cohen, Shaw, Waldock and Smith, 2022a).

He also wanted to explore the socially committed poetry of Latin America, and he met poets, critics and a broad cross-section of Latin American people, while acquiring over a thousand publications of all types, from books to unpublished manuscripts, leaflets and magazines. His studies extended to popular music and protest songs, and his acquisitions to LPs cassettes and his own recordings. His collection of *canciones de lucha y esperanza*, 'songs of hope and struggle', a term he preferred to 'protest music', because he considered one protested *against* something, yet these songs were always *in favour* of something: land reform, literacy, better housing, democracy, and so on. He donated his music archive to the University of Liverpool's Institute of Popular Music at the behest of Jan Fairley, a journalist who researched and wrote about World Music; she had studied under Pring-Mill at Oxford and was a research fellow at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Popular Music (Cohen, Shaw, Waldock and Smith, 2022a).

Pring-Mill's conception of songs of hope and struggle shaped his collection which, while it covers much of Latin America and the Caribbean, is particularly strong on the music of Chile and Nicaragua. Chilean *Nueva Canción*, or New Song, was a style of folk music that was the soundtrack to the 1960s social unrest in Chile, in much the same way musicians like Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and Joan Baez were in the USA. Inspired by folklorist, ethnomusicologist and visual artist, Violeta

Parra, who founded the movement, groups such as Inti-Illimani and Quilapayún, and singer-songwriters like Víctor Jara and Patricio Mann, were very close to Salvador Allende's Popular Unity movement; after the Chilean coup d'état in 1973, Quillapayún and Inti-Illimani played prominent roles in international Chilean Solidarity campaigns. Albums, recordings and lyric books of these artists strongly in the collection the students encountered.

There is a clear difference between the aesthetics of denunciation and those of hope. In the former, visual semiotic devices are designed to capture attention with bold images and colours and reveal experiences of violence, as well as communicating factual accuracy and legitimacy. This is evident in the imagery of denunciation and solidarity materials from the period, which are designed to shock or intimidate; resistance to oppression highlights violence, injustice, inequality, and identifies their perpetrators. Furthermore, transnational solidarity with victims needs to convince multinational publics and political actors of the veracity of claims of illegal imprisonment, torture, murder, and disappearances. Notably, these artefacts are often hand-made or designed to be cheaply produced en masse. This is a reflection not only on the grassroots nature of their production in the Chilean context, which meant working with limited resources, responding efficiently to urgent causes and ensuring effective dissemination. Figure 1 below evidences such a case, where striking, almost playful, lettering is used to cover almost half the frame to declare the purpose of the document: Chile Bulletin. It draws the spectator in, before revealing more detail. Below the title, a speech bubble encased in sharp, jagged lines holds text so small that it literally requires the viewer to move closer, where they will find an extract of President Salvador Allende's final speech, delivered to the nation moments before his death. To the left of these inspiring words, a man can be seen tethered to the nation of Chile with a rope, his hands behind his back and his head hung as if held up by a noose, mouth open as if speaking from beyond the grave – an image of the violence and suffering of Chileans. Below the drawing, we find the maker of this document, the Merseyside Solidarity Committee. The inclusion of an issue number reveals the publication is part of a series, while the charge of 5p (around 45p in today's money) indicates the organisation's need to cover the cost of printing. Figure 2 from the Merseyside Chile Committee For Human Rights presents a simpler and more professional-looking composition, with clear typed lettering at the top, and a wood-cut style printed image – evocative of folkloric art – in the bottom half of the frame. The highly contrasted black and white image shows a pile of fallen bodies interwoven on the floor, whose hands still clutch their flags, a homage to those who have died defending the right to a better future.

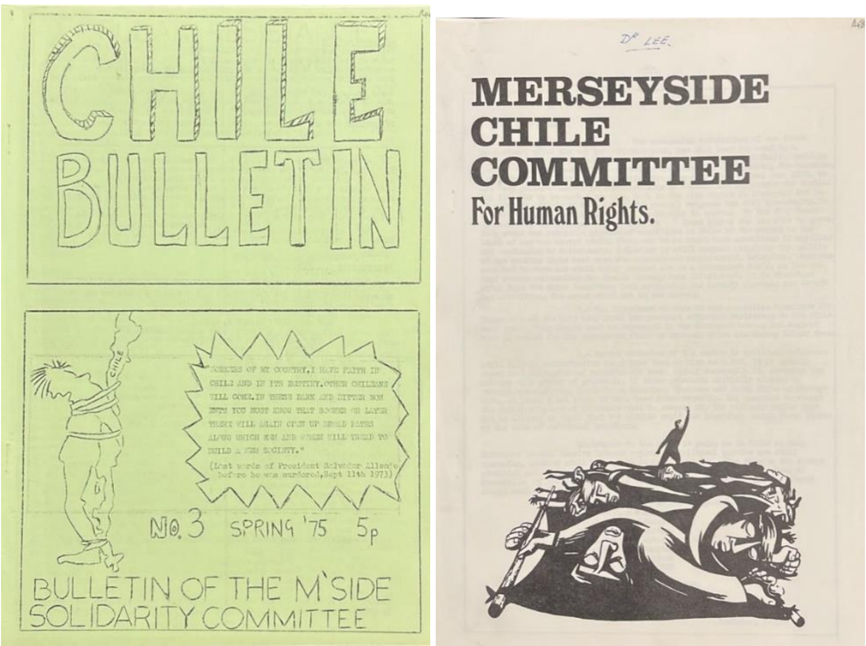

Figure 1 (left): Bulletin of the Merseyside Solidarity Committee No. 3, 1975. Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library; Figure 2 (right): Merseyside Chile Committee For Human Rights, no date. Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library.

Despite these images' dominantly dark overtones, they both present a slither of hope. In Figure 1, Allende's words provide solace: "Keep in mind that, much sooner than later, the great avenues will again be opened through which will pass free men to construct a better society". In Figure 2, a figure is seen standing defiantly in the background, emerging from the pile of bodies with a fist raised in the air, promising the struggle is not over.

In other images we encountered in the Pring-Mill collection, messages of hope were significantly more prominent, and it became clear that their purpose was not to horrify and denounce, but rather animate, uplift, and inspire, using images that portray empathy and solidarity. One student wrote:

> All of us were amazed by the variety of colourful, striking visuals – certain artworks reminded me of cubism with their vivid primary colours and range of motifs. Some contained the iconic clenched fist, raised in the

air, while others depicted birds, their large wings spread wide as if trying to break free from their cage, the canvas, and fly towards freedom.[16]

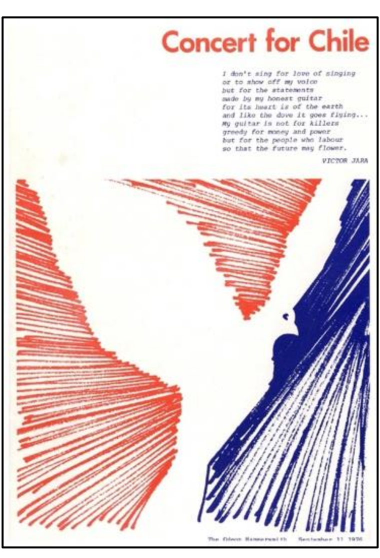

Figure 3 (left): Vinyl Sleeve for Quilapayún's "El Pueblo Unido Jamas sera Vencido". Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library; Figure 4 (right): Concert for Chile, event poster. Courtesy of University of Liverpool Library.

Figure 3, a vinyl sleeve for Quilapayún's famous "El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido" (The People United Will Never Be Defeated), contrasts the subtlety of Figure 2 as a raised, clenched fist, a symbol of defiance, takes up almost the entire frame. Figure 4 is a poster produced for a solidarity concert taking place on the 11 September 1976 at the Odeon Hammersmith, London. Once again, a message of hope dominates the page through the symbol of a white dove of peace. The poster also contains the lyrics of "Estadio de Chile", a song written by Víctor Jara, a famous singer murdered by the regime: "my guitar is not for killers; greedy for money and power; but for the people who labour; so that the future may flower." As well as the bright, joyful colours of the artworks, both of which are based on

[16] Taniguchi, Mayu (2023) *A Visit to the Liverpool Music Archive*, https://www.thinkinginsidethebox.co.uk/leeds-blog/thinking-inside-the-box-1973-a-visit-to-the-liverpool-music-archive [accessed 12 March 2023]

the Chilean national flag, a social semiotic approach reveals more about their distinctive features. Both artefacts act as witnesses to the solidarity and freedom afforded by musicians outside of Chile; the ability to produce and disseminate revolutionary music and play concerts that bring people together in solidarity, a sharp contrast to the cultural censorship and necessarily understated use of music under the regime in Chile.

The Pring-Mill collection included a vast amount of music and materials associated with the Chilean singer Víctor Jara, his life and activism, understood in the context of the brutality of his death at the hands of the Chilean regime. His songs, and the hope and joy which with they were written, continue to be widely performed across the world in the name of freedom. While we sifted through the materials in the archive, we played a number of Víctor Jara's songs, whose image, lyrics, voice and musical composition accompanied our collective interpretation of the materials. One student was struck by a biography written by Jara's wife, Joan, which she eventually selected as a part of the project exhibition (Jara, 1984). It is through this experience that students decided that the themes of 'Hope, Struggle and Solidarity' - as opposed to the violence of oppression and 'Resistance' - as the guiding themes of their project. In this way, through the repertoire of the archive, students reactivated the hope and struggle of 1970s Chile, as well as its political power, to generate transnational solidarity.

Connecting with Kadima

The second milestone in the project concerned a unique collection of printed material that represents one of the largest and most important collections of graphic art recording resistance counterculture in Chile under authoritarian rule (Cristi and Araneda, 2018). In 1977, during the Pinochet civil-military dictatorship, the Tallersol Cultural Centre was founded in Santiago by a collective of artists, and cultural and political activists who resisted repression by creating space for cultural freedom. They produced posters, pamphlets and other graphic material for human rights, political, social, cultural, and religious organisations. The design, production and distribution of the printed works was done semi-clandestinely, and security forces repeatedly raided the print workshop, and its members were detained, tortured, and internally exiled. Recently, the University of Liverpool have been working with Tallersol to catalogue and digitise this original printed matter to make this remarkable asset available to the public and academia. The project is funded by the Modern Endangered Archives Program

(MEAP)[17] and the first 150 items in Tallersol's 'Memories of Resistance' archive, can be studied online.[18]

Tallersol and its founder Antonio Cadima – Kadima – were and remain well connected, working with religious, cultural, and political activists, groups in Santiago's shantytowns, opposition cultural centres, and human rights organisations, such as the families of political prisoners and anti-torture campaigners. Kadima estimates that in the early 1980s they were responsible for 50-60% of the posters produced by the resistance in Santiago. The Tallersol archive is not only testament to a remarkable underground graphic workshop, but it also foregrounds the network of popular political, social, cultural and religious groups that resisted Pinochet, and chronicles their campaigns, perspectives and activities as the civil-military dictatorship unfolded.

The posters and other printed matter broadly represent the grassroots political, social, and cultural resistance to oppression in Chile. In contrast to the National Protests and democratic transition in the 1980s, the cultural dimensions of the resistance, their creative and political strategies, and social networks are less well understood. Chile's distinct tradition of mural and graphic art was a potent symbol of opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship and of the international solidarity campaigns. The Tallersol 'Memories of Resistance' archive includes posters and pamphlets created for specific campaigns, protests, events, and cultural and countercultural happenings involving themselves and fellow artists, writers and musicians.

In the months following the visit to the archive, students arranged a virtual encounter with Kadima himself, inspired by his past experiences as an activist, artist and educator. Kadima talked to students about his work, his visual inspirations and how to combine images to produce an impactful poster. He also counselled them on how to lead a workshop on poster-making, revealing the social and material conditions that shaped his work in terms of their production – quick and cheap to produce, easy to disseminate, highly replicable and ephemeral. This interaction inspired and shaped the project, adding the student's artistic perspective and their ability to draw on diverse semiotic configurations from both resistance within Chile and solidarity outside it.

What students found in Kadima's work was evidence and experiences of the cultural censorship that overshadowed the regime. Unlike the images and music

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[17] *Modern Endangered Archives Program*, https://meap.library.ucla.edu [accessed 20 December 2023]

[18] *Memories of Resistance: A Digital Archive of Chile's Graphic Resistance*, https://meap.library.ucla.edu/projects/memories-of-resistance [accessed 20 December 2023]

produced and disseminated overseas, which drew from the pre-regime visual, textual and audio symbols of Nueva Canción Chilena, Kadima's artworks were shaped by the ever-present need to evade capture and imprisonment. References to the raised fist, Allende and Víctor Jara were dangerous to use, and so Kadima brought elements of folkloric art to portray the struggle. Similar to Pring-Mill, Kadima acknowledged the important distinction between hope and struggle on the one hand and the victimhood associated with resistance on the other. While one reawakened the agency of social and political movements under the regime, the other, shaped by the dictatorship's narrative as well as that of ensuing governments, understood those movements as a closed chapter, lost to state terror.

Contemplating these two sets of artefacts – those of Pring-Mill and Kadima – in dialogue with one another, with their interesting fonts, phrases, recurring symbolisms, and composition, two symbols emerged: the dove and the sun. Both represent hope and often appeared in the idealised form of the typical 'folkloric' style that characterised many of the posters. They were combined to produce the project's logo (Figure 5), along with guitar strings, which are both a reference to music and the story of Víctor Jara, and a reminder of the dangers faced by those speaking out against injustice, the strings of the guitar also representing the bars of a prison cell.

Figure 5: Logo for Thinking Inside the Box: 1973.

Collectively (Re)Interpreting the Archives through Student-led Workshops

The third phase of reinterpretation appeared when students decided to develop and run a series of poster-making workshops. Students approached local organisations with their proposal, emphasising their chosen themes of Hope,

Struggle and Solidarity and their relevance to the fiftieth anniversary of the military coup in Chile. They prepared to deliver the workshops at the Hyde Park Book Club, a café and bar; Left Bank, an event space; and Leeds Art Gallery, part of the city's museums and galleries group. These spaces share a commitment to public engagement, with a focus on the local community. They are all regularly frequented by the public, but in particular by students, activists, and creatives who often also contribute creative and cultural outputs.

The students proactively collated their experiences and the specialist knowledge and skill they acquired into a design for the workshops themselves. They had consulted scholars, industry experts and fellow students from the arts to ensure the message and purpose of the workshops were clear; to develop a central method for their delivery; and to best allocate their limited resources. Inspired by Kadima's own practices, the workshops were designed to educate participants about the Chilean regime, and guide them to produce their own political posters by drawing inspiration from the graphic, symbolic, musical and material elements of the political posters and artworks from the archives of Pring-Mill and Kadima. They provided participants with prompts, inspired by Kadima, to think about how they would communicate the political messages and struggles of today with limited text and materials.

A reactivation of collective, arts-based practices from 1970s Chile and Europe-based solidarity networks took place in a decolonial performance of the archive comprising the images students had collected through their research and the new posters being produced in the workshops.[19] Through the act of collectively interpreting images, reconfiguring symbols and messages, and producing new artefacts of hope, struggle and solidarity, the students and participants were engaging with the practices of the past to reactivate their discursive power in a new context. The new artefacts represent distinct historical conditions, shaped by students' access to the archives, their encounters with scholars and each other, their ability to photocopy and print posters, their engagement in community spaces of the city and most importantly their personal motivations and feelings of solidarity towards global activists and activism in the past and present.

Conclusions

[19] *Inspired By The Works Of Antonio Kadima, Thinking Inside The Box: 1973 Has Created Its Own Archive Of Collaborative Political Artworks*, https://www.thinkinginsidethebox.co.uk/poster-making-workshops [accessed 25 December 2023]

Performative Memory-Making and Decolonisation

In this article, we have reflected on a decolonial and student-led pedagogical practice based on the performance of the archival materials pertaining to political resistance in Cold War Latin America. Borrowing concepts from sociological semiotics, multimodality and performance theory, we asked the question: can the practice of 'Thinking Inside the Box' generate new interpretations and practices of solidarity with the past? The project rested on students' ability to dedicate time, allocate resources and develop knowledge together and with others as a means of memorialising Chile's 1973 with the wider public, celebrating the key figures who lost their lives and livelihoods in the struggle for freedom, and resurrecting practices of political activism from the past. Students' ability to collectively develop and engage in these activities was nurtured through a decolonial approach to the archive that awakened the agency of material artefacts of solidarity. By the time September 2023 came around, when the Chile Solidarity Campaign were preparing for their 50th commemorations, the Chilean exile and diaspora community had already worked with students to co-produce speaking events and invited them to delivery one last poster-making workshop, this time with the grandchildren of exiles. Through students' engagement with artefacts of resistance in the 1970s, Thinking Inside the Box had come full circle: through archives, knowledge had been passed down from Kadima in Santiago to students in Leeds, and eventually contributed to memory and solidarity among the newest generation of Chileans in the UK.

Solidarity and Denunciation: Two Modes of Visual Communication

By introducing a social semiotic lens to our reflection, we have been able to interpret and conceptualise the students' experience of the archive as an example of translocal and transgenerational solidarity. It also brings nuance to our understanding of how this takes place. After carrying out their first visits to the Robert Pring-Mill collection of Latin American Songs of Hope, students' collective interpretation of visual materials evolved into a critical debate surrounding the aesthetics of hope and solidarity versus those of a more denunciatory and reactionary nature. Students identified in the artefacts two styles: on the one hand, the wider tradition of "monochrome, small formats and low-weight papers" (Cristi and Aranenda, 2018, p.84), characterised by the incorporation of folkloric art and employing limited resources such as coloured inks. This style was a reflection of wider social contexts: under the regime, artists faced censorship which limited their use of text and direct references to Allende's Chile, widely described as a cultural blackout. This style was distinct from the

more colourful, hopeful compositions that marked the three short years of Allende's government (1970-1973). While in Chile, visual references to this period and artistic style were censored and destroyed (McSherry, 2019, p. 152), overseas they were not. This led to the re-emergence and re-iteration, in exile, of those graphic and lyrical communications through music, artworks, posters and performances produced by Chileans and solidarity activists all over the world. Ultimately, these were the visual languages that the students were drawn too, identified with and embodied.

Examining the reconfiguration of these artefacts in present-day Leeds reveals nuanced ideas about solidarity as a concept and praxis. Students involved in the project were not driven to activism in response to living under a military dictatorship. A comparison between the civil-military regime of 1970s and 1980s Chile and present-day Britain highlights a critical factor in the students' ability to identify with the past. The project depended entirely on the open-mindedness, intellectual curiosities and capacities of students, staff and all those involved; it relied on the academic and professional trajectories, practical knowledge, expertise and connections of staff members and how this was interpreted by the group. Unlike the political activism of 1970s and 1980s Chile, students and staff were not threatened by arrest, incarceration, torture, death or banishment, nor were they especially limited by a scarcity of resources. Instead, the archive activists of today benefitted from a socio-political climate that welcomed such interventions, as well as access to institutional resources, funding, physical space and digital tools. The ways that the artefacts were filtered, reinterpreted and given new meaning as students reconfigured symbols and messages incorporated their own situated realities, combining social movements, visual references and intersectional positionalities from past and present.

Reinterpreting the Archive

When understood as "a social practice of resistance, collective creation and regeneration of the social fabric" (Cristi and Araneda, p. 84), the reactivation of Tallersol and other activists' graphic communication practices of the 1970s and 1980s by students and publics in Leeds today demonstrates a circular temporality. The digital, intergenerational transmission of these practices through a video call between students in the UK and an artist-activist who resisted the Chilean military regime likewise demonstrates its trans-localisation. Connected across time and space, Tallersol and TITB's graphic practices not only promote social justice and collective action through visual representations, but through the very embodiment of "the collectivization of graphic production, the constitution of active networks of solidarity, technological innovation and the use of minimal resources" (Cristi and Araneda, p85). In this way the archive is no longer merely a container of static

facts, but a constellation of dormant semiotic devices, aspirations, prefigurative politics and solidarity that is awoken and transmitted through collective bodies and declarative memory.

Archives as Tools for Memory-Making and Transformative Justice

Thinking Inside the Box also made key contributions to collective memory. Typically, Latin America's mechanisms of transitional justice – often state-led and liberal in nature – promote a closure of the past by defining political activists as victims and focusing reparations and legal justice around victims of torture and families of the disappeared. By doing so, living histories of prefigurative political activism, struggle, hope and solidarity, which hold the potential to transform the lives of the communities they reach, are denied or overlooked. Incidentally, the UCLA Library, which is currently digitising Kadima's collection, recently published a page with suggestions as to how the artworks and posters might be used pedagogically.[20] We hope that with this contribution we can begin to construct an answer: in re-awakening this hope and solidarity, Thinking Inside the Box facilitated a transformative form of justice: the ability for Kadima's artworks activism to inspire new generations, and the ability of third-generation Chileans to connect with and embody the struggle of their parents and grandparents.

[20] *MEAP in the Classroom: Posters as Visual Data*, https://meap.library.ucla.edu/about/news/meap-in-the-classroom-posters-as-visual-data/ [accessed 25 December 2023]

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ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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¿Why Leeds?

Elisa Martinez Relano

Nicaraguan cartoonist, journalist, and illustrator

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

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Elisa Martinez Relano[1]

¿Why Leeds?

The following piece was written by Elisa Martinez Relano in 2023. Inspired by a student-led project exploring past and present solidarities with Latin America, Elisa, now completing an MA in the History of Art and Social History at the University of Leeds, wrote the following text. Her reflection on archival research around Chilean exile in the 1970s takes place in 2023, fifty years after the infamous coup, and is guided by a simple question: how and why would Leeds engage in solidarity activism with a place as seemingly distant as Chile?

Not only is this essay a fantastic contribution to scholarship on the Global Cold War and solidarity with Latin America, but it also captures some of the questions at the heart of this special issue: what can we learn from solidarities in the past? What meaning do they gain when reactivated in the present? And, why do archives matter?

See the contribution by Anna Grimaldi and Richard Smith in this special issue for more information on Leeds-based student projects relating to Chile 1973.

2023 serves a dual significance. Not only is this the 50th anniversary of the 1973 coup d'état in Chile, a year during which many other Latin American countries were under authoritarian regimes, but 2023 is also Leeds' Year of Culture, where the culture of those who live and have lived in this city are being celebrated. Leeds City Council Museums and Galleries, for example, have curated exhibitions such as 'Overlooked' and 'Leeds Artists Show' to tell the story of Leeds through the people who lived here. So, as the location for the annual exhibition project *Thinking Inside the Box*, Leeds is a very relevant location.

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[1] Elisa Martinez Relano is a Master's Student in the History of Art and Social History at the University of Leeds, Elisa Martinez Relano has participated in a student-led project exploring past and present solidarities with Latin America. Her reflections on the project and her findings are featured in this special issue.

Yet, you may find yourself asking, what is it that links our city to the people affected by a military dictatorship in Latin America half a century ago? The fact is that the history of Chile played a part in the local history of Leeds, but also in that of the University of Leeds itself.

In 1976, a mural was painted within Leeds University Union by exiled activists and Chilean students. These individuals had found themselves in Leeds after leaving behind the right-wing dictatorship that had taken power in their homeland of Chile. General Augusto Pinochet had mobilised the armed forces to overthrow the democratically elected government of the Socialist leader Salvador Allende, and over the following years, opposition to the regime was silenced through disappearances, assassinations, imprisonment, and forced exile.

The mural eventually fell into disrepair after the decision to construct a wall covering the artwork, which resulted in it being hidden from view during the following decades. As a consequence, the painting and its message had been essentially forgotten (or silenced) until its rediscovery during building renovations in 2017. It was only when a Chilean student at the time recognized remnants of the Chilean national flag that an effort was made to identify the origins of the artwork. A restoration project was initiated to replace deterioration in the paint and plaster, while master's students of the University of Leeds' Art Gallery and Museum Studies programme carried out extensive research into the local Chilean community.

Image from LUU - https://www.luu.org.uk/news/2020/06/24/a-spotlight-on-luus-restored-chilean-mural/

Pedro Fuentes, Rafael Maldonado, Gilberto Hernández, Eduardo Espinosa, and Ricardo Escobar were some of the people who painted the Leeds mural in 1976. Gilberto and Eduardo served over two years in concentration camps or prisons and were only released in exchange for accepting a life of exile in Britain. During interviews conducted by the MA students throughout 2018, they spoke about their experiences as refugees in 1970s Britain. They expressed pride in being refugees, feeling gratitude and strength in their status as exiles and survivors. In particular, they appreciated the solidarity from local communities in Leeds, which is something that seems particularly relevant to the current wave of anti-refugee sentiment in Britain today. They also expressed that 'the mural is a symbol of memory', as well as 'solidarity and friendship'. It was created during a period of concern for those who had stayed behind in Chile, and the central purpose of their involvement was to reinforce solidarity with their fellow citizens in Chile. The

senior management staff at their old universities in Chile had been replaced by members of the military command, which is also why the University of Leeds is such an important setting for the mural. The fact that they could express their political preoccupations more freely within an educational organisation here was a positive and reaffirming act of protest itself.

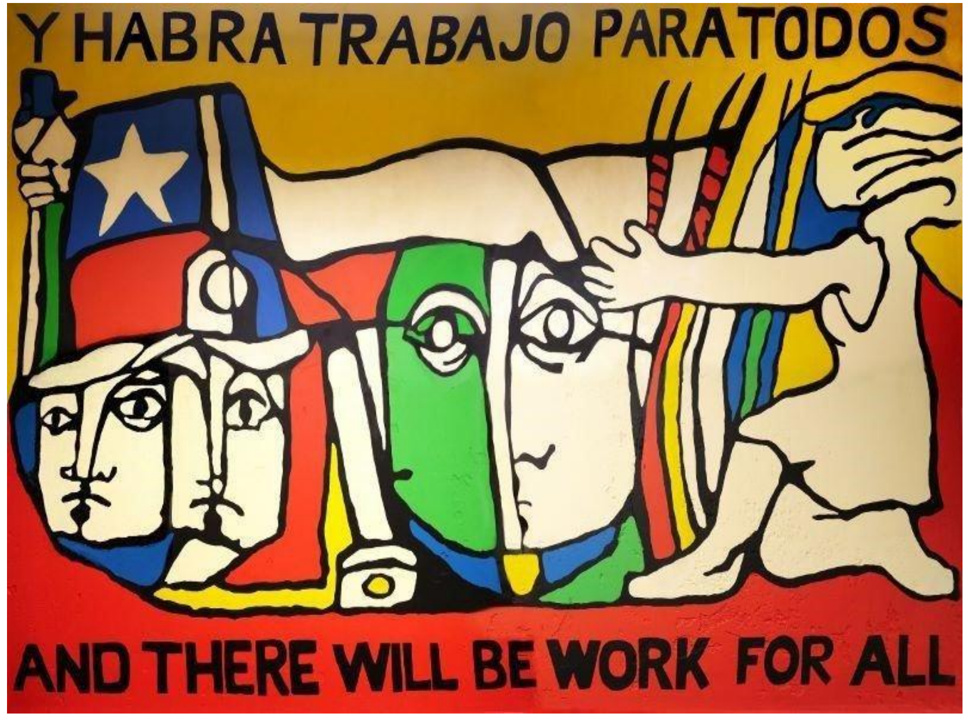

Image of solidarity mural at the Leeds University Union building, from Leeds Art Fund

The artwork is bordered with a slogan in both Spanish and English: '...and there will be work for all'. In the centre, four faces of manual labourers (most likely, farmers and miners) are represented alongside a woman grasping a bundle of wheat. Above the scene, the Chilean flag appears to be transposed into the shape of a mountain or factory in the distance, a reflection of hope that nationalisation would put industry back into the hands of the general population and provide a better future for all. This Leeds mural is an exact copy of the Brigada Ramona

Parra mural in Chile's capital city Santiago[2]. It formed part of a series of murals outside the Barros Luco Hospital that outlined this hope for nationalisation across mining, agriculture, and industry as well as the demanding happiness and the protection of children. In Chile, and Latin America more broadly, murals have a long history of cultural and political significance, particularly since the Mexican muralist movement of the early 20th century. In the years leading up to Allende's election, murals played a central role as an informative tool that encouraged the population to engage in politics. It was a time of instability, but there was a belief that positive change was attainable, and murals were an art form that had the ability to reach the masses organically. After the military removed Allende from power, these artworks were covered or destroyed. In this context, the restaging of the mural in Leeds allowed this group of activists to reoccupy the type of spaces that had been taken away from them in Chile. As a result, the Leeds mural is one of the only surviving versions and has since inspired others to restage the work. In 2019, a welsh-language version was painted at El Sueno Existe festival in Machynlleth Wales, and now in 2023 Thinking Inside the Box Leeds will reclaim this history again. Thus, the mural lives on, acting as a living artefact of the Allende-era Chilean struggle.

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[2] The murals form a sentence which reads '…Y ahora también Chile, Y se nacionalizarán las minas, Y la tierra para el que la trabaja, y el cobre para los Chilenos, y nace el hombre nuevo, y habrá trabajo para todos, y a prepararte a dirigir la industria, y también habrá alegría, y no habrán angustias para nacer, y los únicos privilegiados los niños'; Alexandra Denisse Reyes Espinoza, 'Muralismo e imaginario latinoamericano. Análisis comparado de un sentimiento de resistencia latinoamericana, 1910-1973' (unpublished thesis, University of Valparaíso, 2019) pp. 61-66. <http://repositoriobibliotecas.uv.cl/bitstream/handle/uvscl/3531/Tesis%20Alexandra%20Reyes%20Espinoza%202019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Cover of Inti-Illimani concert catalogue, 1985, from the Popular Music Archive at the University of Liverpool

This story did not end in 1976. The Chile Solidarity Campaign in Leeds continued to function throughout the late 20th century. The interviews with the Chileans who painted the Leeds mural reveal that many in Yorkshire condemned the dictatorship and advocated for the release of political prisoners in Chile. As part of Thinking Inside the Box: 1973, we visited the Popular Music Archive at the University of Liverpool and discovered yet more evidence of this Leeds-based solidarity. The picture here is of a concert brochure for the 1985 Inti-Illimani UK solidarity tour of London, Leeds, and Edinburgh. It demonstrates how people collaborated and participated culturally in supporting the Chilean people. Inti-Illimani were an Andean-folk-protest music group who were on tour in Europe when the coup occurred, allowing the Pinochet regime to ban them from re-entering their native country of Chile between 1973 and 1988

Image from the Inti-Illimani concert catalogue, 1985, from the Popular Music Archive at the University of Liverpool

This prompted a decades-long tour of the world. Their concert in Leeds on the 6th of October 1985, with the English folk singer Frankie Armstrong as a special guest, positions the city within a broader history of cultural solidarity for Chile.

On that day, the traditional harmonies of Latin America and English folk music were played in unity. It is important to note that this was not an isolated event. The concert programme also includes photographs from Chilean solidarity marches held in Leeds, which cements Chile within our city's culture of protest. In fact, an advert and article in the Leeds Student newspaper from 1980 confirms that Armstrong and Inti-Illimani had already played a charity concert in Leeds Town Hall on 21st November 1980 in protest of how the British government appeared to conceal the atrocities suffered by Chileans. Even the national report of the Chile Solidarity Campaign's activities noted the fact that 2,000 people, including the Labour MP Derek Fatchett as a speaker, attended Inti-Illimani's concert in Leeds Town Hall on 7th September 1983. By acknowledging the history that Leeds and the Chile Solidarity campaign share, we as a city are looking towards the past to inform the future.

ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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The growth paradigm and the failures of the alternatives within the system: notes towards a dystopian Marxism

Rodrigo R. Gómez Garza

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), México

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Alternautas is a peer reviewed academic journal that publishes content related to Latin American Critical Development Thinking.

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Rodrigo R. Gómez Garza [1]

The growth paradigm and the failures of the alternatives within the system: notes towards a dystopian Marxism

Abstract. We start with two main hypotheses: a) the tendency to overproduction and expanded reproduction is inevitable in a context of production based on competition and the search for profit; b) conflicts for resources and the tendential degradation of the quality of life are also inevitable and are only going to worsen as the expanded reproduction takes its toll on the environment and on the material conditions for the reproduction of capital. This paper explores some underlying phenomena to support these claims, such as the Jevons Paradox, the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall, and the Energy Return on Investment. Finally, it discusses the failure of some of the alternatives to the Growth Paradigm: Sustainable Development, Green Growth, Circular Economy and Degrowth.

Keywords: Overproduction, Autopoiesis, Jevons Paradox, Rate of Profit, Dystopian Marxism.

Resumen. Partimos de dos hipótesis principales: a) la tendencia a la sobreproducción y a la reproducción ampliada es inevitable en un contexto de producción basado en la competencia y la búsqueda de ganancia; b) conflictos por recursos y la degradación tendencial de la calidad de vida también son inevitables y sólo empeorarán mientras la reproducción ampliada impacte sobre el medio ambiente y sobre las condiciones materiales para la reproducción del capital. Este trabajo explora algunos fenómenos subyacentes que apoyan estas afirmaciones, como la Paradoja de Jevons, la Tendencia Descendente de la Tasa de Ganancia y

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[1] Rodrigo R. Gómez Garza is a postdoctoral researcher from Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias (CRIM-UNAM). Member of the National System of Researchers (SNII), Level I. Tutored by Dr. José Raúl García Barrios. This work was supported by UNAM postdoctoral program (POSDOC). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7454-0352

la Tasa de Retorno Energético. Finalmente, discute el fracaso de algunas de las alternativas al Paradigma del Crecimiento: el Desarrollo Sustentable, el Crecimiento Verde, la Economía Circular y el Decrecimiento.

Palabras clave: sobreproducción, autopoiesis, paradoja de Jevons, tasa de ganancia, marxismo distópico.

Introduction

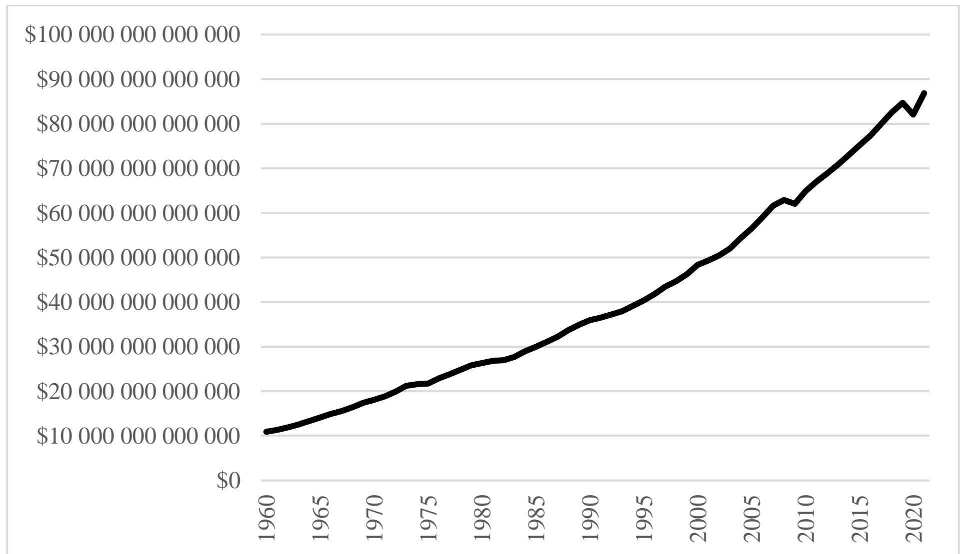
The first hypothesis is that the tendency to overproduction and expanded reproduction is inevitable in a context of production based on competition and the search for profit, such as the one that has ruled the world-economy for centuries. Historically, competition between capitals forces technological improvements that cause a fall in production costs and in the prices of commodities, which triggers phenomena such as the Jevons Paradox or the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall, where capitals are forced to compensate for the drop in the mass of profit per individual commodity and in the percentages of profit by constantly increasing the scale of production to extract a bigger absolute mass of profit. In this regard, the second hypothesis is that the struggle for resources and territories is also inevitable given the continuous expansion of capitalist production. If we accept these two hypotheses, we must accept two facts: 1) that an ecological collapse is inevitable, and that capitalism can't reform itself to be 'greener' or 'sustainable'; 2) conflicts and wars for resources and territories are only going to worsen in extensive and intensive terms as the material conditions for the reproduction of capital are undermined.

To prove these claims, we first present a section that explains the growth paradigm that has permeated capitalism since its rise to the hegemonic mode of production in the world-economy after the Industrial Revolution. Growth is inherent to capitalism and is structurally impossible a 'type' of capitalism that does not try to grow or a stationary state capitalist economy, the data from the last two centuries supports this premise. In another section we discuss three phenomena that explain, at least in part, the underlying structure of this constant growth, namely: a) the Jevons Paradox; b) the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall; c) the Energy Return on Investment. To further develop the argument, we go into a section that discusses the inevitable failure of the most serious 'alternatives' to the current world-economy's growth model: a) Sustainable Development, b) Green Growth, c) Circular Economy, d) Degrowth. Given this premises the possibilities of either a utopian reality that can free us or a capitalist system that can still function for centuries to come are rather slim. The bigger possibility in play is the collapse of the modern civilization as we know it. Thus, in the last section of this paper, in

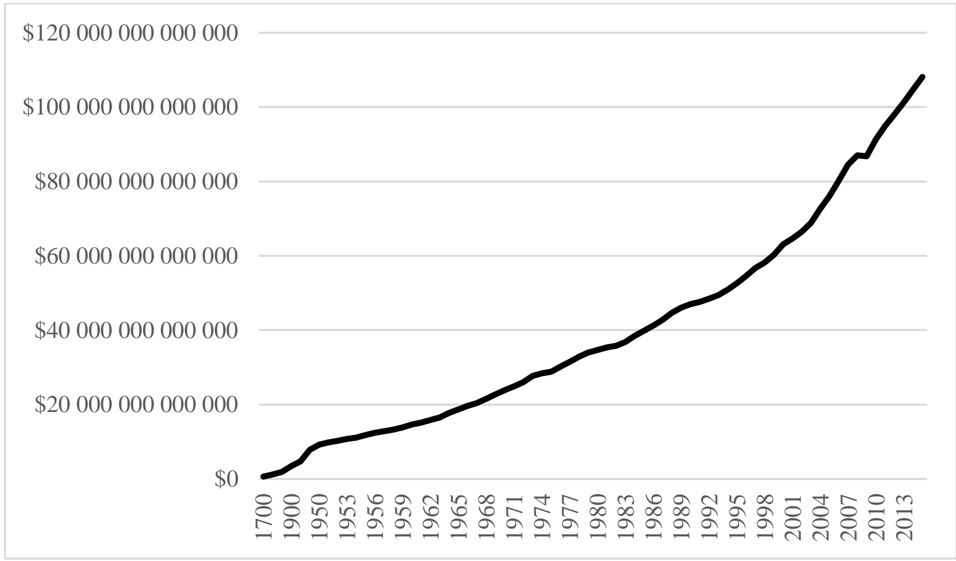
the conclusions, an argument will be made to embrace a scientific dystopian thought to better explain the times to come.

The growth paradigm and the great acceleration

From 1960 to 2021 the economy has grown around eight times in size (see graph 1), but to give more context we can mention that from the early 1800s to 2015 the economy grew around a hundred-fold (see graph 2), which means that a 1% growth in 2015 would be roughly equal to the total size of the economy at the beginning of the 19th century. If seen in relative terms growth appears to be slowing down, but in absolute terms each new percentage point of growth is considerably larger with each passing year, we can clearly see that a 1% growth in the world-economy in 1820 is not the same as a 1% growth in 2020, it is several orders of magnitude bigger.



Graph 1. World Gross Domestic Product, 1960-2021 (constant 2015 US$). Source: made by the author with data from The World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2023).



Graph 2. World GDP. Total output of the world economy; adjusted for inflation and expressed in international $ in 2011 prices. Source: made by the author with data from Roser (2017).

We can also see this in play in the long run by looking at the growth in per capita GDP over the last two centuries (see table 1), where the world's real GDP per capita grew approximately 14 times with most of the growth occurring after the 1950s. A quick look at the Maddison Project Databases will show that for most of human history economic growth wasn't a widespread phenomenon and that an exponential growth has occurred just very recently in terms of human history.

Real GDP per capita in 2011$

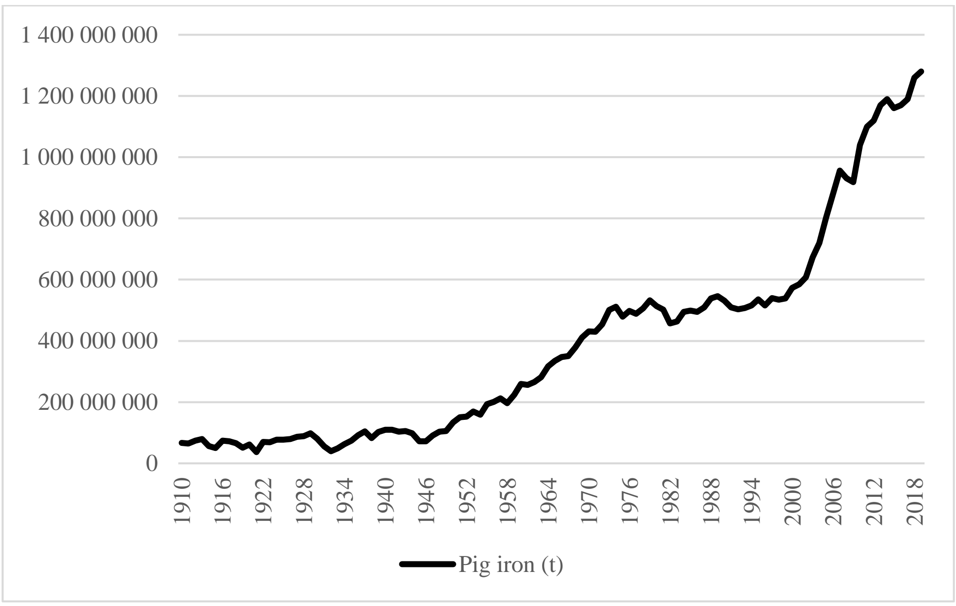
Year	Western Offshoots*	World
1820	$2,513.05	$1,101.57
1850	$3,474.41	$1,225.08
1870	$4,647.45	$1,497.98
1900	$7,740.85	$2,212.04

Real GDP per capita in 2011$

Year	Western Offshoots*	World
1920	$9,741.42	$2,241.17
1940	$11,620.50	$3,133.20
1950	$14,773.22	$3,350.57
1960	$17,471.51	$4,385.79
1970	$23,209.65	$5,951.55
1980	$28,786.76	$7,232.97
1990	$35,619.38	$8,222.48
2000	$44,329.27	$9,914.57
2010	$48,090.15	$13,179.50
2016	$51,667.98	$14,700.37
2017	$52,597.22	$14,944.09
2018	$53,756.50	$15,212.42

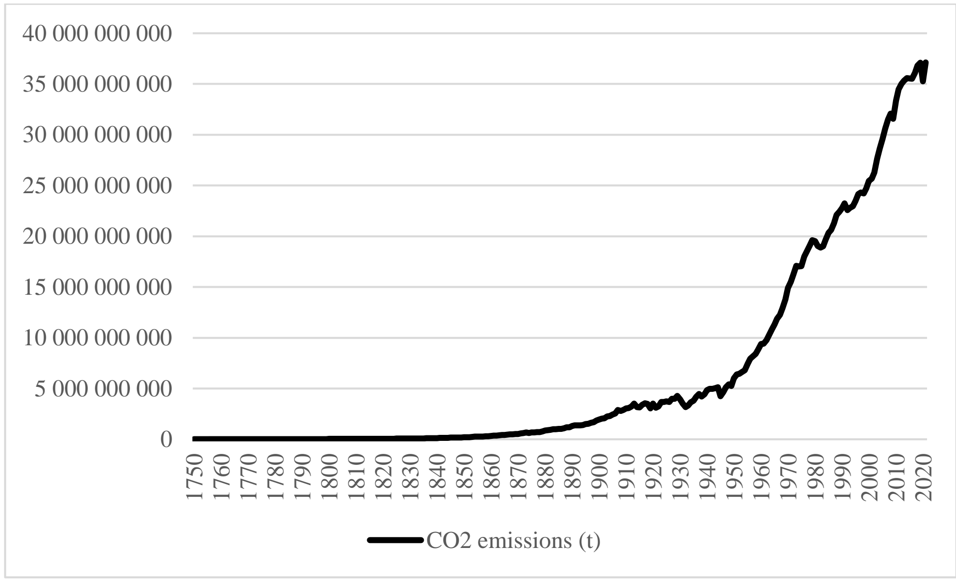
Table 1. Real Gross Domestic Product per capita in 2011$, 1820-2018. Source: made by the author with data from the Maddison Project Database (2020). *United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

And if we see the rate at which production has been growing the numbers are staggering. We can look at the data for some of the most relevant socio-economic indicators, for instance the global production of pig iron (see graph 2) between 1910 and 2019 grew almost 20 times and it is still on the rise. Yet again we can see that an exponential jump took place around the 1950s.



Graph 3. World pig iron production in metric tons, 1910-2019. Source: made by the author with data from the U.S. Geological Survey (2022).

This phenomenon that occurs around the 1950s is what has been called 'The Great Acceleration', since we can also see the same trend in almost all major indicators of the world-economy happening at the same time, from socio-economic indicators such as population, real GDP, or energy use, to Earth system trends such as Green House Gases (GHG) emissions, ocean acidification, biosphere degradation, or tropical forest loss (Steffen, 2015).



Graph 4. Global CO2 emissions (tons), 1750-2021. Source: made by the author with data from the Global Carbon Project (2022).

If we look closer to the growth of some of these indicators we can appreciate that if we limit ourselves to see the picture in terms of percentages, as is often the case with economists, it may seem that year to year growth is not that big, and some of these economists may even consider it a problem since there are periods where growth seems to be slowing down or even falling (see table 2); and slow growth seems to be an economist's worst nightmare. But if we look at the bigger picture and think in absolute terms (e.g., tons of crude steel), it becomes apparent that growth over the last two centuries has not stopped, it has an exponential upwards trajectory that must sometime come to an end if we are to believe that we live in a finite world.

World crude steel production, 1950-2021							
Year	**Million tons**	**Year**	**Million tons**	**Year**	**Million tons**	**Average growth rates %**	
1950	189	**2000**	850	**2011**	1540	**1950-55**	7.4%
1955	270	**2001**	852	**2012**	1562	**1955-60**	5.1%
1960	347	**2002**	905	**2013**	1652	**1960-65**	5.6%
1965	456	**2003**	971	**2014**	1674	**1965-70**	5.5%
1970	595	**2004**	1063	**2015**	1623	**1970-75**	1.6%
1975	644	**2005**	1148	**2016**	1632	**1975-80**	2.2%
1980	717	**2006**	1250	**2017**	1735	**1980-85**	0.1%
1985	719	**2007**	1350	**2018**	1827	**1985-90**	1.4%
1990	770	**2008**	1345	**2019**	1875	**1990-95**	-0.5%
1995	753	**2009**	1241	**2020**	1879	**1995-00**	2.5%
		2010	1435	**2021**	1951	**2000-05**	6.2%
						2005-10	4.6%
						2010-15	2.5%
						2015-20	3.0%
						2020-21	3.8%

Table 2. World crude steel production, 1950-2021. Source: made by the author with data from the World Steel Association (2022).

This type of growth, that is very recent in terms of human history, seems to be uncontrollable, and the underlying structure of this system seems to be unstoppable and spiraling out of control. It's as if the system has become independent of conscious human decisions and has gone fully autopoietic leading us to an inevitable collapse. In the next section we will explore certain phenomena that explain this autopoiesis.

Destructive autopoiesis: Jevons Paradox and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall

The Jevons Paradox

The approach of perspectives such as the one from Sustainable Development and that of Degrowth theorists tend to focus on the search for technological improvements that would allow to reduce the use of resources and thereby to reduce the rate of environmental destruction and the conflict surrounding the fight for said resources. However, historically the more efficient the use of resources and the more it would be viable to reduce their use the more their consumption increases. This phenomenon, that has been recorded since at

least the 19th century, is known as the ‘Jevons Paradox’ (Jevons, 1906, pp. 140-142), or as the "rebound effect" by conventional economics (Saunders, 1992), and describes the way in which as the improvement in production processes and technological innovation makes the use of some resource more efficient, in absolute terms the use of said resource increases instead of decreasing. The fall in production prices derived from productive improvements under a context of competition between capitals motivates capitalists to produce more, to expand the scale of production under better conditions of competition. The existence of this phenomenon jeopardizes the premise of conventional economics that postulates that improvements in productive efficiency, technological development and the search for new raw materials are the keys to a sustainable world; in fact, historically it has been the opposite, each new improvement opens a new market for the accumulation of capital.

This paradox applies to practically all productive spheres in the long term, including those that are supposedly ‘sustainable’, a paradigmatic case would be that of sustainable agriculture that promotes intensive agriculture as opposed to an expansive one, that is, it proposes to increase production per hectare to avoid expansion to virgin lands; under capitalist dynamics, agricultural production improvements paradoxically result in greater expansion and greater deforestation, as can be seen in the case of several South American countries at least for 4 decades, where the “Jevons Paradox exists even for moderate levels of agricultural productivity, leading to an overall expansion of agricultural area” (Ceddia, 2013, p. 1052). And we can see the Paradox in play all over the world in all sorts of industries, for example we can mention studies for specific countries or regions like in the United Kingdom regarding private road transport (Freeman, 2015) or energy demand in Scotland (Hanley, 2009), and the Jevons Paradox existing at the macro level for all major economic regions of the world across decades (Polimeni & Polimeni, 2006; Alcott, 2007).

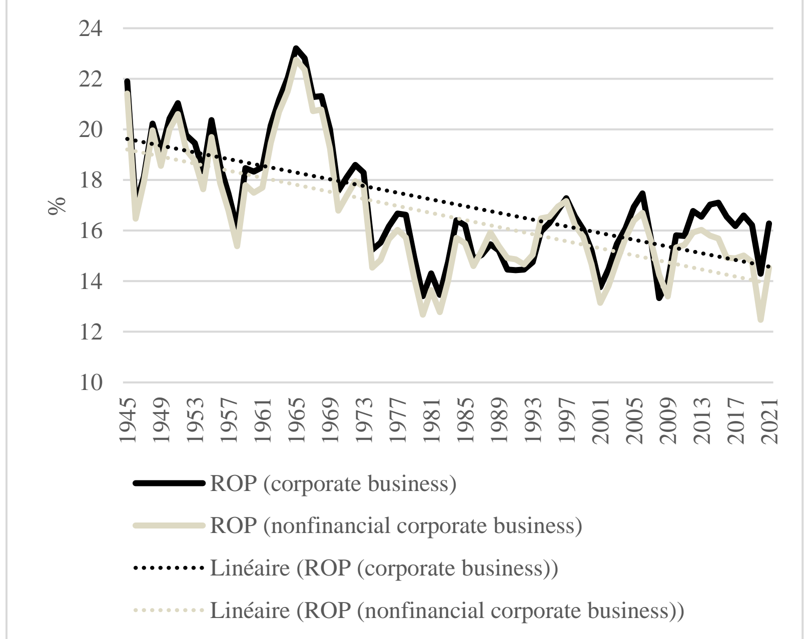
Just to mention a few more recent studies, we discover that in 37 countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Jevons Paradox has been in play at least from 1990 to 2020 (Yu et al., 2022). We can say the same about the iron and steel industry in China from 1995-2017 (Wang et al., 2022) and across sectors in India from the 1980s to 2017, where the “magnitude of energy intensity effect is stronger in the agricultural sector than the other sectors” (Murugasamy & Mishra, 2022, p. 112). The Paradox is in play, but most of these recent studies still believe that more energy efficiency will ultimately be the long-term solution, not considering that efficiency can’t improve forever, there are natural boundaries to efficiency and the transition to renewable clean energies is not likely to improve efficiency at a world-economy scale, as we will see in another section. And while “the evidence in favour of ‘Jevons Paradox’ is far from conclusive, it does suggest that economy-wide

rebound effects are larger than is conventionally assumed and that energy plays a more important role in driving productivity improvements and economic growth" (Sorrell, 2009, p. 1456).

The Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall

Competition and technological innovation motivated by it is what is at the base of this need for constant and blind production, this is because the more efficient the production processes are, the easier it is to produce goods through the intensive use of machinery, which displaces the use of labor force in relative terms: with a downward pressure over the price of commodities and a bigger capital intensity the capitalist profit margin per individual commodity is reduced, which is why it is necessary to increase the scale of production to compensate with mass of profit the fall in the rate of profit. In general terms, this is what the Law of the Tendential Fall in the Rate of Profit describes, as explained by Karl Marx, using the simple formula of dividing surplus value over the total advanced capital (Marx, 1993 [1894]).

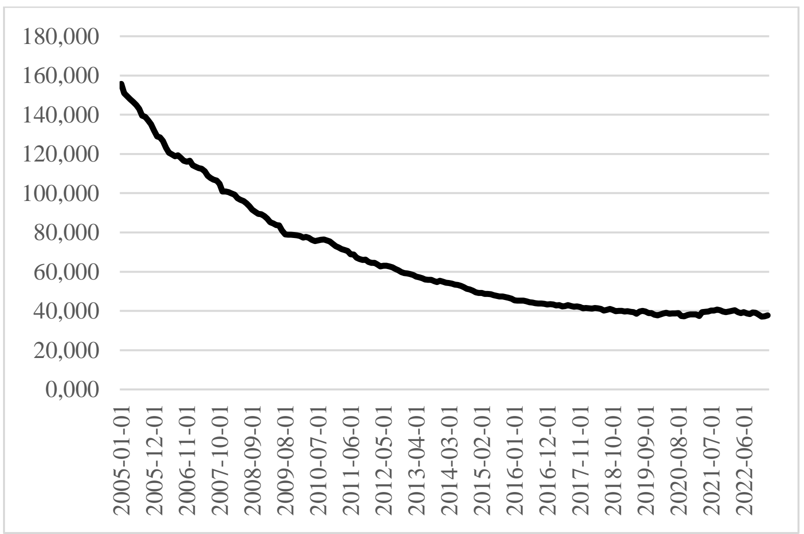
It is only relatively recently, perhaps over the last 15 years, that the evidence for a secular falling rate of profit has been widely available and has gained more academic interest, just to name a few the works by Shaikh (2016), Carchedi & Roberts (2018), Kliman (2011), Roberts (2016), Duménil & Levy (2012), Kotz (2008), Maito (2013), and Minqi *et al*. (2007), have proven the existence of a tendential fall in the rate of profit in the long run for the whole world-economy at least since the 19th century. Analyzing the literature on the matter it can be appreciated in a very suggestive way that the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is maintained regardless of the type of measurement that is carried out, if it is before or after taxes, with or without inventories, whether or not it includes the financial sector or if the figures are adjusted to historical prices or real prices. It can also be seen that there are "waves" in the behavior of the rate of profit in the long term, where capital tries to counteract the fall in the profit rate by applying the recipes already analyzed by Marx (1993 [1894]), especially by reducing real wages during the last wave of capitalist expansion, during what is now known as the neoliberal era. The falling rate of profit manages to be temporarily offset, but as Marx explains it, the "trend" is maintained and with each long wave of capitalist development returning to the levels of profitability known by early capitalism seems an impossible task. In this regard, we can see that the rate of profit of the most developed economy on the planet fails to be restored to its 1940s or even 1960s levels (see graph 5).



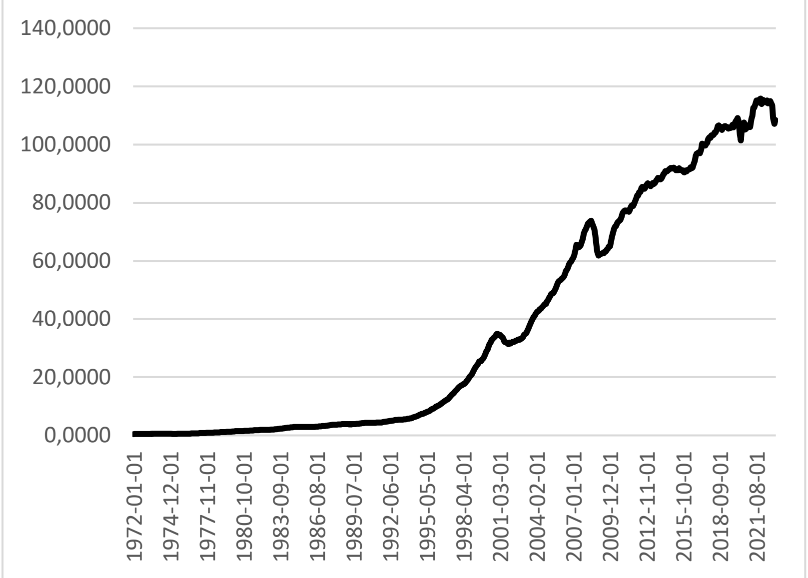
Graph 5. Rates of Profit of the corporate and non-financial corporate sectors of the United States (1945-2021). ROP= 100 * [(Net value added - compensation of employee) / Net stock of nonresidential fixes assets at replacement cost]. Source: made by the author with data from Wasner & Basu (2023).

The previously described phenomenon can be observed practically in any economic sphere that depends on the intensive use of machinery. A paradigmatic example would be the production of computer equipment and electronic products, as can be seen in Graph 6 the price for these types of goods has been steadily decreasing, and, at the same time, as can be seen in Graph 7, the number of products manufactured and launched on the market has not stopped increasing exponentially. Cheaper products need larger scales of production to compensate the reduction of the rate of profit with absolute mass of profit, as David Harvey would put it:

> […] if the mass of value in certain hands is already huge, then that mass may continue to expand with potentially monstruous consequences, environmental as well as social, even though the rate of profit is falling […] Out of this contradiction arises the pressure to create and grow the world market while putting more and more stress on the metabolic relation to nature. (Harvey, 2021, pp. 79-80)



Graph 6. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Computers, Peripherals, and Smart Home Assistants in U.S. City Average, Index Dec 2007=100, Monthly Seasonally Adjusted (January 2005-February 2023). Source: made by author with data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023).



Graph 7. Industrial Production: Manufacturing: Durable Goods: Computer and Electronic Product (NAICS=34), Index 2017=100, Monthly, Seasonally Adjusted (January 1972-February 2023). Source: made by the author with data from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System of the United States (2023).

And there are additional elements to consider when discussing the tendential fall of the rate of profit, for instance, what Immanuel Wallerstein describes as the three main drivers for this tendential fall: a) the long term increase of real wages as the world-economy grows closer to the total proletarianization of the planet; b) the rise in the cost of raw materials for production; c) the secular rise in taxation (Wallerstein, 2004). And we should also consider that in Wallerstein's perspective the secular rise in taxation goes hand in hand with the increasing costs needed to repair or maintain the environment as capitalist production destroys it, long gone are the days when the destruction of the environment was cast aside simply as part of the so-called "negative externalities", if the world-economy intends to flourish and persist it needs to increase its expending to repair the damage done to its material foundations. And the costs are plenty and constantly rising, not only due to the direct damage that we have done and that we need to take care of (like deforestation or the millions of tons of plastic in the oceans), but also due to increasing climate disasters that derive from global warming (like hurricanes or forest fires). In this regard, we can mention, just as an example, that in 2022 there were 18 climate events in the United States that generated losses for more than one billion dollars, and the frequency of this type of events is increasing yearly, the annual average between 1980-2022 was of 7.9 events (CPI-adjusted) while the

annual average of the 2018-2022 period was 17.8 events (NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information [NCEI], 2023).

The Energy Return on Investment

One of the main issues faced by the capitalist reproduction process is the capacity of the available energy sources to boost production at scales appropriate to the valorization needs of the system. Oil has been the soul of the capitalist economy for nearly two centuries and is the main cause of the rapid capitalist expansion around the world, however all good things come to an end and unfortunately (for capital) hydrocarbons begin to reach its productive limits. The problem is that not all energy alternatives that are on the horizon have the same energy capacity as hydrocarbons. The "energy capacity" of each type of resource is usually measured using the Energy Return on Energy Invested (EROEI), which is calculated by dividing the energy obtained in the exploitation of a resource over the energy consumed in the production or extraction of said resource:

$$EROEI = \frac{obtained\ energy}{energy\ invested}$$

Which means that if a barrel of oil generates (in a hypothetical case) 40 J of energy when exploited but 20 J were needed to produce it, the energy return rate would be 2, for each unit invested you obtain double what was used in its production; this would be expressed as an EROEI of 2:1. Also, it is worth mentioning that there is also the Net Energy Gain (NEG) approach, which does not use a rate of return, instead it refers to the real amount of total energy obtained once the expense in producing it has been deducted:

$$NEG = obtained\ energy - energy\ invested$$

We could say that the EROEI approach focuses on the efficiency of an energy source, it is a rate, so it allows us to understand the problem in relative terms or proportions. The NEG, for its part, allows an analysis in which the energy obtained is evaluated in absolute terms to discern the viability or convenience of dedicating effort to obtaining an energy that in relative terms does not seem to be very convenient. Both approaches are not in conflict when carrying out an analysis, and although in this section we will focus on the EROEI considering the NEG approach is useful for an in-depth analysis of chains of production (Arodudu et al., 2013). The NEG approach has its limitations, given that in a scenario where the problem is the relentless growth of production thinking about the viability of an energy source that is not very efficient but that in terms of mass is very abundant or thinking that low efficiency can be compensated with production on

larger scales does not sound very healthy in terms of caring for the biosphere or equitable distribution of wealth.

Furthermore, there is a type of EROEI measurement that accounts for the minimum level of energy efficiency required for a modern society to function properly. If, for example, the main energy source of a hypothetical society had an EROEI of 1:1, it would mean that the energy that its resources provide is the same as what it costs to produce them, so this hypothetical society could not allocate energy resources to any other productive activity, it would be production for the sake of production, like extracting oil just to stare at it because doing anything more would imply a negative energy return on investment. Thus, if we want to have a fully working society and strive for better standards of living, we cannot settle for low EROEIs, the lower the EROEI the higher the sacrifices we need to make as a society (e.g. social security or education) (Hall, 2017, p. 154).

Thus, there is a minimum EROEI that allows society to perform as a society. According to Weißbach et al. (2013) the minimum 'economic threshold' for a society to function would be based on an EROEI of 7:1, so all Energy sources that have an EROEI lower than that are simply not viable for reproducing the most basic needs of a modern industrial society. This threshold would rule out the viability of all biofuels and of many technologies based on solar and wind power. But the threshold given by the research of Weißbach and his colleagues only accounts for the minimum necessary to boost an industrial society at a basic economic level, however no developed or developing nation functions in reality with such a reduced EROEI, a 2014 research that compares human development indices with the energy return rates of several countries concluded that "countries with an $EROI_{soc}$ of less than 15-25:1 and/or less than 100 GJ per capita per year tend to have a poor to moderate "quality of life"" (Lambert et al., 2014, p. 164). According to Fizaine et al. (2016) the United States needs a minimum societal EROEI of 11:1 to continue with positive economic growth rates, but in reality, USA has an EROI of around 40:1 across all generating technologies (World Nuclear Association 2020) and its current production levels depend on maintaining that standard.

The attention paid to the relevance of energy seems to be a relatively recent topic, during most of capitalist history, easily extracted, cheap and abundant fossil energy seemed to be unlimited, so the reflection on the need to transition to other energetics has not been on the table for a long time. Even to this day conventional economists do not give importance to the relationship between energy and economic growth, thinking that the market by itself will be in charge of leveling energy production by finding the best alternatives through the law of supply and demand. But as we know, capitalism likes to expand by consuming efficient energy without worrying too much about the social or environmental consequences, so leaving everything to market forces does not seem to be the best

alternative. Furthermore, so far it does not seem that any of the 'renewable' energies promoted by government agencies as the panacea to all the problems of the modern world are even close to granting the same energy advantages as those granted by oil in its heyday. For instance, in the case of the United States until before 1930 the combined EROEI of oil and natural gas was around 100:1, by 2010 it was closer to 20:1 due to greater difficulties in extracting oil and gas from harder to reach sources and greater costs in refining lower quality materials, in contrast, photovoltaics, biofuels, solar and less refined forms of extracting oil (such as tar sands) were well below an EROEI of 10:1(Murphy et al., 2010). Depletion is not being counteracted by innovation and the EROEI of hydrocarbons has been steadily declining across the globe for decades (Court & Fizaine, 2017; Lambert et al., 2014; Rhodes, 2017; Brandt et al., 2015).

Furthermore, returning to the scale problems and the exponential growth of the system, renewable energies, by having such low EROEIs, enhance the increase in production and energy expenditure, we can see that the problem with exploiting resources with reduced EROEI is that to be profitable at production scales such as those used by transnational capitals, production needs to be pushed to the limit to compensate for low energy efficiency with a large mass of product that gives a large mass of profit:

> Replacement of higher EROEI sources with lower EROEI sources results in an increase in the total energy input. Using published EROEI estimates for existing and new primary energy sources, we estimate that total energy inputs will need to increase by a minimum of 40% (and could increase by as much as 400%) to provide a fixed net useful energy for human societies. Growth in net useful energy demand will further increase these estimates. The timescale for these increases is given by the primary energy source replacement time, which historically has ranged from 30–50 years. (Deng & Tynan, 2011, pp. 2440-2441)

All of this without taking into consideration that oil is not just another energy source like all the other "alternatives", oil is the raw material of practically all of the cutting-edge industries worldwide and is what has allowed the unparalleled advance of the way of capitalist production around the world:

> The importance of oil to human global civilisation cannot be overemphasised, since not only does it provide the liquid fuels on which most of the world's transportation depends, but it underpins most of the chemical industry, and is the raw (carbon) chemical feedstock from which plastics, pharmaceuticals, and most consumer goods are made. Perhaps more strikingly, without oil, and natural gas to make fertilisers, modern agriculture could not exist in its present form: oil is not only needed to fuel tractors and combine harvesters, but the food produced is transported both around nations and the wider world. (Rhodes, 2017, p. 233)

The failure of the 'alternatives' within the system: sustainable development, green growth, degrowth and the circular economy

Sustainable Development

On light of what has been laid out in previous sections we can say that the idea of Sustainable Development is a fallacy, an oxymoron, the adjective contradicts the noun, or there is development or there is sustainability but not both at the same time (on a world-economy scale at least). Sustainable Development policies, on general, have not been successful since they began to be applied a few decades ago, one of the main causes of this failure being that industrialized countries have no real interest in changing current technological accumulation patterns due to the higher profit rates that they give, in addition to the fact that the so-called "green technologies" are not really so, since applied under a capitalist production scheme they are only profitable as long as they are produced on a large scale, consuming even more natural resources in the process, all of which leads to the fact that Sustainable Development policies are nothing more than a slogan or a declaration of good will where politics are almost totally disconnected from the real application in the economic sphere.

At least since 1987, when the concept of Sustainable Development was first coined, and more specifically since 1992 with the Earth Summit of the United Nations, there has been a concerted effort at the level of countries and international treaties to transition to a more sustainable world. However, the reality is that the idea has not gone beyond the concept, most of the 'achievements' are laws or agreements that remain dead rhetoric, such as the declaration of new Protected Natural Areas or updating goals that have not been met with new ones that will not be met either. The Millennium Development Goals were not met and gave way to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in a few years we will be talking about how the SDGs were not met and gave way to other now more difficult goals to fulfill. In one of the most recent reports on the state of progress of the SDGs, it is mentioned that overall "high-income countries (HICs) and OECD countries are closer to achieving the targets than other country groups, yet none are on track to achieve all 17 SDGs" (Sachs et al., 2022, p. 17). The report also mentions that rich countries are 'hampering' poor and underdeveloped countries efforts to reach sustainable development.

In the same way, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets that were part of the Strategic Plan for Biological Diversity 2011-2020 were a resounding failure, in the 2020 report, at the end of the period of the strategic plan it was concluded that "at the global level none of the 20 targets have been fully achieved, though six targets have been partially achieved (Targets 9, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 20)" (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020, p. 10). In this way, some

'achievements' are highly acclaimed, but if we analyze the content of the goals that have been 'partially' achieved, we will realize that they are goals without substance, simple make-up, a disguise of progress made with the drafting of laws, reports and money spending: target 9, achievements in identifying and prioritizing invasive alien species; target 11, progress in designating new protected natural areas; target 16, entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol; target 17, progress in that various countries present strategic action plans; target 19, advances in scientific knowledge about the functioning of the biosphere; target 20, progress in increasing financial resources to apply plans that help meet Aichi targets.

However, despite the failure of laws and treaties, Law is one of the few weapons left to communities in struggle, so it is not convenient to underestimate the capacity of legal tools to enforce the right to a healthy environment. We have the example of the Montreal Protocol, which regulated the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) since 1987, successfully reducing the hole in the ozone layer considerably, a success that is constantly referenced as an example of the possibilities of the application of laws and the supposed possibility of green capitalism, but this type of success is only possible in cases in which the dynamics of capital accumulation can do without certain types of productive activities without damaging the foundation of the system. Thus, the use of CFCs decreased, but the use of other types of chemicals that destroy the terrestrial system in other processes has increased exponentially. All this without mentioning the practical ineffectiveness of legal actions to protect the most vulnerable strata of the world's population.

Green Growth (Decoupling)

Economists insist that 'green growth' can exist, to prove it they constantly refer to the idea of 'decoupling' economic growth from the use of resources, they argue that GDP can still grow while decoupling from resource depletion and contamination. But they handle everything in terms of percentages (e. g., the concept of Green GDP), and if the issue is analyzed in terms of the volume of resources used, the problem begins to be quite visible, GDP may theoretically still grow with less use of energy in relative terms, but in reality the use of energy does not stop growing, because the economy keeps growing in size in absolute terms. Thus, some degrowth theorists (as we will see in the next section) harshly critique the use of GDP as a measure of economic health and as a reference for environmental decoupling (Latouche, 2010). Therefore, degrowth theorists push for an absolute degrowth of production, since "de-growth implies physical de-growth or downsizing economic throughput as measured by material and energy flows. The debate rests on how much downsizing is necessary for sustainability

and whether there is an optimal scale of the economy" (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010, p. 1743).

We can mention the case of China, which at the moment is the country most involved in Circular Economy policies and the one that paradoxically seems to have the most advanced environmental legislation (despite some notable omissions), we observe that despite improvements in "eco-efficiency", total resource utilization has not decreased at all and the environmental destruction continues at higher scales, as might be expected from the energy efficiency paradox. The decoupling is only a relative decoupling:

> Data should, however, be interpreted with care. The absolute numbers show an increase in resource use in China, and a resource productivity ratio that is converging to EU numbers, yet it is still higher, i.e., the Chinese economy is less resource productive than the EU in absolute numbers. A main driver for relative decoupling in China has been GDP growth. (Bleischwitz et al., 2022, p. 5)

What current literature points to is that "empirical evidence on resource use and carbon emissions does not support green growth theory" (Hickel & Kallis, 2020, p. 469). In this regard, a 2023 study concluded that of 36 high-income countries studied only 11 had recently (between 2013 and 2019) achieved absolute decoupling (in terms of carbon emissions), but still the rates of the countries that are achieving absolute decoupling are far from what is needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C: "At the achieved rates, these countries would on average take more than 220 years to reduce their emissions by 95%, emitting 27 times their remaining 1.5°C fair-shares in the process. To meet their 1.5°C fair-shares alongside continued economic growth, decoupling rates would on average need to increase by a factor of ten by 2025" (Vogel & Hickel, 2023, p. e759).

The Circular Economy

Going into the definition of the concept, we see that there does not seem to be a consensus regarding many of the details that would define a Circular Economy. A 2017 study undertook the task of compiling the definition of the concept as it appears in 114 related publications and arrived at the conclusion that in general terms there is no single definition, and many contradict each other. Among the coincidences, what stands out the most is that most of the definitions put economic growth before environmental protection or see new business opportunities within a 'green economy'. This study's findings conclude that:

> […] the circular economy is most frequently depicted as a combination of reduce, reuse and recycle activities, whereas it is oftentimes not highlighted that CE necessitates a systemic shift. We further find that the definitions show few explicit linkages of the circular economy concept to sustainable development. The main aim of the circular

economy is considered to be economic prosperity, followed by environmental quality. (Kirchherr et al., 2017, p. 221)

We can see this in play in the European plan to implement a Circular Economy, where growth is still the focus: "In December 2015, the Commission adopted a Circular Economy Action Plan to give a new boost to jobs, growth and investment and to develop a carbon neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy" (European Commission, 2019, p. 1). And going back to the problems discussed in previous sections, efficiency is not a deterrent for growth, and what the Circular Economy enthusiasts fail to discuss is the existence of a rebound effect within this framework, as such, they have "tended to look at the world purely as an engineering system and have overlooked the economic part of the circular economy [...] circular economy activities can increase overall production, which can partially or fully offset their benefits" (Zink & Geyer, 2017, p. 593). As we saw when talking about 'Green Growth' what history seems to indicate so far is that decoupling economic growth from resource utilization is somewhat impossible when talking about large scales, and at the end of the day the Circular Economy is still based on the premise of growth.

And we still have other problems to consider that due to space restrictions should be discussed in another place, for instance the fact that full circularity is impossible for most materials and that the growth paradigm requires both extraction of new materials and attempts to reuse and recycle old materials. And we can also start by mentioning that more investment in 'cleaner' energies that have lower energy return on investment (EROEI), and more investment in recycling that is often more expensive than just regular extraction, and more investment to fix environmental disasters, and rising costs due to environmental taxes, etcetera, all of this keeps having an impact in the rate of profit and keeps pushing the increases in production to compensate the falling rates of profit with absolute masses of profits.

For some materials, notably cement, ceramics, and composites, there is as yet no recycling route by which the material can be returned to its original structure and quality [...] For some materials, recycling generally involves a loss of quality [...] in many cases recycled material must be mixed with virgin material to produce acceptable products, thus reducing the net benefits of recycling [...] For many critical metals that are used in compounds (as alloys, or in electronics applications), the energy required to separate them as part of a recycling process may be significantly greater than the energy needed for virgin production [...] For some materials, notably glass, the energy required for recycling is similar to that required for virgin production [...] For other materials, such as paper, the

emissions benefit of recycling may be less than the energy saving. (Allwood, 2014, p. 464)

Degrowth

In the Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (dedicated to assessing emission reduction and mitigation efforts) the word 'degrowth' appears 29 times (IPCC, 2022b), 8 times in text and 21 times in the bibliography, for a two thousand page report is not that much but nonetheless it does recognize this approach as one of the possible solutions that needs further exploration and that has not been sufficiently addressed by the IPCC: "scenarios that include climate change impacts or economic degrowth are not fully represented, as these scenarios, with a few exceptions, were not submitted to the database" (IPCC, 2022b, p. 383). Consequently, in the Full Synthesis Report released in 2023 that gathers the main contributions of the three working groups of the IPCC the degrowth approach is never mentioned (IPCC, 2023). This recurrent dismissal of the degrowth perspective by international organisms is in line with the mainstream perspective that claims that 'sustainability' and growth can go hand in hand, and when degrowth policies are taken seriously they seem to be within the framework of a 'tactical' degrowth in some aspects of the world economy, but not in a systemic sense: "The sustainability world (SSP1), for example, is a world with strong economic growth, but sustainability worlds with low growth or even elements of degrowth in developed countries could also be explored" (IPCC, 2022b, p. 1875). There are, however, studies that try to question the IPCC main scenarios by integrating the degrowth approach to the modelling of a 1.5°C scenario as required by the Paris Agreement:

> […] we find that the degrowth scenarios minimize many key risks for feasibility and sustainability compared to technology-driven pathways, such as the reliance on high energy-GDP decoupling, large-scale carbon dioxide removal and large-scale and high-speed renewable energy transformation. However, substantial challenges remain regarding political feasibility. (Keyßer & Lenzen, 2021, p. 1)

The challenge for degrowth lies in the last part of the quote, "substantial challenges remain regarding political feasibility". Degrowth requires political will and planification, something that I argue is not aligned with the underlying mechanisms of the world-system that mainly operates as an autopoietic system. Degrowth policies may find success at local or regional levels, but the challenge is systemic and needs to be addressed in a systemic way, as was previously mentioned, the fact that a few developed countries are achieving absolute decoupling does not mean that we are advancing towards the best scenario (Vogel & Hickel, 2023), living in a world-system means that rich countries can outsource

environmental damage to poor nations, thus achieving certain goals in a few developed parts of the system does not mean that the system itself is healing:

> Degrowth scholars emphasise that global absolute decoupling is currently not proceeding fast enough to meet Paris Agreement targets […] Ecomodernists point to important progress towards achieving absolute decoupling at the national or regional scale […] and the future potential of emerging technologies and policy reforms. (IPCC, 2022a, p. 173)

Nonetheless, degrowth theorists are advancing their theory by proposing reforms that could affect the system in its entirety. The notion that the system can be reformed is a whole debate in itself but we can start by mentioning some of the propositions given by some of the main degrowth scholars. For instance:

> […] we propose five types of reforms that can work together to favor futures where common people work, produce, and consume less, share more, enjoy more free time, and live with dignity and joy. These policy packages are: a Green New Deal without growth; universal incomes and services; policies to reclaim the commons; reduction of working hours; and public finance that supports the first four. (Kallis et al., 2020, p. 65)

A proposal of this style within a capitalist social reproduction scheme sounds crazy, it is not very or at all compatible with what capitalism is, and there are problems that go hand in hand with decreasing, the most obvious of them is unemployment, because how can jobs be generated in a context of negative growth and rising capital intensity. How to tell workers and unions to support the initiative if their quality of life in a context of growing impoverishment depends on growing economies; capitalism has made workers dependent on economic growth and they can no longer be asked to return to self-subsistence schemes when well beyond half of the global population lives in cities: “Under current economic and fiscal policies […] degrowth has been argued as an unstable development paradigm because declining consumer demand leads to rising unemployment, declining competitiveness and a spiral of recession” (IPCC, 2022a, p. 2718). There are some developments within degrowth literature that try to tackle this issue (Hickel, 2020) but the propositions are still far from getting into practice at a global scale.

Degrowth in its more refined form seems to be the 21st century version of Marx’s utopian vision (a science-based utopia), because in its core degrowth is not just about slowing down growth just for the sake of it, degrowth is not just austerity, degrowth focuses on a redistribution of wealth where everyone has their needs met, where society produces based on human needs and not based on the needs of profit:

While austerity increases inequality by curbing public services and benefitting the rich through tax cuts and privatisation of government services, degrowth policies focus on democratising production, curbing the wealth and overconsumption of the rich, expanding public services, and increasing equality within and between societies. Degrowth is also not a recession: recessions are unintentional, while degrowth is planned and intentional. (Schmelzer & Vansintjan, 2022)

In this sense, Degrowth seems to be the most serious alternative to our current predicament and the one that needs to be taken more seriously, but most of its propositions ultimately go against the core values of the capitalist system and capitalism would need to destroy itself for Degrowth policies to flourish.

Conclusions: notes for a dystopian Marxism

What we observe is that the alternatives that seem to be more 'viable' are actually not achievable within a frame of production like the capitalist one, because they either generate more production or directly go against the generation of profit. And it should be remembered that a good part of the sustainability argument is based on the premise of the transition to renewable energies, however, renewable energies by themselves are promoting the increase in production, not the other way around. We can mention that in BP's 2022 report on global energy use it mentions that "primary energy in 2021 grew by its largest amount in history, with emerging economies accounting for most of the increase" (BP, 2022, p. 4). Has the use of renewable energy increased? Yes, promoting growth and the creation of new markets. Has the use of fossil fuels also increased? Yes, to new historical levels. So what game are we playing? The game of covering up rotten flesh with cheap make-up, false hopes, and perfumes of sustainability while the paradigm of growth continues unscathed. We are talking about ecological suicide even in the case of an economy that stops growing but keeps the same scale of production every year, a 0% growth under the current scale of production is still ecological suicide given the massive use of resources in absolute terms. Degrowth may start happening, but not due to the successful application of degrowth policies, if it ever happens it will be due to real physical limits signaling the start of the environmental collapse or due to an all-out war in the race for what's left. Within a capitalist mode of production voluntary degrowth is not an option, capitalism is structurally bound to keep growing as long as the material conditions of the natural world allow it, this is what is meant by 'destructive autopoiesis'.

The 'real' alternative would be in a mode of production that worries about life and not profit, in a redistribution of resources according to capacity and necessity (as Marx would say) and not according to the principles of unrestrained accumulation; but in this case we would be talking about a 'ghost' that very few want to see traveling the world and that has no clear way of materializing. In this way, we

conclude this article with a reflexion about this state of affairs that also doubles as a personal positioning regarding the destiny of capitalism and the role that a 'revolutionary subject' could play in this bleak outlook, a positioning that is sure to upset a lot of dogmatic Marxists and a lot of social science theorists that put the subject as a God and as the ultimate agent of change.

Throughout the whole turbulent history of Marxism, we can find two big currents, those that Ernst Bloch in his already classic book 'The Principle of Hope', described as the 'warm' and 'cold' currents. The first one, the warm one, is that of utopian thought, the one that thinks that there is light at the end of the tunnel, while the cold one is that of rational and objective thought where the cold hard facts and the 'science of material conditions' rest. These two currents seem to dominate the intellectual landscape, alternating periodically depending on the mood of the times, however, according to Bloch, the good Marxist theory should draw on both currents to avoid an approach that is not dialectical (Bloch, 2007, pp. 251-252). The problem with Bloch's conceptualization is that only the warm and hopeful Marxism is the one we can describe as being a 'philosophy of the future', a materialism that goes forward 'to reach home' and liberty, while the cold Marxism remains anchored in the present of the objective conditions (Bloch, 2007, p. 253). Taking into account the disenchantment of these times, perhaps we should add a third current, one that derives from the coldest Marxism to the point of becoming almost glacial, in which, based on the analysis of the trends and laws of the capitalist system in the long term, we can predict that the most likely scenario is not that of Utopia but that of Dystopia, that of the worst possible future. We could call this glacial Marxism with the simple name of Dystopian Marxism.

Particularly, the gravity of the ecological crisis that we face at the beginning of the 21st century, which has no signs of slowing down, allows us to think quite clearly and without being too farfetched that capitalism can end, but not because of revolutionary activity but due to an abrupt ending of life in civilization as we know it due to an ecological collapse that prevents capitalism from continuing with the rate of accumulation to which it has been used to for at least two centuries. The question is whether the will of warm Marxism and its philosophy of the future provides enough tools to think of a way to avoid this scenario of collapse, or if, on the contrary, dystopian Marxism anchored in cold Marxism has even more convincing arguments to prove that we are on the verge of collapse and that given the conditions and laws of the historical accumulation of capital that we know, there is no way that a contemporary revolutionary subject can do something in time to change this state of affairs. I believe that the time of Utopia has passed, I believe that accepting hopelessness can give better solutions to the issues that are coming our way. As Žižek would put it: "The true courage is not to imagine an

alternative, but to accept the consequences of the fact that there is no clearly discernible alternative: the dream of an alternative is a sign of theoretical cowardice" (Žižek, 2017, p. 4).

Thus, reconceptualizing the idea of growth and the idea of a sustainable economy also involves reconceptualizing the idea of a social agent willing to generate these changes, a social agent that disappears in mathematical models and is replaced by "rational actors" who are usually companies or states that supposedly, in the pursuit of their own benefit, achieve a general benefit and a balanced development that has not yet been achieved in at least two centuries of capitalist history (at least as far as environmental degradation is concerned). For example, when we talk in economic theory about the existence of rational consumers, we are dealing with an abstraction of such magnitude that we could think that these are treatises on metaphysics; in reality, the rational consumer (as well as the rational producer) are just abstractions of theoretical equilibrium models that do not match with reality (Keen, 2011).

In this sense, an extensive analysis of the modern "revolutionary subject" that is subsumed by the system's autopoiesis is also one of my interests, but it escapes the scope of this article. For now, I will say that what the research I have done so far tells us is that in the Long Duration and in terms of world-economy the action of the subject has not altered the dynamics of capitalist accumulation as it relates to exponential growth and ecological destruction. Quite the contrary, every attempt by the "historical subject" to take the reins of world production in a social, communal, and sustainable way has ended up promoting the development of capitalism (despite its initial intentions), be it the Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution, or more recently Bolivarian revolution. Thus, the economic sphere seems to function independently of the will of individuals, it appears as an autopoietic system, as understood by Niklas Luhmann (2013), in which the social glue becomes money and the connection between individuals and therefore the creation of social relationships only occurs through money as a medium while capitalism expands extensively and intensively.

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Documentary review

After the Collapse: Heddy Honigmann's 'Metal and Melancholy' 30 Years On

Rafael Shimabukuro

University of Cambridge, UK

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Rafael Shimabukuro[1]

Documentary review

After the Collapse: Heddy Honigmann's 'Metal and Melancholy' 30 Years On

What remains of a society after its collapse? That is the central question posed by Dutch-Peruvian filmmaker Heddy Honigmann in Metal and Melancholy (1994). An ethnographic documentary following taxi drivers around Lima, the film captures the atmosphere of early 1990s Peru, a society torn apart by more than a decade of economic crisis and bloody armed conflict. Honigmann, who passed away in Amsterdam in 2022, offers us a window into a time and place defined by collapse. Thirty years on, as Peru returns to the abyss in the wake of a prolonged political crisis while global capitalism marches towards planetary catastrophe, revisiting Metal and Melancholy is revelatory.

Honigmann, the daughter of European Jewish refugees, was born and raised in Lima before leaving for Rome to study filmmaking and eventually settling in Amsterdam. She directed several films before Metal and Melancholy, but this was her first feature-length documentary. She would go on to become a renowned documentarian. Her range was radically diverse, extending from Brazilian erotic poetry in O Amor Natural (1996) to the aftermath of the Bosnian genocide in Good Husband, Dear Son (2002). What remained constant in her oeuvre were the compelling portraits of the people in her films, something already front and centre in Metal and Melancholy.

Formally, it is hard to place Metal and Melancholy in a national film tradition. The film was made for Dutch public television, although the dialogue is in Spanish and everyone on camera is Peruvian. There is no narration, as all scenes are

[1] Rafael Shimabukuro is a PhD student in Latin American Studies at Cambridge University. He holds a BA in Economics, Politics and International Studies from the University of Warwick and a MSc in Politics Research from the University of Oxford. His PhD is funded by the Harding Distinguished Postgraduate Scholars Programme. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7549-4354

conversations between Honigmann and taxi drivers. The camera's point of view is that of a passenger sitting next to the driver. The film is cut as mostly self-contained conversations with individual taxi drivers, although a few make recurring appearances. While we hear Honigmann often, we barely ever see her. This gives a certain sense of candour, and indeed rawness, to the film.

The title alludes to a conversation Honigmann has with Jorge Rodríguez Paz. He is an elderly actor who, after featuring in many prominent Peruvian films, is forced to work as a taxi driver to make ends meet. Referencing Federico García Lorca, Rodríguez Paz says:

> A famous Spanish poet once said Peru is made of metal and melancholy. He was right. [Why metal and melancholy?] Maybe because pain and poverty made us as hard as our metals. And melancholy because we are also tender, and we cherish better times which have been lost to oblivion.

Although García Lorca was writing at the beginning of the 20th century, at no time has his description of Peru been more accurate than in the early 1990s. By then the country was reeling from a protracted economic crisis going back two decades. Remarkably, by some metrics in 1992 Peru's GDP per capita was 32% lower than in 1975 (World Bank, 2024). The developmentalist dreams of the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces (1968-1980) had degenerated into hyperinflation, deindustrialisation and an international credit blockade. Meanwhile, the Shining Path, an ultra-Maoist offshoot of the Peruvian Communist Party, had made a mockery of José Carlos Mariátegui's hopes for an Indo-American revolution. Starting in 1980 they led a bloody insurgency against Peruvian society. The death toll from the ensuing conflict is fiercely contested, but by the turn of the millennium the Shining Path had killed approximately thirty one thousand Peruvians, mostly indigenous peasants but also community leaders and other Marxists (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2003). The military was not far behind, killing approximately twenty thousand in a brutal, often indiscriminate counter-insurgency campaign.

The taxi-driving in Metal and Melancholy is a result of these interlocking crises. Many if not most of the interviewees are middle-class professionals: a medical publicist, a judicial bureaucrat, a retired air force officer, a policeman, and so on. They have been forced to moonlight as taxi drivers to get by, for their primary wages are no longer enough. Not even taxi-driving is sufficient: many are also forced to sell snacks and trinkets. In an uncomfortable moment Rodríguez Paz awkwardly attempts to sell pens to Honigmann, who politely refuses. The film's narrative is of downward mobility, of adapting to increasingly more precarious material circumstances.

Yet, if somewhat perversely, the film is also a story of creativity and ingenuity. One taxi driver removes the gear stick every night to make his car harder to steal. A different driver, when faced with an engine that will not start unless it is hot-wired, responds by ironically reframing that shortcoming as another anti-theft feature. We visit the house of a driver who has installed a generator to make sure lights remain on during blackouts. Most interestingly, we encounter several women who have entered the traditionally male profession of taxi-driving. They too have to subsist, so they too go out to the streets with their cars.

Solidarity and collective action do not feature as possibilities. The mechanisms for survival we encounter are individualistic. Indeed, taxi-driving in Peru is an individual undertaking. Drivers are overwhelmingly self-employed, using their own cars and getting customers by driving around the city until hailed. In a country as poor as 1990s Peru car owners are a minority, but if one does own a car, all one really needs is a sign on the windshield. In this sense the film captures Uberisation decades before Uber and without corporate intermediaries. To borrow the romanticising frames of Hernando de Soto, Peru's foremost neoliberal thinker, the taxi drivers belong to the informal sector. They are micro-entrepreneurs for whom the way out of economic crisis passes through the market. Collapse does not mechanistically create revolutionaries.

The lack of collective action in 1990s Peru should not be surprising. Many social leaders had been murdered or intimidated into silence by the Shining Path and the military. One of the taxi drivers, a former policeman, admits to working undercover as a secondary school student informing on the teachers' union. For the driver this is a quaint story rather than a confession, but given the Peruvian state's occasionally murderous track record, it is also slightly unsettling. More unsettling is when another taxi driver recalls an acquaintance murdered for breaking an armed strike called by the Shining Path. Not only was collective action met by repression, but self-declared revolutionary action was frequently repression itself.

Honigmann sporadically experiences the latent dangers of existing in early 1990s Peru. At one point she asks a taxi driver to stop. The taxi driver declines her request, since they are close to a police station and stopping there is likely to be met by violent counter-terrorism measures. Another time a stern-looking policeman at a stoplight notices the camera and asks Honigmann for her permit to record. He takes a while checking all papers are in order, never abandoning his slightly menacing expression. He eventually asks what the documentary is about. When told, he abruptly smiles. He is a taxi driver too and he wants to be interviewed. In him the threat of repression and the precarity of existence are entwined.

Futures only possible in the past haunt interviewees. A taxi driver looks back fondly on her relationship with her ex-husband. They got together young, and they had a long love story full of happiness and excitement. None of this stopped him from cheating on her when she was pregnant, so the relationship collapsed. Now she is a single mother living with her own father, who is sexist and abusive. She cries in desperation in front of the camera. Towards the end, yet another taxi driver recounts meeting a young Italian woman holidaying in Peru. They spent an intense few weeks travelling together and fell in love, but the woman had to return to Italy. She begged him to go with her but he refused, afraid of how her white family might react to a brown partner. After decades all he has left of their relationship is a music cassette she gifted him, which he keeps in his car at all times. He plays it for Honigmann. One cannot help but ask: were his concerns justified? Or did he deny himself a radiant tomorrow? Could things have turned out differently, if only we had had the right consciousness? And why do alternative futures come in the form of love, and not politics?

Of course, the picture that emerges out of Metal and Melancholy is incomplete. For many in 1990s Peru the situation was even more dire than for our protagonists. Many indigenous peasants lived under the iron fists of the Shining Path and the Peruvian military. Leftist students were being abducted from university halls and murdered. In Honigmann's film we do not encounter the wretched of the Earth. Nor do we encounter its rulers. We do not meet the high bourgeoisie, insulated from despair by virtue of a submissive state, private property and savings accounts in US dollars. This is a vision of collapse from a particular lower-middle-class angle.

Fujimorismo, moreover, is conspicuously absent. The local form of neoliberalism which emerged in the 1990s, Fujimorismo articulated a neoliberalism in which populism and authoritarianism were central. It would go on to frame Peruvian politics for the next three decades. In Metal and Melancholy Alberto Fujimori is barely mentioned beyond a passing reference to taxi drivers' votes being responsible for bringing him to power. This is a puzzling absence. Metal and Melancholy was filmed in the months following Fujimori's widely popular self-coup, when tensions were high yet people on the street were mostly allowed to speak their mind. In that context the passing reference to Fujimori gains new meaning. The driver who made the claim does not elaborate, but our protagonists belong to the social base for Fujimorismo. Many are former members of the repressive state apparatus, but they are nonetheless exposed to economic crisis. They all find themselves in a precarious material position. Yet, out of choice or out of necessity, for them the solution to precarity is self-entrepreneurship, not

collective struggle. Metal and Melancholy illuminates the social environment in which Fujimorismo was born.

Ironically, metals eventually 'saved' Peru. After Fujimori 'stabilised' the economy in the 1990s, in the twenty years between the turn of the millennium and the pandemic the commodities boom was responsible for an impressive growth rate and a massive reduction in poverty. This salvation was only partial, as even during the peak of the boom many Peruvians were forced to endure food insecurity, inadequate healthcare and high levels of inequality. Regardless, macroeconomic developments outside the control of ordinary Peruvians helped them overcome the very worst of the 1990s. Collapse, however, has lingering spectres.

Today, Peru is reeling from the aftermath of Pedro Castillo's turbulent left-wing presidency. After a prolonged fight with an obstructionist right-wing Congress, on December 7th, 2022, Castillo illegally tried to close down the legislature in a self-coup reminiscent of Fujimori's thirty years prior. Unlike Fujimori, Castillo failed to gain the support of Peru's masses or its armed forces beforehand. He was quickly impeached and then arrested. After this, however, protests against Castillo's replacement, Dina Boluarte, flared up across the country. Some protestors demanded Castillo's release and reinstatement. Many more demanded a general election and a constituent assembly to replace Peru's neoliberal 1993 constitution. The new right-wing regime met them with severe repression. A nationwide state of emergency was called and the armed forces killed 49 civilians, while one policeman died in unclear circumstances. The protests have since died down, but the new government has further eroded Peru's democratic institutions and has become embroiled in corruption scandals. The ghosts of the 1990s are coming back to life. Metal and Melancholy foreshadows some important aspects of the current crisis.

The conflict between Castillo and Congress was complicated and often confusing, but a large factor was the Peruvian right's rabid backlash against Castillo. As soon as he qualified to the presidential run-off in April 2021 right-wing politicians and the media went on an anti-communist crusade straight out of the Cold War. This crusade was assisted by the events of the 1990s, when self-described Marxists almost brought Peruvian society to its knees. Additionally, the enduring support for Fujimorismo inside and outside Congress, a crucial pillar of the new right-wing regime, has to be understood relative to the desperate situation Peru found itself in the 1990s. In the Fujimorista imagination, it was Alberto Fujimori who brought Peru back from the edge of the precipice. Metal and Melancholy helps us understand how steep a precipice that was. Indeed, the severe repression against the recent protests is justified by unfounded accusations of terrorism.

On another level, Metal and Melancholy presages the impasses of the Peruvian left, which struggled through the short presidency of Castillo. The entrepreneurial disposition of the taxi drivers in Metal and Melancholy is now widespread in Peruvian society. Much of the left, including Castillo's post-inauguration economic team, proposes a popular economy with markets in which the state redistributes mineral wealth while promoting small and medium-sized business. This 'modern' left operates within the parameters of neoliberal self-entrepreneurship. Others on the left, like the founder of the party that brought Castillo to power, Vladimir Cerrón, propose more active economic intervention, but their thought has evolved little since the developmentalism of the 1970s. Acquiescing to the post-collapse mood and ignoring the collapse ever happened are both bad alternatives. During his term Castillo was unable to articulate a compelling alternative to Peru's existing economic system, which contributed to his isolation and eventual downfall. Another way forward has to be conceptualised, one that centres solidarity, cooperation and economic democracy while offering a more edifying alternative to neoliberal self-entrepreneurship. However, this happening is now unlikely, with reaction on the rise and the left discredited by Castillo's authoritarian streak.

Ultimately, Metal and Melancholy is an accomplished, revealing documentary. Revealing, evidently, of Peru's past and present. But also revealing of the general experience of collapse. As Mark Fisher (2003) attributed to J.G. Ballard, 'the periphery is where the future reveals itself'. In the 1990s, as the systems of production and reproduction started to fail, Peruvians adapted in any way they could. They were ingenious, but they adopted ingenuity without solidarity. They learnt to live with repression, but they could not free themselves from the weight of their dead dreams. Today, as capitalism marches towards ecological catastrophe, as systems of care limp along after years of coronavirus, and as millions in the Global North and parts of the Global South face downward mobility, Metal and Melancholy is a window into a possible future. In Peru, exogenous developments eventually ameliorated the very worst of the crisis. But waiting for accidents of fate is a bad approach to tackling collapse. For even if they eventually occur, there is no guarantee collapse will be permanently vanquished, nor that it will fade away without traumatic aftermaths. And the wait still consists of metal and melancholy.

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Understanding how ontological conflicts materialize through dialogue between political ontology and Henri Lefebvre's spatial theories

Louise Lamers

University of Ghent, Belgium

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Louise Lamers[1]

Understanding how ontological conflicts materialize through dialogue between political ontology and Henri Lefebvre's spatial theories

Abstract

This article explores how Henri Lefebvre's spatial theories can inform post-development research, particularly into socio-environmental conflicts. Post-development's politico-ontological branch understands these conflicts as ontological clashes, stemming from the imposition of particular understandings of concepts like 'development' and 'nature'. The article argues that Lefebvre's spatial theories constitute a language for grasping the spatial dynamics of these ontological conflicts. The article offers guidance on applying this language by navigating through four key areas: (1) the ontological domain, by first overcoming some problems in Lefebvre's work through a politico-ontological reading, (2) the methodological domain, by demonstrating how his work provides an analytical framework to dissect the spatial manifestations of conflicts between diverse worlds, (3) the epistemological domain, by highlighting how Lefebvre's theories give insights into strategies of dominant ontologies to remain in power, (4) the domain of theories of change, by emphasizing Lefebvre's advocacy for the empowerment of marginalized communities to reclaim agency in shaping their spatial environment. This theoretical effort is then briefly illustrated with tensions that can arise from fortress conservation policies. Given their clear material concerns regarding land use and distribution, it is demonstrated how a PD's

[1] Louise Lamers is a PhD researcher at the Ghent Institute for International and European Studies. She obtained an M.A. degree in History at Ghent University and an M.A. degree in European Studies at Maastricht University. Her research focuses specifically on EU foreign environmental policy directed at Latin America. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5519-5170

politico-ontological examination of such socio-environmental conflicts can benefit from Lefebvre's spatial theories.

Key Words: Post-Development; Political Ontology; Henri Lefebvre; Spatial Theory

Introduction

This article sets out to illuminate how the work of French sociologist and geographer Henri Lefebvre – particularly his theories of space – can contribute to the post-development (PD) school. At the core of this theoretical endeavor lies a recognition of the profound implications of socio-environmental conflicts such as conservation initiatives that lead to land grabbing (Quiroga and Uscátegui, 2021; Parra-Romero and Castillo, 2022; Marijnen, 2017). These conflicts are not merely disputes over territory; they embody deeper struggles over the conceptualization and implementation of 'development' and 'nature'.

The PD school, rooted in Latin-American critical socio-political scholarship, understands socio-environmental conflicts as ontological clashes, emerging from the imposition of specific, often Western-centric, notions of 'development' and 'nature' onto diverse socio-ecological contexts (Blaser, 2010; Tassinari, et.al., 2020; Demaria and Kothari, 2017;2022; Parra-Romero and Castillo, 2023). These clashes are not abstract philosophical debates, but material struggles that influence how societies organize themselves and utilize their environments.

As Mario Blaser puts it: ontologies, – as the sets of assumptions about what *is* and their interrelations – are always enacted (2010: p.3). This is exemplified in initiatives like REDD+ (Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), where the designation of, for example, Amazon areas as carbon sinks underscores the clash between divergent ontologies (Gutiérrez Escobar, 2022). The abstract valuation of forests as carbon storage units for carbon trading purposes contrasts starkly with the lived realities of indigenous communities, who perceive these areas as integral to their cultural and economic livelihoods (Gutiérrez Escobar, 2022).

In this context, Henri Lefebvre's spatial theories offer valuable insights. His seminal work *The Production Of Space* unveils the intricate interplay between society, space and power (1991). His work provides robust methodological frameworks for analyzing the spatial dynamics of ontologies (1991: p.33; 38). Through Lefebvre's lens, space is not a passive backdrop but a dynamic arena shaping, and shaped by, social practices and power relations.

Arturo Escobar recognizes the potential of phenomenologists like Lefebvre for post-development, supported by political ontologists like Blaser (Escobar, 2001; Blaser, 2004; 2009). This article argues that Lefebvre's spatial theories constitute a language to explore how ontological conflicts play out spatially. Therefore, this paper advocates for a deeper integration of Lefebvre's spatial theories into politico-ontological analyses within the PD school, emphasizing synergies between post-development's politico-ontological critique of modernism and Lefebvre's Marxist critique of capitalism. Focusing primarily on *The Production of Space*, incorporating some concepts from his other works, the article guides this integration across four key domains: the ontological domain, the methodological domain, the epistemological domain, and the domain of theories of change.

The article is structured as follows: first, an initial context introduction to post-development, political ontology and Lefebvre's work is given. Secondly, it proceeds to demonstrate how Lefebvre's spatial theories serve as a language to understand the materialization of ontological conflicts. This is achieved by navigating a dialogue with political ontology across four key domains: ontology, methodology, epistemology, and theories of change. Finally, it synthesizes the potential of Lefebvre's work to capture the spatial dynamics of ontological conflicts through a brief illustration of fortress conservation.

Introduction to Post-Development, Political Ontology and Henri Lefebvre

Both political ontology and critical geography are important theoretical pillars of post-development (e.g. Escobar, 2015B; 2018: p.66; Tassinari, et.al., 2020). However, despite clear shared influences from mid-20th century European phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the explicit incorporation of Lefebvre's spatial theories remains sparse, indicating a need for deeper examination and engagement (Elden, 2004; Escobar, 2018). The following is an introduction to the PD movement, Politico-Ontological theory and Lefebvre's oeuvre.

Post-Development and Political Ontology

During the 1990s, the post-development school was gradually taking form (Escobar, 2005; Neusiedl, 2019). With roots in critical Latin-American scholarship, its founding works (*The Development Dictionary*, by Sachs; *Encountering Development*, by Escobar; *The History of Development*, by Rist; and *The Post-Development Reader*, by Rahnema and Bawtree) focus on the

adverse outcomes of a political international development discourse and policy (Demaria and Kothari, 2019: p.2589). Post-development contends that the conventional view of development as economic growth within a modernist, often neoliberal framework has stripped 'development' of its political dimension. It has become an elitist tool imposed on so-called 'developing countries,' depriving their populations of agency and the ability to lead lives they find meaningful (Neusiedl, 2018: p.651).

In the mid-2000s, Escobar identified what he calls an ‘ontological turn’ in social sciences with prominent scholars such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Tim Ingold, Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser (Tassanari et.al., 2020: p.489). It is marked by a renewed attention for ontological struggles adjoining epistemological conflicts about what knowledge counts, something by which social theory has been prominently shaped in the past decades, particularly with post-structuralism. This renewed attention for ontology has led to particularly heated debates on the human-nature relationship in anthropology, geography and political philosophy (Tassanari, et.al., 2020: p.498).

Post-development and political ontology both understand reality generally as composed of multiple ontologies, coexisting with the dominant Euro-modernist ontology. The latter divides object and subject, nature and culture, modern and non-modern, and adheres to a linear past-to-future temporality (Blaser, 2010: p.4; De La Cadena and Blaser, 2018). Blaser comprehensively defines ‘ontology’ as assumptions about what exists and their interrelations (Blaser, 2010: p.3). Importantly, ontologies or worlds are not fixed; they evolve through human and non-human interactions and therefore result from social processes. Ontologies can be conveyed as "stories" encapsulating a world's assumptions and relationships. Yet, ontologies always extend beyond verbal expression to encompass embodied and enacted aspects, with myths serving only as an entry point to understanding ontologies (Blaser, 2010).

Post-development’s main endeavor is denouncing Euro-modern-ontology’s pretention to be a single world whereby differences are mere deviations from itself as the norm (Escobar, 2015; 2015B; 2018). Thereby, development, as a practice and discourse, is an explicit tool to universalize modernity and its institutions (Blaser, 2010: p.6; Demaria and Kothari, 2017; Neusiedl, 2019; Parra-Romero and Castilla, 2023). PD opposes this self-proclaimed ‘One-World’ world with what it calls a ‘pluriverse’ – a world in which many worlds fit (Demaria and Kothari, 2017: p.2595; Reiter, 2018; Escobar, 2018: pp.16; 86). It links the clashes between worlds with epistemological struggles as it argues how pluriversality, up till today, is the entanglement of several cosmologies connected in a power differential (Mignolo in Reiter, 2018: p.X). Political ontology, as PD’s main theoretical pillar, has a three-fold focus: first, it wants to shed light on the mechanisms that shape a particular world or ontology. Second, it aims to

conceptually capture the "conflicts that ensue as different worlds or ontologies strive to sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other" (Blaser, 2009: p.877). Third, it contributes to theories of change on how to move from the One-World-world to a pluriverse.

Henri Lefebvre

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) is considered one of the world's leading, French post-war sociologists, philosophers and geographers (Foster, et.al., 2020). Kipfer, Saberi and Wieditz represent Lefebvre's work as "a representative of a heterodox and open-ended, passionately engaged, and politically charged form of Marxism." (2012: p.116).

In the first (1947) and second (1961) volumes of his *Critique of Everyday Life*, he introduced the concept of the 'colonization of everyday life' (Harvey in Lefebvre, 1991: p.428; Kipfer, Saberi and Wieditz, 2012: p.116; Davies, 2016).

During his time at the University of Nanterre in Paris in the mid-1960s, Lefebvre connected his *Critique of Everyday Life* with the student uprisings of 1968, as reflected in his book *The Right to the City* (Harvey in Lefebvre, 1991: p.430; Fischer and Bauer, 2019: p.3). For Lefebvre, the city, rather than the factory, is the site where the high diversity in lived realities clash most visibly with capitalism's space, highlighting its homogenizing and colonizing nature (Stewart, 1994: p.614; Bogaert, 2012; Prigge, 2008: p.51; Kipfer, 2008: p.203; Huchzermeyer, 2019). Hence, it was not solely the proletariat's responsibility to unite and challenge the capitalist system within the confines of factories. Instead, he believed that everyone should come together to resist the pervasive influence of capitalism in everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991: p.61).

In 1974, Lefebvre published *La Production de L'Espace*, offering a perspective on everyday life through the lens of space production. He views space as an amalgamation of three domains: 'social,' 'mental' and 'physical space' (figure 1) (Schmid, 2008). Lefebvre introduces the concept of 'abstract space,' causing the 'colonization of everyday life' (Davies, 2016). It describes Western space where the physical and social realms are made subordinate to the mental realm (Lefebvre, 1991: p.39; Wilson, 2013). This process leads to the establishment of a universalized conception as a norm that homogenizes lived experiences and practical engagements with the world in everyday life (Stewart, 1994).

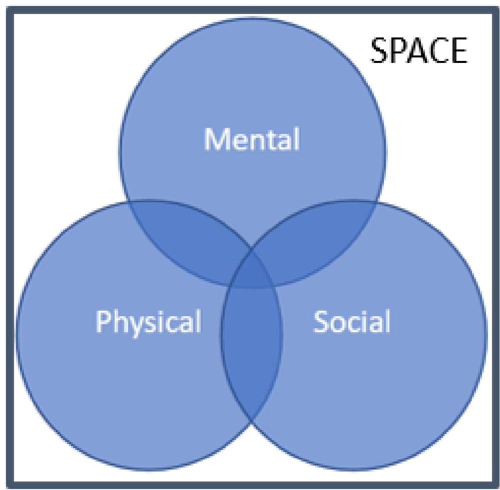

Figure 1: Lefebvre's Ontology Of Space

Lefebvre's influence is most noticeable in (1) political economy with Harvey (2001) who used his work as an inspiration for a Marxist geographical account of political economy, world-system analysis, and global studies; (2) cultural studies with Soja (1999) who introduced his work in scholarship from the postmodern linguistic and cultural turn (Kipfer, 2012: p.116); and (3) urban studies with his *The Right To The City* (Lefebvre, 1968; e.g. Goonewardena, et.al., 2008).

Reading Henri Lefebvre from a politico-ontological perspective

This section will guide the deeper integration of Lefebvre's spatial theories into the politico-ontological branch of the PD school by navigating a dialogue between both across the four domains of ontology, methodology, epistemology and theories of change (Figure 2). By doing so, we can enhance our understanding of how ontological conflicts materialize.

	How Lefebvre informs Political Ontology	Synergies	How Political Ontology informs Lefebvre
Ontology	Assets: Phenomenology of place: merging object and subject. Problems: (1) the construction of spaces starting from one reality (2) Upholding a nature-culture divide	Multiple modes-of-space-production // ontological enactments	A politico-ontological reading of Lefebvre allows for: (1) the acknowledgement of the pluriverse (2) overcoming the human-nature divide
Methodology	Lefebvre's triads constitute frameworks for empirical analysis: (1) his representations of space-representational space- and spatial practice triad to analyze struggles between ontological enactments (2) his physical-mental-social triad to analyze epistemic struggles.	Lay bare the arbitrariness of a particular mode-of-production/ontological enactment and the injustices that surge from this.	(1) a more open-ended, flexible and non-deterministic approach counterbalancing Lefebvre's predefined analytical frameworks to avoid rigid interpretations (2) nuancing Lefebvre's terminology that upholds the idea of one order to which all else relates: coded and uncoded, norm and difference, producers and users of space.
Epistemology	(1) theorizations of how the One-World world perpetuates itself (A) with his concept of Abstract Space and (B) his history of decorporalization. (2) overcoming the north-south divide in terms of alternatives to Modernity. Alternatives are omnipresent, also in Western societies.	One space or ontology purports to be the only world.	(1) highlighting maximal differences with roots external to the modernist space. (2) reframing Lefebvre's concepts of differences as equivocations reflecting a more relational philosophy.
Theory of Change	(1) theorizing the dynamics of human agency as users and producers in world-making (2) locating the key to transition in a return to the body that enables the conscious production of space true to the lived reality of the body (3) non-deterministic understanding of space-production from which differences inevitably emerge.	Transition is possible trough conscious alternative ontological design/enactment or space-production which implies prefiguration. This implies self-determination.	Adding a non-human dimension to Lefebvre's theorization of agency.

Figure 2: This table guides the integration of Lefebvre's spatial theories into politico-ontological research by navigating a dialogue between both across four domains. This

dialogue enables Lefebvre's spatial theories to constitute a language to dissect the material dimensions of ontological conflicts.

The Ontological Domain

In order to render Lefebvre's theories apt to articulate how ontological conflicts manifest spatially, they must align with the core tenets of Political Ontology. PO asserts that differences are ontological, constituting a pluriverse. PO distinguishes itself by challenging three fundamental issues within Western theoretical traditions that uphold the notion of a single world: an object-subject divide, a nature-culture divide, and the belief in a single reality (Escobar, 2001; Viveiros De Castro, 2004).

Aligning Lefebvre with PO's stance on these three issues is crucial because he has been criticized for overlooking other-than-human agency and he does not explicitly endorse the concept of the pluriverse (Leary-Owhin and McCarthy, 2020B). Hence, this section outlines how Lefebvre can be read from a politico-ontological perspective.

Let us start with the issue of the object-subject divide, which stems form the Kantian division between the material and the mental realm (Lefebvre, 1991). Materialism asserts the complete independence of the physical world from consciousness, with object features inherent to their physical nature (Lacerda, 2015). Hence, knowledge originates from understanding objects themselves. In contrast, idealism emphasizes the primacy of ideas in shaping reality (Lacerda, 2015). It suggests that objects mainly exist as their mental constructs. Knowledge thus stems from the cognitive interpretations of objects by subjects. Hence, while realist materialism fuels positivism's quest to uncover the mechanisms of external reality, constructivist idealism critiques positivism, viewing reality as socially constructed and interpretable across cultures (Grix, 2002; Scarso, 2013). Post-structuralism, for example, - an influential idealist school – focuses on discourse in reality construction (Lefebvre, 1991).

While in certain respects diametrically opposed, both materialism and idealism sustain the ontological dualisms of object-subject, nature-culture, and one reality (Scarso, 2013; Lacerda, 2015). This, because they maintain an either-or narrative: reality is either the fixed, external material realm, or a mental construct. The knowability of reality is found in either the material object or the cognitive subject (Scarso, 2013; Lacerda, 2015).

Lefebvre sits at the intersection of both, arguing for an and-and narrative. He critiques Stalin's historical materialism for pretending that "the world and its laws are [fixed, universal, and] fully knowable": "man knows the limits of consciousness and reason" (Kipfer in Lefebvre, 2009: p.XXIII). Yet, he criticizes

post-structuralist idealism for focusing on the mental abstraction of reality that is discourse: “concepts [are mere] abbreviations of the infinite mass of particularities of concrete existence” (Kipfer in Lefebvre, 2009: p.XX). While acknowledging the impact of mental constructs, Lefebvre would agree with Ingold when he asks: “Is the seagull wheeling outside my window a genuine creature producing its own form of life, or a blob of raw material to which I have attached a concept, drawn from my cultural tradition, of ‘seagullness’? It might seem strange that anyone should entertain the latter idea. Yet many anthropologists have found themselves arguing along precisely these lines: namely that non-humans can figure in the world of humans only as animated cultural constructs” (2005: pp.504-505).

Hence, Lefebvre presents reality not as a mental construction or a fixed, external, objective world, but as praxis, and thus in constant evolution (Kipfer in Lefebvre, 2009). Praxis constitutes the complete spectrum of all practices, representing the total activity of living beings. For Lefebvre, within the practices of an individual, the material and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract, object and subject merge in living actuality. From this perspective, reality emerges as socially produced rather than mentally constructed or constituting a fixed, external, objective realm.

Kipfer outlines how “this yields Lefebvre's dialectical materialism, which diverges from Stalin's portrayal of historical materialism as merely the opposite of idealism” (Lefebvre, 2009: p. XIX). Lefebvre's dialectical materialism refers to the dynamic of 'space-production', wherein the real and the ideal engage in constant interaction through praxis.

By bridging the materialism-idealism divide in praxis, Lefebvre overcomes the object-subject dualism. In doing so, he is strongly influenced by phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who emphasize an active, practical, and perceptual involvement and experience of the lived world (Elden, 2004; Simonsen, 2005). Hence, the material realm of the object and the mental realm of the subject merge in reality (Pierce & Martin, 2015: p.1287).

Along these lines, Lefebvre strongly advocates for the reunification of object and subject in the body: “Western philosophy has betrayed the body; it has actively participated in the great metaphorization that has abandoned the body; and it has denied the body. The living body, being at once ‘subject’ and ‘object’ cannot tolerate such conceptual division” (Lefebvre, 1991: p.132; 407; Stewart, 1994: 612; Simonsen, 2005; Meyer, 2008; Frehse, 2020; e.g. Silva, 2016).

Bodies are not merely traversing a pre-existing world to which mental conceptions are attached (Lefebvre, 1991: p.199; Bauer, 2019). Perception is not understood as an internal representation of the external world but rather as an active bodily engagement (Lefebvre, 1991: p.199; Simonsen, 2005: p.9; Bauer, 2019). Quoting

Merleau-Ponty, Simonsen clarifies this idea: "I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence" (in Simonsen, 2005: p.10).

In this framework, the environment and the body are inseparable, blurring the lines between object and subject (De La Cadena and De Castro, 2018). Lefebvre uses the example of a spider spinning its web as an extension of its body to illustrate how bodies produce and experience space in a unique way: "for any living body, just as for spiders, shellfish and so on, the most basic places and spatial indicators are first of all qualified by that body" (1991: p.174). Time and space of mayflies are unavoidably different than the time and space of dogs or a human collective: "The space of one group, like their measures of duration, must have been unfathomable to all others" (Lefebvre, 1991: p.120).

While Lefebvre's phenomenology bridges the object-subject divide, he is unable to overcome the nature-culture divide. Although Lefebvre acknowledges that other-than-human bodies also create space, he has been severely criticized for depicting nature as a mere décor, molded by human social practices acting upon it (Kipfer, Saberi, and Wieditz, 2012: pp.125-126; Leary-Owhin and McCarthy, 2020B; Dorch, 2019). PD and PO scholars, as well as political ecologists extensively criticize disregarding more-than-human agency as reductionist anthropocentrism (De Castro: 2004; De La Cadena, 2019; Alimonda, 2022: p.114; Burke, 2022).

Lefebvre does effectively question the Kantian division between mental subjects and material object, which caused people to *abstractly think about*, rather than *vividly experience* reality, resulting in the alienation of humans from reality (1991: p.24; Foster, et.al., 2020: p.34). Yet, he praises other-than-humans for their immediate engagement with the world because they lack the mental realm altogether (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.174-175). Hence, they do not posses the curse of mental abstractions that alienates humans from their reality: "Long before the advent of the logos… lived experience… was already producing [space]… Long before the analyzing, separating intellect, long before formal knowledge, there was an intelligence of the body" (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.174-175).

According to Lefebvre, other-than-human spaces are enacted and lived, not conceptualized like those of humans (1991: p.173). Hence, this enactment cannot be corrupted by abstractions, homogenizations and reductionism. Lefebvre distinguishes between the other-than-human *creation* of space and human *production* of space, whereby the construction of reality is still reserved for human social interactions (1991: pp.173-174). Lefebvre finds other-than-human immediate space-creation admirable and encourages humans to strive for it (1991:

p.173). However, by asserting that only humans possess a mental realm, Lefebvre inadvertently perpetuates the material-mental division he criticizes.

Besides bridging the object-subject and the nature-culture divide, political ontology requires Lefebvre's theories to explicitly reject the notion of a singular reality where differences are viewed solely as cultural variations (Scarso, 2013). This perspective endorses the idea that there are no genuine alternatives beyond the modernist world (Blaser, 2013). All there is, are cultural variations of modernity. Essentially, it suggests that the modernist worldview has effectively eradicated all non-modern ontologies (Blaser, 2013).

PO counters this idea by understanding reality as multiple worlds (Viveiros De Castro, 2004). This idea is based on bridging the two dualisms of object-subject and nature-culture. Drawing from shared influences with Lefebvre of mid-20th century European phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, PO bridges object and subject by merging both in the body (De La Cadena and Viveiros De Castro, 2018; Escobar, 2019; Elden, 2004). Yet, unlike Lefebvre, PO extends this idea to the more-than-human realm (De La Cadena and Viveiros De Castro, 2018). Each body – human or non-human – experiences and produces a unique world.

De La Cadena and Viveiros De Castro explain how bridging both dualisms can sustain the idea of a pluriverse with the "almost canonical example … of the differences between jaguar and human": what beer is to humans, is different from what beer is to a jaguar. Equally, what blood is to humans is different from what blood is to a jaguar. "The reason for the differences between their points of view resides in their different bodies." (De Castro, 2004: p.471; De La Cadena, 2019: p.38). This perspective refutes the idea of one reality in which differences are merely cultural, because different bodies entail different realities. Hence, political ontology allows for a more radical acceptance of differences, something that constructivist idealism is unable to accommodate.

Despite the critiques Lefebvre faces, his phenomenological understanding of the body in which object and subject come together, allows for a politico-ontological reading of his work when extended to the other-than-human realm (Janzen, 2002: p.99): collective human or other-than-human bodies do not just experience and produce space in unique ways, they produce and experience unique spaces. Spaces then, do not refer to socio-cultural constructs of one world, but to multiple enacted ontologies or worlds (figure 3). This interpretation overcomes the human-nature divide and allows for understanding reality as a pluriverse. Escobar confirms that "in refusing to separate knowing from doing and these from existing, [Lefebvre]

provides us with a language with which to question radically the dualisms of [object-subject and] nature and culture" (Escobar, 2001: p.205).

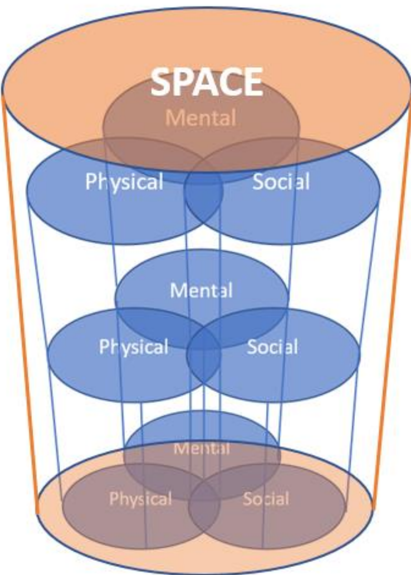

Figure 3: A Space of Spaces: A Politico-Ontological Reading Of Henri Lefebvre's Spatial Theory

A Politico-ontological reading of Lefebvre's work enables it to constitute a language to explore how ontological conflicts play out spatially. For example, Lefebvre's theorization about how bodies produce space according to the analysis of rhythms and spatial directions as well as his theorization of space-production via his dialectic triad, appear valuable to understand how these multiple worlds come to be, i.e. how collective bodies enact their particular ontology, how they produce their particular space.

The Methodological Domain

Let us focus here on the methodological potential of Lefebvre's dialectic triad. Lefebvre posits that space is produced through a triadic dynamic of representations of space, representational space, and spatial practices. This dynamic offers insight into how ontologies are enacted and how incompatible enactments may clash in space.

1. Representations of space are conceptions, born out of logic, such as mathematical spaces, maps, and commodified and monetarized landscapes. It is the space of structures that reduce the rich variety of lived reality to mental abstractions. (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.33+38; Stewart, 1994: p.610; Prigge, 2008: p.51).

2. Representational spaces are lived spaces, imbued with symbolism and meaning through use. It is the space of lived actuality that is historically and contextually contingent (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.33+38; Stewart, 1994: p.610; Prigge, 2008: p.51).

3. Spatial practices are the "social practices by which space is materially produced" (Wilson, 2013: p.367). It is all praxis observable in the physical realm (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.33+38; Stewart, 1994: p.610; Prigge, 2008: p.51).

When conceptions are in accordance with lived reality, or at least continuously informed and revised by it, there is no conflict in spatial practice. Lefebvre calls this state 'absolute space' (Stewart, 1994: p.612). However, when conceptions are thought to be real, true, and fixed, despite being reductions of the rich variety of lived realities, conflicts may arise in spatial practices. Lefebvre identifies a tendency in the West whereby conceptions are universalized and imposed onto the rich variety of lived experience. He calls this state "abstract space" (Lefebvre, 1991; Stwart, 1994).

For example, the human-nature divide is a well-known conception that has been universalized under capitalism (Büscher and Fletcher, 2020; Moore, 2015). It is the idea that nature is diametrically opposed to and subservient to humans. This representation of space has resulted in particular spatial practices such as the establishment of strict national parks from which humans are forcefully displaced so as to preserve pristine wilderness as real, true nature.

This contrasts with the representational space of the rich variety of lived actuality, which results in physical manifestations despite particularly influential abstractions such as the human-nature divide. For many, these park areas are their dwelling place, apparent in farms, pastures, meadows, cattle, and honoring practices of places of particular significance (Parra-Romero, 2023; Silva, 2016). In this case, representations of space and representational space result in contradictory spatial practices. When representations of space are not adapted to lived actuality, but imposed onto it as the self-proclaimed truth, this might lead to severe conflict.

According to Lefebvre many alternative representational spaces are prevented from finding expression in spatial practices at all, because the capitalist system intends to annihilate all possible alternative practices that could potentially

undermine the system through reduction or violence (Lefebvre, 1991: p.393+396; Wilson, 2013).

When the capitalist system is successful in reproducing its space and reducing or annihilating all maximal differences, a coded mode-of-space-production appears. It is a coherent reproduction of space in which representations of space and representational space result in cohesive spatial practices. Yet, any mode-of-space-production unavoidably generates uncoded differences (Lefebvre, 1991: p.52; 393; 396; Shmuely, 2008: p.222).

Whereas Lefebvre understands the struggle to be about controlling the codification of the mode-of-production (the social production of one world), reading Lefebvre from a politico-ontological perspective allows to understand the struggle to be between rivaling modes-of-production (the acknowledgement of the Pluriverse). The enactment of an ontology in space, with its particular representations of space, representational space and spatial practices, along with its internal differences, might coexist harmoniously – as in an ecosystem – with the enactment of different ontologies. Or, they might potentially clash. Consequently, PO is able to nuance Lefebvre's terminology that upholds the idea of one order to which all else relates: coded and uncoded, norm and difference, producers and users of space.

In sum, Lefebvre's triad of space-production captures how ontologies are enacted. Hence, it can constitute an analytical tool to examine how conflicts between ontological enactments manifest spatially. Furthermore, according to Lefebvre's second triad of mental, physical and social space, the weight given to perceptions, conceptions, or lived experiences regarding truth claims can inform us about the epistemological dimension of ontological clashes. In other words: what knowledge counts? According to Lefebvre, in the capitalist space, mental abstractions hold the highest truth claim. Because of this particular epistemological feature of the capitalist mode-of-production, it can never be compatible with other modes-of-space-production. This brings us to the epistemological domain.

The Epistemological Domain

The Political Ontologist Viveiros De Castro demonstrates how thinking in 'worlds' – according to political ontology – or 'spaces' – when using Lefebvre's terminology – allows for understanding differences not as errors, "mere beliefs, or romantic yearnings" (Blaser, 2009: p.888), but as 'equivocations' (Viveiros De Castro, 2004). Equivocations surge when two worlds encounter each other and clash. For example, when talking about or living with nature means different

things to different people and beings, this might lead to misunderstandings between them.

Viveiros De Castro distinguishes between ‘error’ and ‘equivocation’, using a language metaphor: 'errors' occur within a specific language game, whereas 'equivocations' happenbetween different language games (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: p.9). Consequently, determining who is wrong becomes irrelevant since no norm serves as a reference point (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: p.9). He views the anthropologist's role as that of a translator, emphasizing the equivocation, revealing the concealed gap between languages in contact. Translation doesn't eliminate the equivocation, as that would assume it never existed. “If anthropology exists..., it is precisely …because … “common sense” is not common.” (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: p.8). Viveiros de Castro calls this translation ‘controlled equivocation’ (2004).

De La Cadena’s distinction between ‘equivocations’ and ‘disagreements’ highlights the colonial feature of the ‘One-World’-world (2019). For her, an equivocation denotes a misunderstanding among equals who are ontologically different (De La Cadena, 2019: p.39). Meanwhile, a disagreement occurs when one ontology claims universality and imposes its world on others, seeking to eliminate the equivocation by enforcing assimilation with its own norms. (De Cadena, 2019). Essentially, disagreements stem from the Euro-Modern, hegemonic ontology purporting to be the only space, or ‘world’.

Blaser indeed contends that modernist political assumptions persist despite their inadequacy when confronted with other ontologies (Blaser, 2010: p.2). Modernity's tendency to impose its categories on alternative ontologies leads to ontological conflicts (Blaser, 2010: p.2; Garcia-Arias and Schöneberg, 2021). Consequently, the contemporary era witnesses increasingly visible and widespread ontological clashes as societies seek to define a global age distinct from modernity (Blaser, 2010: p.1; Alimonda, 2022: p.120; Lazala, 2020: pp.57-58; Silva and Postero, 2020; Silva, Vidal, and Holmes, 2022).

Blaser describes modernity’s strategy of dismissing alternative ontologies as establishing a truth regime that universalizes the equivalence between the world and its modernist representation (Blaser, 2010: p.5). This approach instrumentalizes expert knowledge as the epitome of true knowledge (Blaser, 2010: p.6; Garcia-Arias and Schöneberg, 2021).

Given the mutual influences from mid-20th century phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, Lefebvre offers a similar critique of capitalist space (Stewart, 1994: p.616; Douglas, 2002; Simmons, 2020).

He posits that the strategy of the capitalist space to prevail and spread, is evident in the historical transformation of space (Stewart, 1994: p.616). For Lefebvre Western space initially embodied a harmonious integration of lived, perceived, and conceived dimensions, constituting 'absolute space'. However, it has since evolved into 'abstract space', where mental conceptions disproportionately determine other realms and claim to define reality (Stewart, 1994: pp.5-6; Wilson, 2013). This reduction and homogenization of diverse lived realities serve the interests of those in power, sustaining their position (Delaisse, Huot and Veronis 2020; Shmuely, 2008: p.221). Lefebvre's concept of abstract space extends Marx's notion of economic alienation to also encompass political, human and spiritual dimensions in everyday life. It represents a condition where lived experience is suppressed and overshadowed by the dominance of conceptualization (Lefebvre, 1991: p.51; Stewart, 1994: pp.615-616; Simonsen, 2005: p.3; Wilson, 2013: pp.366-370; Davies, 2016):

> Reduced models are constructed - models of society, of the city, of institutions, of the family, and so forth... This is how social space comes to be reduced to mental space by means of a 'scientific' procedure [which] is really nothing but a veil for ideology…. Reduction and reductionism appear as tools in the service of the state and of power: not as ideologies but as established knowledge…. Reduction can reach very far indeed in its implications. It can 'descend' to the level of practice…. Many people…of a variety of groups and classes, suffer (albeit unevenly) the effects of a multiplicity of reductions bearing on their capacities, ideas, 'values' and, ultimately, on their possibilities, their space and their bodies… Designed with a reductive practice in mind, they [those in power] manage, with a little luck, to impose an order. (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.106-107)

Lefebvre faced critique for romanticizing non-Western spaces as absolute space (Fischer and Bauer, 2019: p.8; Dorsch, 2019: p.92). In contrast to Western space, he argues that these regions did not experience the exaltation of the mental over the physical and social space, resulting in an 'abstract space'. Instead, space still exists in the harmonious state of 'absolute space', which he considers a characteristic of Western societies in the past (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.122-123). This understanding of space follows a rather linear historical trajectory, whereby other societies are - albeit positively - perceived as being stagnant (Dorsch, 2019: p.92).

The strategy of abstracting space also involves decorporalization. Decorporalization neglects the fact that space is produced and experienced through diverse bodies before conceptualization (Douglas, 2002): "Western philosophy… has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has abandoned the body" (Lefebvre, 1991, p.407; Simonsen, 2005).

An example of this decorporalization process is our current measurement system, which abstracts and homogenizes body parts of varying sizes (Lefebvre, 1991: p.110; Stanek, 2008: p.71). For instance, the "foot" measurement originated from

King Henry I's foot length, while the inch was based on a man's thumb width (Lefebvre, 1991: p.120). This history of abstracting measurements in the West reflects decorporalization, contributing to reality reduction and norm reproduction.

Lefebvre links the decorporalization and abstraction process to a transformation in the nature of knowledge. Abstract space, rooted in abstract reasoning, produces *savoirs*. In contrast, absolute space generates *connaissances*, which are locally, historically, and geographically contingent forms of knowledge derived from direct engagement with the world (1991: pp.368; 413; Stewart, 1994: 611; Escobar, 2001: pp.204-205). Consequently, a genuine bodily experience of everyday life, akin to a child's, becomes a site of resistance and counter-discourses that elude the grasp of power apparatuses" (Stewart, 1994: pp.610-611; Wilson, 2013: p.373; Davies, 2016: p.15).

Lefebvre argues that Western philosophy and science – particularly structuralism, but also post-structuralism – have contributed to decorporalization and spatial abstraction. By focusing on mental reductions of lived realities, they reinforced the existing order (Lefebvre, 1991: p.106; Douglas, 2002; Bhambra and Holmwood, 2021: p.247). Science can counter this by exploring lived and perceived space alongside mental space, uncovering the "truth of space," by revealing the differences between them (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.398-399; Blaser, 2010: p.5).

Lefebvre argues that deviations from the dominant abstraction are only accepted as long as they do not undermine it (1991: p.396). He terms these deviations 'minimal differences' (1991: p.397), while 'maximal differences' are deviations incompatible with the capitalist mode-of-space-production (Lefebvre, 1991: p.397). This distinction parallels Viveiros de Castro's differentiation between multiple modernities as Euro-modernity with its minimal differences and non-modernities as the pluriverse of maximal differences such as Buen Vivir or Ubuntu (Blaser, 2009: p.886). 'Reduced differences' occur when maximal differences are suppressed through violence (Lefebvre, 1991: p.382). This process resembles cooptation, for example, the redistribution of land amongst communities who hold the privatization of land as immoral (e.g. Dario Chambi, 2015). According to Lefebvre, homogenization "serves those forces which make a tabula rasa of whatever stands in their way,… – in short, of differences. These forces seem to… crush everything before them, with space performing the function of a plane, a bulldozer or a tank. The… instrumental homogeneity of space, however, is illusory… because it uncritically takes the instrumental as a given" (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.285; 396; Lazala, 2020: p.54).

Lefebvre contents that differences unavoidably emerge during space production, even during the reproduction process of the capitalist space. This counters the notion that significant differences are solely external. This perspective avoids reinforcing a north-south divide, highlighting substantial differences produced from within Western space. Escobar’s comparison of the degrowth movement in the global north with other post-development alternatives supports this view.

Modernist-capitalism’s strategy of abstraction and homogenization, acknowledged by both post-development and Lefebvre, underscores the similarities between PD’s Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) interconnectedness and Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘colonization of everyday life’. Modernity/Coloniality highlights that modernity's imperial powers and capitalist centers rely on colonized societies and capitalist peripheries (Silva, Vidal, and Holmes, 2022: p.134; Escobar, 2007; Reiter, 2018: p.98). Similarly, Lefebvre asserts that the success of capitalism’s space relies on its colonization of everyday life by homogenizing and reducing diverse worlds to the singular mental construct of capitalism (Stewart, 1994: p.610; Wilson, 2013; Kipfer, Saberi, and Wieditz, 2012: pp.122-123).

In sum, Lefebvre’s insights into the strategies of the dominant ontology reveal the colonial nature of the modernist/capitalist space. To counter this, we must challenge the arbitrariness of abstract concepts presented as reality by emphasizing differences as unique worlds, rather than deviations from the norm. Enhancing maximal differences while preventing their reduction, i.e., cooptation, is essential.

Theories of Change

This brings us to strategies to oppose the current state of affairs and to enhance alternative paths. PD scholars highlight alternative ontologies and how they differ from Euro-modernity, such as the rejection of the human-nature divide, a relational view of differences, and an emphasis on the uniqueness of people's experiences (Acosta, 2018; De Castro, 2004; De la Cadena, 2019; Blaser, 2010: p.2). These alternatives, termed Transition Discourses (TDs), encompass various movements like degrowth, communing, conviviality, and Buen Vivir (Escobar, 2015B; 2018: p.4; Blaser, 2010: p.14). PD explores strategies for TD’s to thrive and resist the homogenizing force of the dominant ontology.

One effective strategy in challenging the dominant ontology, as advocated in PD literature, involves promoting autonomy and self-management. Similar to Lefebvre’s concept of ‘autogestion’ (Wilson, 2013: p.373). This approach allows individuals to live by their own values, empowering them to enact their own worlds (Escobar, 2018: pp.15-17; Kothari et al., 2019; Neusiedl, 2019; Alimonda,

2022). Autogestion embodies the ‘right to difference,’ enabling the choice for alternative lifestyles (2013: p.373; Alimonda, 2022; Kipfer, Saberi, and Wieditz, 2012: p.123). By allowing these to appear, instead of oppressing, punishing, coopting, and assimilating differences, one is prefiguring the pluriverse.

Escobar introduces another strategy labelled 'ontological design,' which involves consciously shaping one's own world through creating artifacts, structures, and organizational systems, thereby influencing daily life patterns (Escobar, 2015B: p.15; 2018: p.116). Ontological design recognizes the importance of the physical dimension of an ontology. These performances, along with everyday practices and social mobilization, have become visible as ongoing cosmopolitical struggles to sustain and expand the diverse worlds of the pluriverse (Blaser, 2004: p.19).

In that sense, ontological design is not so different from Lefebvre’s conviction that the “ability to produce space, rather than just to conceive space, is the means by which people can take back power in their everyday lives” (Stewart, 1994: p.610). Hence, the success of TD’s depends not so much on creating alternative mental constructions, but rather on their practical enactment. It is crucial that this enactment is led by lived experiences rather than abstract constructions that homogenize.

Ontological design thus implies prefiguration, where the distinction between present struggle and future goals is annihilated, merging the real and the ideal in the present (Maeckelbergh, 2014: p.4): “[Space-]production process and [space as a] product present themselves as two inseparable aspects” (Lefebvre, 1991: p.37).

Hence, ontologies should be enacted here and now. But who brings about this enactment? Lefebvre distinguishes between producers and passive users as the two groups involved in the space-production process (1991: p.43; Stewart, 1994). Although the terms may suggest otherwise, both actively contribute to space production, as “such responsibility [is] attributed…to the social totality” (Lefebvre, 1991: p.115).

Producers of space are those that materialize abstract ideas into tangible spaces, producing representations of space. Those in power can easily remain in power because they hold positions that strongly influence the physical organization of space: politicians, architects, urban planners, product designers and affluent individuals. They produce space according to those abstractions on which they thrive (1991: p.48; Hoffman, 2013). Users of space, meanwhile, interact with these physical environments, assigning meaning to them and engaging in spatial activities: they produce representational space (Thompson, 2017). For instance, the standardization of time through clockworks is a representation of space, with people then using pocket watches and adhering to punctuality norms as a result.

Both representations of space and representational space can lead to spatial practices that can either reinforce the dominant ontology when they are in accordance with its coded logic, or they might introduce differences to it, potentially guiding space production in new directions. One can conceptualize a Hijri calendar instead of a Gregorian calendar to make sense of time, producing an alternative representation of space. Or one can wake up with the sun instead of the clock alarm as an alternative representational space. Hence, both producers and users of space can drive change, albeit in different ways. Lefebvre underscores that successful change in space-production should be guided by the lived experience of users rather than by universalized conceptions of producers.

A politico-ontological reading of Lefebvre expands the user-producer framework to the more-than-human realm (Ingold, 2005). For instance, the Andean bear demonstrates user agency in space production as it adapts to human-induced environmental changes in Colombia (Garrido, et.al., 2021). As farmers expanded into new territories, creating pastures and meadows high in the mountains, the bear performs a different spatial practice in this new representation of space: it starts to hunt cattle. While scientists view the Andean bear as shy and herbivorous, local communities, experiencing the bear's predatory behavior, perceive it as aggressive and carnivorous; a *connaissance* that contrasts sharply with the scientists' *savoir* (Garrido, et. al., 2021: p.11).

Discussion: the fortress conservation model as an illustration

Now, let us examine how everything converges in one case study analysis. This theoretical endeavor aims to inform analyses of socio-environmental conflicts, especially those related to conservation issues resulting in land grabbing. PD understands these conflicts as ontological clashes with clear material consequences regarding land use and distribution. Hence, analyses of these conflicts can particularly benefit from insights into how ontological clashes materialize.

The analysis presented here focuses on socio-environmental conflict involving the displacement of communities from strict national parks. It is important to note that what follows serves as an illustration of the tensions often associated with strict national park policies in general, rather than representing a specific context. Rather than empirically analyzing a real-world case, the purpose of this example is to demonstrate how the theoretical framework of this article could be applied to similar situations.

Let us start by examining the ontological enactment of the modernist/capitalist space that brought about this strictly delineated national park, with Lefebvre's triad of space-production.

Strict national parks as the result of a particular ontological enactment

In fortress conservation conflicts, the rigid segregation of 'pristine nature' and 'humans' by park boundaries is the enactment of a human-nature divide rationale. This rationale has been identified as a typical abstraction of the modernist/capitalist ontology, where nature is seen as fundamentally separate from and subservient to specific human groups (Büscher and Fletcher, 2020; Moore, 2015). Hence, this *representation of space* results in particular spatial practices: the creation of a strictly protected national park.

This physical manifestation is not questioned when it aligns perfectly with the *representational space* of lived actuality. Multinationals purchasing carbon credits representing the park's carbon storage capacity, along with park guards safeguarding this ecosystem service, and tourists paying for the sight of it, constitute coded *representational spaces*. Coded, because they represent lived reality in complete accordance with the common sense of the dominant modernist/capitalist rationale. However, it is not the only ontological enactment in the same location.

Plural ontological enactments in the same area

Indeed, the national park as a representation of space contrasts sharply with the uncoded *representational spaces* of lived actuality in the area. For local farming communities this area is their dwelling place, intrinsically bound up with their own history and identity (Parra-Romero, 2023; Silva, 2016). This becomes apparent in particular spatial practices (Blaser, 2010): farms, meadows, pastures, cattle, hunting practices, honoring practices of places with special significance for the community.

While these representational spaces are uncoded in relation to the modernist/capitalist mode-of-space-production, a politico-ontological reading of Lefebvre would reframe this to coded representational spaces according to another, competing mode-of-space-production. This reframing overcomes measuring everything against the modernist/capitalist ontology as the standard.

Clashes between ontological enactments

It quickly becomes apparent that both ontological enactments in the same physical area are incompatible. *Equivocations* surge between people from both

worlds (Viveiros De Castro, 2004). When a local farmer talks with a park representative about the national park, they will talk about the same area, yet about different worlds (Parra-Romero, 2023). The solution is not to undo the equivocation, as this would require the imposition of sameness. The solution is to become aware of it and to control it. Control can only result from mutual understanding and finding compromises to organize the area which fits both worlds as good as possible (Viveiros De Castro, 2004).

The danger lies in equivocations becoming *disagreements* (De La Cadena, 2019). This occurs when one world purports to be the only real or correct world. When the establishment of the national park is considered crucial to some for whatever reason – to conserve ecosystem services such as carbon storage capacity for emitters in the global north in the case of REDD+, or because it is considered the only effective way to safeguard future human generations, economic growth, or even the ecosystem itself – defenders of this idea might try to find strategies to dismiss ontological enactments that put this into peril. One such strategy is propagating the universalization of the equivalence between these natural areas with their modernist *abstraction* as wilderness containing ecosystem services (Stewart, 1994: p.616). This process is defended by *savoirs* under the banner of science, undermining the *connaissances* of lived experiences as romantic aberrations (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.368+413).

Another strategy is to coopt or reduce those ontological enactments that constitute maximal differences vis-à-vis this modernist/capitalist abstraction (Lefebvre, 1991). This could for example involve monetizing the emotional significance of the ecosystem for its inhabitants. In some cases, outright violence is even used, destroying the spatial practices of the rivaling ontology: destroying farms, meadows and pastures, slaughtering cattle, etc. (Garrido, etl.al., 2021). These are all ways by which the modernist/capitalist space avoids maximal differences to take hold. This homogenization of lived realities to fit the modernist/capitalist rationale, is described by Lefebvre as ‘the colonization of everyday life’ (1991; 2002).

Bounding back

Of course, communities enacting alternative ontologies in the same area will not just sit back and assimilate. They continuously highlight the arbitrariness of the conceptions on which the modernist/capitalist representations of space are based as well as of the symbolisms and practices that uphold them (Blaser, 2010; Silva, 2016). They attack the human-nature divide conception, they question the idea of ecosystem services. All this, to weaken the claim of the modernist/capitalist ontology that it constitutes the only true, correct world.

While this work is important, for Lefebvre, the key to oppose the dominant modernist/capitalist ontology that is often overlooked, is striving for the *materialization of the alternative ontology* (1991b). He underscores the importance of the empowerment of marginalized groups to reshape their environments, resulting in spatial practices that reflect the particularities of everyday life: "Any revolutionary 'project' today, whether utopian or realistic, must make the reappropriation… of space, a nonnegotiable part of its agenda" (1991b: p.166-167).

For example, when park residents remain on their territory despite strict park boundaries, they oppose the modernist/capitalist mode-of-space-production to fully crystalize. By cultivating the land or honoring community landmarks, they oppose the modernist/capitalist mode-of-space-production by reproducing their own world. Government officials advocating for these communities may utilize what Escobar calls ontological design, organizing areas to align with local ways of life. This could involve establishing peasant reserve zones, as seen in Colombia, allowing farming communities to engage in conservation efforts without compromising their identity and lifestyles (Ruiz Reyes, 2015). Hence, transition or change is always prefigurative, because it implies the process of production of space as the enactment of an ontology.

More-than-human space-production

Up till now, the analysis only focused on human groups producing space. Yet, a politico-ontological reading of Lefebvre's work allows for the acknowledgement that the national park area constitutes unique worlds created by more-than-human groups (Garrido, et.al., 2021). Consequently, one mode-of-space-production not only potentially clashes with other human worlds, but also with non-human worlds. To give a straightforward example, when a hydroelectric powerplant is installed in a freshwater ecosystem, it might disrupt the habitats produced by other-than-human groups.

These groups are equally forced to adapt and assimilate. When Freya, the 600-kg walrus, sunbathed on boats along the Norwegian coast, accidently sinking one or two of them, she was euthanized because her spatial practices, common to her world, were considered inappropriate (Horowitz, 2022).

When indigenous knowledge is praised for effectively protecting the other-than-humans, it is due to its explicit goal of comprehending other-than-human ways of being. Viveiros De Castro describes how shamans or other trans-specific beings are believed to possess the unique ability to communicate with the other-than-

human realm (1998). To facilitate this communication, they sometimes adorn themselves as the animal or other-life-form in question to immerse themselves in its way of life (Viveiros De Castro, 1998: p.471). They observe, listen, and attentively engage with other-than-human groups, not as objects of scientific study, but as ontologically distinct equals.

This illustration showcased how the integration of Lefebvre's spatial theories into politico-ontological analyses within the PD school can enhance our understanding of how ontological conflicts play out spatially. It offers various concepts, frameworks and tools for analysis.

Conclusion

This article aimed to demonstrate how Lefebvre's spatial theories can constitute a language for post-development's politico-ontological research to capture how ontological clashes – particularly socio-environmental conflicts – materialize. The objective of political ontology and Lefebvre's spatial theories is to expose arbitrary ontological enactments, or modes-of-space-production, revealing the resulting injustices. Building further on this synergy, Lefebvre's work can contribute to post-development literature by offering a language that captures how ontological conflicts materialize. How this language can be deployed has been explored across the four domains of ontology, methodology, epistemology and theories-of-change.

His triad of space-production can offer insights into ontological enactments and how the resulting worlds are spatially compatible or incompatible. Apart from insights into world-making, Lefebvre's theories are also informative regarding epistemological power dynamics and theories of change. Within the scope of this article, the potential of the dialogue has been primarily discussed in theoretical terms, with only a brief, general illustration. Future research is encouraged to conduct in-depth analyses of socio-environmental conflicts by leveraging the theoretical insights presented here.

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(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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Higher education and indigenous and afro-descendant peoples as a field of study and intervention in Latin America

Gloria Mancinelli

Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Argentina

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Gloria Mancinelli[1]

Higher education and indigenous and afro-descendant peoples as a field of study and intervention in Latin America

Abstract

Since 2008, there has been a notable increase in studies on processes of inclusion, retention and graduation of indigenous students in higher education in Latin America; a growing interest in research and university extension activities in collaboration with indigenous and Afro-descendant communities; and the establishment of intercultural academic spaces in the region. This article offers a literature review analysis of this field of study and intervention, elaborated in Spanish and Portuguese in the framework of Latin American institutions. This analysis identifies the various voices, analytical perspectives, lines of research, conceptual debates and contributions that enrich the understanding of some types of experiences in this field, often described as 'intercultural', and others usually considered as educational inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in the field of Higher Education in Latin America. The literature review reveals that much of this research is the result of collaborative work between diverse actors committed to promoting intercultural perspectives at the higher education level, and reflects the historical struggles sustained by these peoples as the fundamental structuring component of these experiences. It is concluded that the increase in research and interventions makes it plausible to postulate and describe the consolidation of a specific field of study and intervention for Latin America, which can be defined as 'Higher Education, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples' and that the experiences analysed

[1] Gloria Mancinelli has a PhD in Anthropological Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). She is actually a postdoctoral fellow at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) with a workplace at the Interdisciplinary Center for Advanced Studies (CIEA) within the Higher Education and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples Program of the National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF). Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8674-0709

reflect a particular and historical link between university systems and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in Latin America.

Key Words: Latin America, Higher Education, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant Peoples; Inclusion

Introduction

Since 2008, coinciding with the presentation of the book "Cultural Diversity and Interculturality in Higher Education. Experiences in Latin America" by the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) during the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2008; Mato 2008b), there has been a notable increase in studies on processes of inclusion, retention and graduation of indigenous and Afro-descendant students in higher education in Latin America. In addition, there is a growing interest in research and university extension activities in collaboration with communities of these peoples, as well as in the establishment of intercultural academic spaces in the region. This increase in research and interventions makes it plausible to postulate and describe the consolidation of a specific field of study and intervention for Latin America, which can be defined as 'Higher Education, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples'.

This article presents an analysis of the academic literature in Spanish and Portuguese in the field of Higher Education institutions in Latin America, covering research produced up to 2023 from various disciplines. The main ones include Anthropology, Sociology, Educational Sciences and Social Work[2]. In addition, they incorporate documents, reports and studies carried out between 2018 and 2024, with the purpose of contextualising the CRES 2018+5 held in Brasilia in March 2024.

The analysis of the literature review reveals that much of this research is the result of sustained collaborative work between diverse actors committed to promoting intercultural perspectives at the higher education level in Latin America. These studies involve diverse actors, such as indigenous elders and intellectuals,

[2] Although the literature review for this article has focused mainly on studies from the aforementioned disciplines, it is important to note that there have also been analyses of experiences of intercultural collaboration in the field of higher education from disciplines such as engineering, agronomy, environmental sciences and various health disciplines, among others.

anthropologists, educators, social workers, sociologists and indigenous and Afro-descendant university students, many of whom are also involved in the design and implementation of institutional and state programmes and policies. In other words, a wide variety of voices, analytical perspectives, lines of research, conceptual debates and contributions can be identified in these studies, covering diverse types of experiences in the field of Higher Education in Latin America, including those frequently qualified as 'intercultural' and those considered as educational inclusion.

Primarily, the studies analysed reflect the historical struggles sustained by these peoples as the fundamental structuring component of these experiences. These struggles question the monocultural and homogenising character of contemporary nation states and their institutions as a whole, and demand a shift towards an intercultural approach that respects, recognises, values and gives participation to the different worldviews, knowledge, practices, languages, historical experiences and territorialities that make up the socio-political map of the countries that make up Latin America.

Taken together, this research delves into the dynamics and specific challenges faced by indigenous and Afro-descendant students in higher education in relation to their access, retention and graduation; it produces information that allows us to identify and understand the impact of programmes and institutional policies on the academic development of indigenous and Afro-descendant students and also on the development of their communities and territories. They contribute to the production of knowledge and know-how to advance intercultural education in higher education. They also highlight the importance of having the participation and perspectives of indigenous managers, advisors and elders in the implementation of intercultural educational strategies and in the design of policies and programmes aimed at advancing the inter-culturalisation of their academic spaces.

The following section presents and describes the studies and reports analysed, which are mainly grouped in dossiers and compilations, as well as including graduate and postgraduate theses. It provides an overview of the multiplicity of experiences that contribute to the construction of an intercultural higher education system at the regional level. In the following sections we present an analysis of the main theoretical and methodological perspectives and findings present in these articles, theses and reports. Most of them are qualitative studies, in some of them quantitative information is retrieved and/or produced.

As a whole, these studies contribute to enriching knowledge and understanding of the problems and challenges that arise in higher education in relation to indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, providing valuable ideas for improving educational practices and policies. In this way they promote inclusion, respect and

appreciation of cultural diversity in higher education academic spaces. They recognise the importance and resources offered by diverse worldviews, knowledge systems and knowledge to meet the challenges presented by the current historical circumstances in which we find ourselves, such as: food production, the recovery of environments degraded by extractivism; the implementation of health interventions in populations affected by socio-environmental degradation, among many other problems that can be mentioned.

Studies on higher education, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America: context and background

Between 2007 and 2011, the UNESCO-IESALC-sponsored project "Cultural Diversity and Interculturality in Higher Education in Latin America" played a leading role in identifying and documenting a wide variety of initiatives designed to address the specific needs of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. The contributions of this project are significant not only for its ability to retrieve a wealth of information in the field of pedagogical innovation, but also for its capacity to analyse these experiences and shed light on how diverse socio-territorial contexts and a multiplicity of actors, both indigenous and non-indigenous, shaped a variety of collaborative programmes, policies and projects. During the development of the project, four books were published (Mato 2008a, 2008b; 2009b; 2010) compiling works by indigenous and Afro-descendant researchers from different Latin American countries. In the introduction to the printed version of the book originally published in digital format in 2010, Mato (2012) analyses the evolution and status of higher education policies for indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. It examines legislative advances since 1980 for the recognition and inclusion of these groups in higher education. It highlights programmes such as scholarships and special quotas in universities. It also highlights the importance of international instruments such as ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, although it recognises a legislative vacuum with regard to Afro-descendants. It is essential to highlight that, in addition to the publications produced during the project's development, previous studies and works describe relevant experiences in higher education for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in Latin America. This background can be traced in the bibliographical references Mato (2012) used, which date back to 1998. Thus, this article offers a broader perspective on the subject and complements the knowledge generated by the 'Proyecto Diversidad Cultural e Interculturalidad en la Educación Superior en

América Latina' (Cultural Diversity and Interculturality in Higher Education in Latin America Project).

Another study we have taken as a reference is the compilation led by Souza Lima and Paladino (2012), entitled "Pathways to Higher Education", which addresses the inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant people at this academic level. This work compiles research conducted between 2002 and 2008 in Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Chile, in the context of the Ford Foundation's 'Pathways to Higher Education' programme. This programme, carried out at the regional level, had as its main objective to support and encourage access to higher education for indigenous and Afro-descendant people. The research compiled in this book analyses the policies at regional, national and local levels that, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation's programme, promoted processes of educational inclusion of these groups in Higher Education Institutions.

In addition to the previously mentioned compilations, an additional set of works that address the subject have been considered, namely the compilations by Gunther Dietz and Martí i Puig (2014), Di Caudo, Llanos Erazo and Ospina (2016). While the former offers reflections that explore the complex relationship between higher education and the empowerment of indigenous communities in Mexico, providing an overview of the challenges and advances made at the Intercultural University of Veracruz and the Ayuuk Intercultural Higher Institute, the latter compiles experiences at the regional level.

The progress of this field of study is also reflected in the colloquiums, workshops and symposia held at various national and regional congresses and scientific meetings, as well as in the construction of inter-institutional networks.

As a continuation of the EISALC Project, the Programme 'Higher Education and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in Latin America' was established in 2012 at the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero [3]. The Inter-University Network on Higher Education and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples in Latin America (ESIAL Network)[4] was also established, conceived as a space for inter-institutional collaboration. Its main objective is to foster cooperation and facilitate exchange between various higher education institutions (HEIs) and universities, some of which are run by indigenous and intercultural organisations, while others are considered 'conventional'. Specific objectives include strengthening links between HEIs, facilitating exchanges and collaboration between team members from different Latin American countries, producing

[3] https://ciea.untref.edu.ar/programa-educacion-superior-y-pueblos-indigenas-y-afrodescendientes-en-america-latina

[4] https://ciea.untref.edu.ar/red-esial-educacion-superior-y-pueblos-indigenas-y-afrodescendientes-en-america-latina

studies documenting experiences in the field of Higher Education and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples, and maintaining a specialised library and video library on the Internet. The creation of the ESIAL Network was made possible thanks to the support of the Secretariat of University Policies of the Argentine Republic. Since then, it has expanded its scope with the participation of other universities in several countries Latin American countries and remains open to the incorporation of new institutions. Currently, 60 universities and other HEIs from 11 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean participate in the programme has been part of the Thematic Networks of the Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (UDUALC) since 2020.

In 2014, the first International Colloquium on Higher Education and Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples was held in Buenos Aires, organised by the ESIAL Programme and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Advanced Studies (CIEA) of the UNTREF. Since then, this event has been held annually until the pandemic in 2020, with a total of six colloquia. After the pandemic, the seventh edition was held in 2023 in Mexico, in collaboration with the University Programme for the Study of Cultural Diversity and Interculturality (PUIC) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. This initiative has contributed significantly to fostering the production of academic works at national and regional level. These works were published annually in digital and printed format, enriching knowledge and reflection on the subject (Mato, 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018a; 2019; 2020). In 2018, as part of its activities, the UNESCO Chair "generated the Initiative for the Eradication of Racism in Higher Education. This initiative arises in collaboration with universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Latin America with the purpose of combating all forms of racial discrimination, with an emphasis on those affecting indigenous and Afro-descendant people and communities. This initiative carried out a total of three campaigns between 2019 and 2022, which generated spaces for reflection in various academic environments and allowed for the production of valuable records of experiences and learning[5].

Another event that can be mentioned is the working group entitled "Indigenous people and Higher Education: policies, experiences and collaborative production of knowledge" that took place at the XI Meeting of Anthropology of Mercosur in 2015, co-organised by teams from Argentina and Brazil working on the subject. As a result of this meeting, two publications were produced that compile numerous works with ethnographic approaches on experiences developed in different Latin American countries. One of these publications is the Dossier

[5] https://unesco.untref.edu.ar/campanas

presented in the Digital Journal Tramas/Maepova of CISEN (Centro de Investigaciones Sociales y Educativas del Norte Argentino) of the National University of Salta (UNSa). The other publication is by the Revista del Instituto de Investigaciones en Educación (RIIE) of the Facultad de Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional del Noreste (UNNE).

The impulse and reflection generated in these events and studies have been coherent with the proposals that emerged from the II Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES) held in 2008 in Cartagena de Indias. This conference can be considered a milestone, as it highlighted in its guidelines for action the importance of transforming educational institutions so that they reflect and respect the cultural diversity that characterises Latin American countries. The pluricultural character of the region is recognised and valued, and it is pointed out that the challenge goes beyond the mere inclusion of indigenous people, Afro-descendants and other culturally differentiated groups in existing institutions. It highlights the need to modify educational structures to accommodate this diversity, incorporating the dialogue of knowledge and recognising the variety of values and learning methods in educational policies, focusing innovation on this adaptation. The challenge, the conference report states, is to interculturalise higher education.

The inclusion of the topic Higher Education, Cultural Diversity and Interculturality as one of the main thematic axes in the III Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2018) represented a significant advance with respect to the previous conference (CRES 2008). This incorporation deepened the need to transform educational institutions to make them more relevant to cultural diversity. Furthermore, the preparatory process of the event allowed for a wide dissemination and collection of suggestions, which contributed to making visible the experiences developed in Latin America in this field during the last two decades. CRES 2018 issued a final declaration that included several recommendations aimed at eradicating racism and interculturalisation in Higher Education. These recommendations include: guaranteeing the educational rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, as well as other historically discriminated groups; incorporating their worldviews, languages, values and knowledge systems, as well as recognising their own higher education institutions. This declaration marks a milestone in the history of higher education, posing a significant challenge to put these recommendations into practice (Mato, 2021). The report produced by the team in charge of axis 2 "Higher Education, Cultural Diversity and Interculturality in Latin America" for CRES 2018+5, held in March 2024 in Brasilia, presents priorities and recommendations for the next five years. These proposals are based on a wide range of sources, including the presentations of the participants in the session dedicated to the thematic axis during the preparatory meeting towards CRES+5, as well as the virtual consultation meetings

coordinated by the team. In addition, responses from specialists, documents and declarations from various organisations and institutions related to higher education and cultural diversity have been taken into account. This diversity of sources has allowed for a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the region in this field, fostering an inclusive and participatory approach in the formulation of future policies and strategies.

In 2021, the UDUAL journal Universidades published the dossier "Racism and Higher Education" dedicated to examining the ways in which, at regional level, racism is present in higher education and in what ways it contributes to its reproduction and naturalisation. In the same year (2021), the journal Integración y Conocimiento publishes the Dossier entitled "Towards the eradication of racism in higher education. In 2023, also focusing on racism, the compilation work by Czarny, Navia, Velazco and Salinas entitled Racism and Indo-Afro-Latin American higher education was published. This collection of works reflects the experiences and trajectories of researchers, teachers and students (Czarny et. al. 2023).

This line of research on the visibilisation of racism in higher education can be considered in part as a derivation of the research on the experiences of indigenous and Afro-descendant students in higher education based on the study of educational trajectories and professional experiences.

Analytical contributions, theoretical and methodological perspectives present in studies on higher education, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples

Within these studies, we find a group that is characterised by its ethnographic approach to intercultural processes in Latin American higher education and focuses on the indigenous and Afro-descendant population; They analyse particular cases, exploring ethnic, identity, linguistic, age and gender dimensions through the theoretical and methodological frameworks provided by contemporary anthropology (Dietz and Mateos Cortes, 2009; Czarny, 2010; Paladino, 2011; Nuñez, 2013; Di Caudo, 2015; Ossola, 2015; Mancinelli, 2019). These studies take up the contributions made from the field of Anthropology and Sociology of Education, based on previous research focused on educational equity programmes, especially in the context of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE). In this sense, they build on the work of researchers such as (Novaro, 2008; Dietz, 2002; Rockwell, 1996; Hecht, 2013; among others).

When we refer to contemporary ethnography, we are referring to that which integrates the historical dimension in its analysis from the perspective of political economy, thus recognising that the problems investigated are the result of complex processes of socio-historical configurations (Balazote et al., 2006). The emphasis on the historical dimension has been strategic in transcending ethnocentric categories (Rockwell, 2009) and confronting essentialist and culturalist perspectives on ethnic groups - indigenous and Afro-descendant - and, allowing reflection on processes of stabilisation, processes of change and processes of production, making it possible to understand mechanisms of functioning and transformation (Comas d'Angemir, 2001:29). It is necessary to add that the idea of culture within this approach does not have an explanatory character and results from the process and dynamics of social formation. That is to say that, within these productions, it is not culture that is at the centre of the analysis, but the processes of configuration - transformation, appropriation, production, reproduction - ethnic, identity, age, gender and sociolinguistic processes that are expressed in the experiences analysed. This analytical approach is also reflected in studies from Sociology (Ocoro Loango, 2021; Euclides and da Silva, 2016) and Educational Sciences (Granada, 2020; Guaymas, 2016).

In the aforementioned works, the ethnic dimension in higher education academic spaces is understood in relational terms, as the result of a complex interaction of asymmetrical inter-ethnic relations and power (Bari, 2002; Díaz Polanco, 2007; Regalsky, 2003). In this way, "ethnic identity" is approached, in a processual way, from a historical approach that recovers unequal and asymmetrical social relations, involving inter- and intra-ethnic dynamics (Ossola, 2015:25, Ocoró Loango, 2018). This relationship between "ethnic identity" and social, economic and cultural inequality leads to a constant debate in the academic field about "the limits of the ethnic variable and other variables of subalternity, such as social class" (Ossola, 2016:25).

These studies also describe the interactions and tensions between indigenous and Afro-descendant students and non-indigenous students, as well as between indigenous and Afro-descendant teachers and non-indigenous teachers, where stereotypes and prejudices are expressed that affect coexistence and academic exchange. They also examine policies and practices that promote equity and recognition of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. As a result, this research has been able to identify and understand how a set of stereotypes give rise to mechanisms of discrimination in higher education settings, either through positive or negative forms, and how they affect the experiences and opportunities of indigenous students and professionals.

Ossola (2016) describes how teachers at the National University of Salta (Argentina) project different expectations for the academic and professional trajectories of indigenous and non-indigenous students. In the interviews these

teachers express the need for indigenous students to return to their communities as human resources to contribute to local development. In other words, they do not consider the possibility that indigenous students can or wish to develop their professional careers outside this mandate, outside the community and, for example, migrate to other cities or countries in search of new experiences or in search of remittances that these professionals could also provide as support to their communities and/or families. They also expressed concern about how the university experience can negatively impact and alienate indigenous students from their cultural values and connection to nature. This concern reflects an essentialist view that limits the perception of indigenousness to rural settings, and a close relationship of harmony with nature.

In interviews with teachers from the University of Mar del Plata (Argentina), in charge of a course with Wichí students from the province of Salta, concerns are expressed about the change in the "environmental setting" that affects Wichí students. They point out that the city of Mar del Plata is a cold and humid region for "the Wichí" who are used to warm and dry temperatures. However, the concern stems from the permanent health problems that some of these students have. These health problems stem from endemic diseases related to living conditions, which are the result of economic inequality and the advance of the agricultural frontier that took off at the end of the 1990s (food insecurity, Chagas disease due to precarious housing, etc.). As in the case of Ossola, we see that the representation of the indigenous is anchored in the idea of beings that belong autochthonously to certain "natural" spaces, while the processes of inequality and territorial, political and economic vulnerability are ignored (Mancinelli, 2016).

Euclides and Da Silva (2016), recover narratives of Afro-descendant female professors in Brazilian universities. These narratives show professional trajectories marked by challenges, ruptures and learning. Although they occupy professional positions, they continue to experience racism and sexism in their daily lives in the academy, highlighting the importance of creating spaces where these experiences can be shared and discussed. Studies by Oncoró Loango and Da Silva (2018), Ocoró Loango (2019) address the issue of racism faced by indigenous and Afro-descendant students in higher education in Colombia, with special emphasis on the analysis of policies and affirmative actions.

In this way, indigenous and Afro-descendant students face particular challenges in their interaction with teachers, managers and non-teaching staff, which are often marked by the reproduction of these stereotypes, as well as by the lack of recognition and appreciation of their knowledge, languages and worldviews. Thus, in the works of Ossola (2016), Mancinelli (2016) and Ocoró Laongo, the voices and reflections of indigenous and Afro-descendant students are recovered

in response to the teachers' questions, highlighting the students' experiences and the way in which they confront these questions in the classroom. These ethnographic studies highlight the teachers' lack of training resources to establish a pedagogical subject capable of giving rise to and bringing into dialogue the students' knowledge and experiences.

These studies, which adopt an ethnographic and historical approach, also offer an overview of the diversity and heterogeneity of the experiences of inclusion, retention and graduation that take place in different university spaces and higher education institutes in Latin America. They allow us to observe how this diversity is configured in relation to the historical trajectories of the different higher education institutions, as well as the diversity of educational policies at regional, national, provincial or state level (Ossola, 2016, Mato; 2008a). Also, within these studies, the complex political, economic, social and cultural scenarios in which these programmes and policies seek to intervene are analysed. In view of this heterogeneity, contemporary ethnography has become a valuable theoretical and methodological tool for researching this issue. Its value lies in its ability to document everyday aspects of human experience occurring in local socio-historical contexts and to make connections with processes of change at broader scales (Rockwell, 2009), such as national, regional or global. In this way, it seeks to understand the particular historical structures that influence these experiences.

In research focused on "indigenous youth", ethnographies highlight the capacity for agency and cultural production of different age groups, as well as their social relationship with other groups in Higher Education Institutions. These studies emphasise the life and educational projects of indigenous and Afro-descendant youth, recognising that age should not be understood as a static variable, but as a dynamic and interrelated construction that emerges from specific social and historical configurations (Ossola, 2016:25, Czarny, 2016).

Czarny (2016) introduces relevant theoretical and methodological aspects that opened up lines of enquiry. The author questions the category of "indigenous university youth" used in many of these studies. She points out that, as a category, it tends to homogenise a process whose experiences are expressed in a markedly heterogeneous manner. Migration studies carried out since the 1990s, the author points out, have made it possible to produce more specific research on indigenous schooling in migratory contexts. Although schooling always has an impact on the identity trajectory, the latter is not reformulated in the same way, since, within these experiences, ethnic, identity, age and university student status variables are intertwined in a complex way, adding to the different dynamics of migration (Czarny, 2016: 139).

Other relevant aspects provided by these studies on migration are related to the importance of the fabric of social networks. These social networks have proven to

be one of the main strategies used to achieve minimum conditions for entry and permanence in higher education (Fernández, 2017; Mancinelli, 2016; Olvera, 2017; Di Caudo, 2016; Seizer da Silva and Nacsimieto, 2017). These networks make it possible to address the migratory context, overcoming the difficulties related to the geographical distances these institutions are located in relation to their communities. In addition, they facilitate access to information and contacts to process applications for scholarships and other social assistance (Mancinelli, 2016). In line with this approach, Ossola (2016) proposes the concept of "mediated entry" to explain the role of social networks as the mechanism that facilitates indigenous students' access to higher education. Importantly, this research also reveals that, in many cases, these mediations include university extension and research teams that closely accompany improvement processes in indigenous communities.

The study of training trajectories, according to Bourdieu, involves the recognition of the positionings that a person adopts over time and space during their professional training process. These positionings are configured, negotiated and transformed through social interactions in communities of practice, where members share a disciplinary communicative repertoire and social norms. The construction of professional identity is understood through the narratives and discourses of social actors, which reveal their interests, experiences, meanings and intentions that shape their professional identity and practice.

Life trajectories are based on the biographical method. It is used to explore people's lives and has been applied in historical and sociological studies. This approach distinguishes between life story and life history. The life story refers to a person's account of his or her own lived experience, while the life history involves a broader analysis that includes other documents related to the person being interviewed. The study of trajectories focuses on identifying the specific transitions that have occurred in an individual's life in relation to the research problem in question. It focuses on the changes and displacements that occur when a person moves from one sphere of socialisation to another, and allows for understanding different types of displacements, such as geographical, professional, scholastic and political (Huchim Aguilar and Reyes Chávez, 2015).

The analysis of trajectories provides a deeper understanding of an individual's life and its relationship to various contexts and situations. This research has been fundamental in recovering the reflections of indigenous students themselves on their process of adaptation to university spaces. Among the most outstanding difficulties identified by them are: adapting to the university school culture, following the rhythms and level of the classes and reflections in relation to the "knowledge not acquired" in their school trajectories and linguistic aspects linked

to the competence of Spanish as a second language. These reflections provide significant insights into the challenges faced by indigenous students and how higher education can respond to their needs in a more inclusive and equitable way. Taken together, these studies contribute to recovering "the deep and ambivalent meanings that the university experience represents in the life and schooling trajectories of indigenous youth" (Paladino and Ossola, 2016: 47).

The aforementioned studies agree that in the last decade there has been a significant process of visibilisation of "indigenous students" in the university system at the regional level. This visibilisation of indigenous students can be understood in relation to a set of processes that have gained momentum in the last decades of the last century and that have led to an expansion of educational coverage for the indigenous population. Firstly, mention should be made of the struggles that indigenous peoples have been developing at the regional level, in which demands for more and better education are central (Mancinelli, 2021). Next, we must consider the extension of primary and secondary education to rural areas, areas that the first stage of development of the Argentine education system, until the middle of the last century, did not manage to reach. Finally, this process has also been boosted by the massification and expansion of the education system. Educación Superior desde la década de los años 70 hasta la actualidad (Ossola, 2015; Paladino, 2011; Di Caudo, 2015; Czarny, 2010).

Some historiographical studies address the relationship between processes of dispossession and territorial disputes and the historical shaping of the educational demands established by these Latin American peoples. Quispe (2015; 2016) offers an account that connects us with the resistance and struggle of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia in the field of education, which was taken up as a battle space as early as the mid-19th century in the context of the formation of Latin American nation states and in relation to the advance over indigenous territories that this process implied (Mancinelli, 2017). The author recovers experiences that these peoples have developed in the field of education with the clear purpose of confronting the conditions of economic, political and cultural inequality that were configured with the definition of the Bolivian national state at the beginning of the 20th century.

Furthermore, she explains the shaping of a process that from a distance can and tends to be perceived as paradoxical: if, on the one hand, formal education has historically been represented and understood as a space of acculturation and loss of ancestral knowledge, languages and their transmission mechanisms, the present of the indigenous struggles understands it as a space of battle for the recovery of mechanisms for the transmission of this knowledge. In this way, the author manages to show how, in the Bolivian context, higher education is linked to the possibility, the need and the right to develop their own institutions that allow them to advance with the autonomy and self-determination of the peoples, two concepts

that strongly mark the work carried out by indigenous actors in the field (Mancinelli, 2016). Similarly, Palechor Arévalo (2016), as an indigenous actor, reflects on "ancestral knowledge", understanding it in relation to the historical resistance of the indigenous peoples of Latin America to the processes of conquest, domination, territorial usurpation and genocide. These approaches allow us to understand how this "ancestral knowledge", which is conceived as immersed in epistemological structures, "must be recovered and situated as the cultural heritage of these peoples", where it is hoped that it will operate concretely in the process of training indigenous professionals in order to advance the development of their "territorialities", the recovery of their "autonomies" and "good living" based on the conditions imposed by the present.

To summarise, historical ethnographic research has provided important contributions and findings in relation to various issues. One of the most important aspects is the experience of discrimination and racism faced by indigenous students in their transit through higher education and how it affects their formative and professional trajectories.

Numerous studies (Novaro, 2006; Mato 2008; Paladino, 2009; Ossola, 2014; Núñez, 2018; Tuaza Castro, 2021; Czarny et al., 2023) describe how racism and discrimination particularly affect these populations and how this problem is intertwined with other structural problems, such as poverty and social inequality. These studies show that racial and identity stigmatisation - which affects people from indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, communities and collectives in various social and institutional spaces - profoundly affects the educational and academic trajectories and employment opportunities of indigenous and Afro-descendant workers, students and professionals. In addition, it has been identified that economic inequality conditions access to housing close to academic institutions, as well as the availability of basic resources such as food, travel expenses, clothing, teaching materials, and access to technologies such as telephones, computers and the internet, and the strategies generated by indigenous students and families to cope with these limitations. At the socio-affective level, in addition to experiences of racism and discrimination, situations related to migration and the feeling of estrangement experienced by indigenous youth and adults have been observed, especially those who move through their life and educational trajectories in communities located in rural and peri-urban areas. This research has contributed to making these problems visible and raising awareness of the importance of addressing them in a comprehensive manner. That is to say, using a historical ethnographic approach to articulate various dimensions of analysis - age, identity, gender and class.

In addition, this approach motivates us to investigate the historical and spatial structures that determine these perspectives and to engage in a dialogue with the different historiographical currents present in various studies that address educational issues in the indigenous population.

Studies on intercultural programmes and policies in higher education

In this section, we refer concisely to a set of studies that focus on the analysis of institutional programmes and policies - provincial and national - that seek to promote the inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant young people and adults in higher education. Numerous university projects and/or policies arise in response to demands channelled through university extension experiences, established in collaboration with indigenous and Afro-descendant communities or social groups.

These initiatives, in which university extension actors, communities and indigenous and Afro-descendant social groups play a fundamental role, highlight the lack of educational policies at the national level that guarantee effective conditions for entry, retention and graduation from higher education, as well as education with an intercultural approach at this academic level for young people and adults belonging to these peoples. Collaboration between university actors and indigenous communities has been key to identifying the specific needs and challenges faced by these groups in their access and educational trajectory. Furthermore, it has been fundamental to promote policies and programmes that address the demands related not only to access to education, but also to the field of knowledge production and technologies that accompany the specific processes of these populations. This includes, for example, addressing the environmental effects derived from extractivist economic policies that may affect indigenous communities and their environment.

The main purpose of these studies is to analyse the concreteness and scope of the objectives set out in the design and development of policies and programmes focused on the access, permanence and graduation of indigenous students. They also seek to evaluate the experiences of collaborative work with indigenous communities and to make the necessary adjustments to the objectives in order to improve their effectiveness and relevance. It is important to highlight how these studies recognise and value the participation of diverse actors and perspectives, such as indigenous and Afro-descendant elders and intellectuals, anthropologists, educators, social workers, sociologists and university students, who contribute in different ways to the design and development of the programmes. The research highlights the unequal relationships in the processes of recognition and valuation of scientific and technological production.

The analysis of educational programmes and policies that have contributed and continue to contribute to the professionalisation of indigenous and Afro-descendant people in Latin America shows that this process has been consolidated in two significant moments. The first moment took place at the beginning of the 1970s, when the training of indigenous and Afro-descendant teachers began and the first intercultural teacher training colleges were created in Mexico and Brazil. These initiatives were later extended to other Latin American countries, marking a milestone in the process of educational inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant people in higher education at the regional level. The second moment, from the 1990s onwards, saw a more concrete stage of inclusion of students from these populations in the university system, especially in careers related to areas of importance for the development of their communities (Ossola, 2016:30).

Mato (2008b, 2015a) and Ossola (2016) have systematised and analysed trends and characteristics observed in different types of institutions at the regional level in Latin America. They have shown that the programmes and policies implemented focus mainly on addressing economic aspects through scholarships, tutoring for academic support, and the creation of spaces for reflection and dialogue between intercultural knowledge.

Mato (2008b, 2015a) identifies five trends that are manifested at the institutional level: 1) programmes for the educational inclusion of indigenous and Afro-descendant people in conventional universities through quotas, scholarships and academic and psychosocial support; 2) programmes that grant degrees and certifications by conventional universities and institutes of higher education; 3) projects for teaching, research and linkages between institutions 4) co-executions between higher education institutions and indigenous and afro-descendant organisations; 5) creation of universities and other "own" (indigenous) and intercultural institutions.

For her part, Ossola (2016) points out that the higher education offer for indigenous people is made up of three types: initiatives for teacher training, programmes arising from international cooperation and tutorial support measures, and scholarships for the incorporation of students. This author takes up the scheme proposed by Dietz and Mateos Cortes (2011) to classify experiences, identifying three trends: 1) indigenous universities that are located in or near communities; 2) intercultural universities that do not restrict their enrolment to indigenous people; and 3) conventional universities that implement policies and initiatives with an ethnic focus (cited in Ossola, 2016: 61). Overall, however, these trends show that interventions are mainly focused on addressing entry deficiencies and improving school performance, with financial and pedagogical support as areas of focus (Ossola, 2016).

It is important to highlight that studies on the various programmes and policies show the constant back-and-forth between "cultural diversity" and "socio-economic inequality". In this sense, the debates that have taken place, especially in conventional educational spheres, focus on the criteria for classifying the "cultural other" for the allocation of economic scholarships, as well as on specific actions aimed at the pedagogical accompaniment of indigenous youth. These actions include tutoring programmes, spaces for reflection and intercultural dialogue, personalised academic support and other strategies designed to address the particular educational needs of indigenous students and foster their academic success in the university system. These actions seek to address inequalities in access to adequate basic training that will allow them to enter and advance in the university system.

In the regional context, neoliberal policies pose challenges to higher education and to the formulation of education policies targeting indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. The significant expansion of higher education, driven by various factors, such as the demand for labour transformation in a constantly evolving labour market. On the other hand, there are migration processes as a result of the expansion of extractivist economies, affecting diverse populations, both urban and rural, and crossing national borders. Didou Aupetit and Chiroleau (2021) stress that intercultural education policies have failed to reverse structural inequalities and have sometimes led to new mechanisms of discrimination, as a result of their targeted and compensatory nature.

One aspect to consider in the scenarios that give rise to intercultural policies in education at all levels of education is the influence of compensatory and targeting policies, in relation to state decentralisation of education systems in Latin America, especially at the initial and primary levels. This trend was consolidated between the 1970s and 1990s also in the context of neoliberal policies (Serrudo, 2006; Hirsch, 2010; Hecht, 2011; Corbetta, 2016). These studies show how these policies, which focus on the indigenous and Afro-descendant population, are caught up in welfarist logics that influence projects and concepts of interculturality. They also question the orientation of intercultural public policies, as they concentrate mainly on initial and primary education levels (Novaro, 2006; Rezaval, 2008; Paladino, 2009; Hecht, 2011), with a constant emphasis on the issue of "literacy".

These policies leave educational opportunities for young people and adults at the higher education level unaddressed. The orientation of intercultural education policies towards the initial levels, their limitation to the problems of literacy, rurality and their focus on the "indigenous population" with the expectation of "compensating for deficiencies" raise questions about the current and past goals of the state in relation to these populations.

In examining the diversity of policies and programmes, one can also appreciate the diversity of approaches that are being shaped around interculturality and/or multiculturality in higher education. Part of this diversity can be understood by considering the trajectories followed by education systems at regional, national, provincial levels, as well as the autonomous status of university systems, and the pedagogical traditions rooted in university institutions, which were influenced by the historical context in which they were established (Ossola, 2016: 37). In this way, we can observe that the configuration of "intercultural" programmes and policies in higher education attempts to develop in very diverse conditions, while seeking to address issues related to different socio-territorial spaces.

Hooker Blandford (2015) addresses one of the most complex aspects related to interculturality at all educational levels: the evaluation of the quality and relevance of training proposals. This work provides an interesting systematisation of the main legal instruments that enable the emergence of intercultural university institutions in different Latin American countries and guide quality assessments. In examining these normative frameworks, it is possible to appreciate both the progress made in this area and the inconsistencies that often arise in evaluation processes. Hooker Blandford refers specifically to the evaluation carried out in one of the intercultural universities that form part of RUIICAY (University Network of Intercultural Institutions of Latin America and the Caribbean): the Amawtay Wasi in Ecuador, which was finally closed under the presidency of Rafael Correa because of the results obtained in that study[6]. This paper also presents the evaluation experience carried out by the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN), where evaluation was approached from a reflexive perspective.

In fact, this approach generated an intense and committed debate within URACCAN on how to understand and define "educational quality" and "relevance" in these educational projects. The Hooker Blandford study problematises the concept of educational quality in a scenario where intercultural experiences become a cultural battlefield. In this context, policy projects must face profound debates and reflections, as the concept of educational quality is rooted in educational paradigms that see it as a consumer good or a market product. This reflects the influence of neoliberal policies in the field of education.

Santamaría (2015) denounces that the contexts of educational reforms that recognise the rights to diversity often conceal a process of commodification of education, treating it simply as a service. This approach highlights the importance of critically questioning and analysing education policies that may promote

[6] The Amawtay Wasi University has been opened again in 2018 and is now functioning.

commodification and their impact on the quality and relevance of intercultural education. Hooker-Blandford's work and Santamaria's reflections highlight the need to examine dominant educational paradigms and neoliberal policies in relation to educational quality in intercultural contexts. These studies invite us to reflect on how educational approaches can be influenced by market logics and how this can affect the implementation of inclusive and relevant policies in education.

Final considerations

The presence of indigenous and Afro-descendant people in higher education in Latin America should not be seen as a completely new phenomenon. On the contrary, this "presence" and the process of "visibilisation" should primarily be understood in terms of how indigenous organisations and students are currently forging their presence in these academic environments and how educational institutions address this presence (Ossola, 2015). Ethnographic studies analyse how indigenous and Afro-descendant students "inhabit" higher education institutions and how they construct their daily lives in these spaces through complex dynamics of "cultural appropriation". Within these studies, the question of identity has been one of the main variables of analysis, making it possible to observe how the university experience influences the reconfiguration of ethnic identity (Czarny, 2010, 2016) and how it impacts on communities of origin (Ossola, 2015).

Institutional programmes and policies, both at provincial and national level, that seek to promote the inclusion of indigenous youth and adults in higher education have emerged in response to demands channelled through university outreach and research experiences, working closely with indigenous communities or social groups. The research highlights the lack of centralised educational policies at state level that guarantee effective conditions for the access, permanence and graduation of indigenous youth and adults in higher education, as well as the need for education with an intercultural approach at this academic level.

The quantitative studies carried out to date are still relatively scarce and present important limitations in relation to the conceptual and methodological criteria for defining the indigenous and Afro-descendant population and in relation to the information systems used. They mainly show the need to adjust instruments and methodologies to construct indigenous population indicators (Schkolnik and Del Popolo, 2005; Ossola, 2016). Maidana et al. (2007) point out that statistical studies express important limitations in relation to the ethnic variable. Firstly, because an individual's recognition of belonging to a particular people can vary throughout his or her career, concealing or making his or her identification visible depending on the current situation and the concomitant needs and interests of all kinds. On

the other hand, the indigenous populations are approached in a homogenous manner, and do not allow us to see variations in rates that are expressed at the territorial and intra-ethnic levels, making the results obtained opaque for the purposes of this research.

Statistics at regional, national, provincial, state or departmental level highlight marked disparities in the field of higher education when comparing entry and graduation rates between the indigenous population and the general population. These highly relevant statistical analyses have been developed mainly by agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO. On the basis of these data, ethnic-based initiatives to improve outcomes have emerged, supported by more precise indices and indicators of socio-educational inequality derived from these studies.

This involvement between Latin American university systems and Indigenous Peoples reflects a particular and historical link. On the one hand, it represents the struggle that indigenous peoples have sustained in pursuit of their rights as peoples, and their efforts to preserve their cultures and contribute to the well-being of their communities deeply affected by extractivist economies. On the other hand, this link is also driven by actors who seek not only to address the demands of indigenous peoples, but also to advance the production of knowledge to address socio-environmental and epidemiological issues that affect the population as a whole. This highlights the importance of promoting inclusive and intercultural education in the region, in line with the objectives of sustainable development and the principles of equal opportunities in education.

Finally, during the Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES 2018+5), it is worth mentioning therelvance of the CRES 2018+5 to address the issue of racism in higher education and the urgent need to move towards an intercultural higher education system.

Mato (2018) points out that in order to take these recommendations forward, specific research is needed to identify the various forms of racism that affect Higher Education, which are often referred to generically by the term "structural racism" (Almeida, 2019; ECLAC and IFCLAC, 2020). It argues that, although the concept of "structural racism" makes it possible to emphasise the historical density of this ideology and how it affects the very foundations of our societies, it is problematic to make visible the multiple concrete ways in which racism affects Higher Education. To overcome this limitation, specific studies on the incidence of structural (e.g. historically accumulated economic disadvantages), systemic (e.g. the norms, policies and practices of each Higher Education system), and institutional (norms, policies and practices of each HEI) factors are needed (Mato, 2020).

Mato (2020) points out that in order to effectively address these recommendations, detailed research is needed to identify the various forms of racism affecting Higher Education. Often, general reference is made to "structural racism" (Almeida, 2019; ECLAC and FILAC, 2020) to highlight this issue. However, Mato argues that this term, while highlighting the historical depth of this ideology and its impact on the foundations of our societies, may be insufficient to visualise the multiple concrete manifestations of racism in Higher Education. To address this complexity, it is essential to conduct specific research that analyses the influence of structural factors (such as historically accumulated economic disadvantage), systemic factors (such as the norms, policies and practices inherent in each Higher Education system) and institutional factors (the regulations, policies and practices of each Higher Education institution).

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ALTERNAUTAS

(Re)Searching Development: The Abya Yala Chapter

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Uses and Abuses of the Conquista

Book Review of *Conquistadores: A New History of Spanish Discovery and Conquest, by Fernando Cervantes (Penguin Random House, 2020)*

& ¿Quién conquistó México? [Who conquered Mexico], by Federico Navarrete (Debate, 2019)

Ulises Mejias

Oswego State University of New York, United States

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Ulises Mejias[1]

Uses and Abuses of the Conquista

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& ¿Quién conquistó México? [Who conquered Mexico], by Federico Navarrete (Debate, 2019)

Spanish people can detect my Mexican accent as soon as I open my mouth, and it's interesting to see their reactions during my travels through that country. Most Spaniards are kind and curious. But I do remember a taxi driver who convivially told me that, to be sure, Spain had done horrible things to Mexico, but that I should still think of Spain like a father — a drunk and abusive father, in his words, but a father nonetheless.

One can take such remarks about colonialism in stride and with good humor when they come from a taxi driver. But it is difficult to swallow similar arguments when they come from historians like Fernando Cervantes, author of *Conquistadores: A New History of Spanish Discovery and Conquest.*

This "new history" is an attempt to rehabilitate men who were once appreciated as "admirable adventurers", but are now seen as little more than "brutal, genocidal colonists" (p. xvi), says Cervantes. This decrease in prestige has apparently little to do with the actual historical facts of the American genocide, and more with Europe's "own sense of shame" (2020, p. xvi).

[1] Ulises A. Mejias is professor at the Oswego State University of New York. His research interests are related to Critical internet studies, philosophy and sociology of technology, and political economy of digital media. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3774-0195.

To alleviate this shame, he simply dismisses centuries of empirical research about the brutal impact of colonialism as propaganda meant to caricature and ridicule these noble adventurers. As he sees it, even those Spaniards who accompanied the conquistadores and chronicled their depravity were merely engaged in a campaign to "horrify the Spanish court" (p. 80). Yes, the colonizers committed plenty of violence, Cervantes admits. But their belief that they could amass extreme wealth through violent dispossession, while simultaneously serving God and King, evokes a "disarming frankness" which should be celebrated (p. xviii). My taxi driver would probably agree: an abusive father, yes, but a disarmingly frank one.

Casting the blame as far away from Europe as possible seems to be a useful strategy in this project. Take Muslims, for example. According to Cervantes, kicking them out of Granada was expensive, and their expulsion meant fewer subjects were paying taxes to the Castilian kingdom. So Muslims were a primary motivation behind Columbus' voyage to look for alternative sources of wealth, and practically forced Spain to launch its colonial project.

Colonial Absolution

Once history begins to be interpreted with such flexibility, the sky's the limit. Consider Cervantes' analysis of the Requerimiento. This was a document read by the conquistadores prior to pillaging a city or village, read in Spanish to an audience that could not understand what was said to them (which is why Nick Couldry[2] and I compare it to the Terms of Service of contemporary Big Tech companies).

The Requerimiento[3] read, in part:

> "But, if you do not [submit to Spanish rule], and maliciously make delay in it, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their Highnesses; we shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can…"

Rather than recognize this as a deceitful and absurd maneuver to justify violence and theft in pseudo-legalistic terms, Cervantes astonishingly attempts to recast the

[2] See for more information: Data Grab (penguin.co.uk)

[3] El Requerimiento by Juan López de Palacios Rubios (1513) - Encyclopedia Virginia

Requerimiento as an exercise in the "recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous people" (p. 82). In his view, the document afforded indigenous people the opportunity to exercise the Spanish legal principle of *obeying without submitting* ("obedezco pero no cumplo"). In other words, they could supposedly accept colonial rule while protesting its injustice. What Cervantes elides is that this was not merely a matter of legal compliance, but of life and death. As we know, resistance and the refusal to submit were the result of a painful and often deadly process of anti- and de-colonization carried out by indigenous people. To present it as something originating in the good will and legal frameworks of the colonizers is a travesty. Cervantes in fact argues that the legislative measures instituted by the conquistadores "succeeded in creating a moral climate in which the Spanish Crown was constantly reminded of its obligations towards the indigenous peoples", a climate that collapsed when colonies obtained their independence and was replaced by modern notions of human rights that, according to him, did not serve these peoples as effectively (p. 356).

If Cervantes' project is to present us with a revisionist version of history that will allow Europeans to feel less shame about the aftermath of colonialism, he is certainly not the only one engaged in such an enterprise. We might recall a recent pronouncement by UK business and trade minister Kemi Badenoch, a black woman, who had the temerity to tell audiences[4] that the UK's wealth is unrelated to colonialism. Or Gordon Brown's declaration in 2005 that Britain must stop apologizing for its colonial past[5], and claim ideas like freedom, tolerance and civic duty as its most successful exports.

The business of absolving colonizers is as old as colonialism itself. Consider the work of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a Spanish priest and scholar, who in the early days of colonialism gave voice to the prevalent belief within the Church and the Crown that the enslavement and dispossession of Indigenous Americans were justified, because they were not fully human (Hanke, 1985). In a similar vein, we also have the recent example of authors who have claimed[6] that Zionism is not colonial but in fact represents an anti-colonial nationalist movement, even if in order to make such a claim they need to overlook the material reality of settler colonialism in Palestine.

Messy Historiographies

[4] Kemi Badenoch: 'UK's wealth isn't from white privilege and colonialism' | Kemi Badenoch | The Guardian

[5] stop apologizing for its colonial past

[6] See more at: A Dying Postcolonialism – The Abusable Past

In the context of these old and new revisionist projects, Cervantes' work might be characterized as a form of *imperialist nostalgia*: the colonizer mourning the victim he himself has killed, or the civilizing agent lamenting the decimation of other cultures as personal losses (Rosaldo, 1993, pp. 69-70). My intention here is not to single out Cervantes, who is —as far as I can tell— a white Mexican working in the Global North like myself. Instead, I am interested in questioning the way in which these nostalgic narratives are deployed, and for what purposes. Cervantes is in fact a good story teller, and weaves historical records in an engaging way; he gives a vivid account of how the soldiers who risked their lives in the name of an empire were eventually betrayed by that same empire, as they were replaced by colonial administrators with closer ties to the Crown. But his conclusion that, because of this, the conquistadores are not directly responsible for the ills that afflict present-day Latin America is too opportunistic.

What should this kind of historical manipulation be replaced with? This, of course, is a question that has preoccupied scholars for decades. Critical studies of colonialism (an umbrella which might cover disciplines like postcolonial and decolonial studies, dependency theory, new imperial histories, critical international relations, non-western epistemologies, and so on) have attempted to identify the tensions, contradictions and challenges that a critical historiography of colonialism must contend with. Following Howe (2010), these might include addressing questions about the appropriate levels and units of analysis, that is, whether historians should focus on specific bounded spaces like nations or communities, on specific types of colonialism like plantation or settler colonialism, on colonialism as a global system, or even on new forms of extractivism like data colonialism (these choices, of course, have important repercussions on the diverse and contested meanings of terms like imperialism and colonialism). Then there is the question for critical historians of colonialism of how to best manage multiple interdisciplinary theoretical influences, including cultural and literary criticism (which at one point relied heavily on postmodernism and poststructuralism), anthropology, political theory, economics (including Marxist and neo-Marxists approaches), human geography, and so on. These tensions also bring to the fore questions of modernity (Is colonialism modern? Is modernity colonial?) and culture (Is culture colonialist? Is colonialism cultural?). And they put historians in the difficult position of having to decide whether colonialism and capitalism should be considered together or separately, and whether colonialism is a more useful trans-historical organizing concept than capitalism. Finally, as Howe (2010) suggest, this raises important and complicated questions about violence (its representations and memories) as well as the possibilities of resistance.

The task of historians is made even more complicated by their propensity to fall into what Cooper calls the traps of "vaguely specified temporalities" (2005, p. 17-22). These include *story plucking*: equating two concepts or narratives despite their historical differences while assuming there is a universal essence to coloniality; *doing history backward:* "confusing the analytic categories of the present with the native categories of the past" (p. 18); and *the epochal fallacy*: taking colonial and postcolonial periods as coherent wholes, rather than as possibly contradictory and segmentary constructs.

In addition, historiographies of colonialism must contend with another important tension found in all colonial histories: the issue of native collaboration with the invaders. European colonizers did not invent coerced labor, dispossession of land, population displacement due to conflict, undemocratic governance, oppressive patriarchy or human rights abuses. They typically exploited already existing dynamics, made them worse by racializing them, and exported them to the rest of the globe. And they did so often with the help and collaboration of local elites from the colonized populations, forming alliances with them.

What conquest?

These alliances are the focus of *¿Quién conquistó México? [Who conquered Mexico?]*, by Federico Navarrete (2019), a book that, in some ways, stands in inverse opposition to Cervantes' *Conquistadores*. If Cervantes' project is to rehabilitate the conquerors, Navarrete's is to examine the political maneuvering of the conquered, which problematizes the narrative of conquest itself, with its standard view of Spanish winners and Mexican losers.

The answer Navarrete poses to the question raised in the title of the book is that Mexicans conquered themselves. This seems a bit of a simplification, but not by much. In his work (which is more polemical than academic, though it is backed by the appropriate historical sources) he highlights the role of Malinche, the woman who became the cultural and linguistic translator of Hernán Cortés, as well as his mistress. And he examines how the Tlaxcaltecas, a confederacy of Nahua people who sided with the Spaniards, provided enough military aid to overthrow the Mexica empire. Without Malinche and the Tlaxcaltecas, the conquest would not have succeeded.

At the surface, these might sound like straightforward examples of alliances between the colonizers and local elites, a case of one group of colonized betraying their peers to gain a better position within the new world order. But the reality Navarrete describes is much more complicated than that, pointing to the complexities and contradictions of colonial history.

In Navarrete's view, everyone who made alliances with the conquistadores is also in some ways a victor in the conquest: by siding with the Spaniards, the locals manipulated them to gain political advantages over other local groups. It could be argued that this transaction engendered a new class of modern Mexicans who managed to survive, and just as important, managed to imagine a future that included them. Navarrete is not naïve about the actual role the conquistadores played, or the role of the geo-politics of the time. He is also not unaware of the way in which the Mexican state eventually positioned itself as the sole inheritor of the history of the 'victims', which it deployed in the creation of a nationalistic myth in which indigenous peoples (i.e., the "traitors") were made second class citizens. What Navarrete misses, of course, is that the benefits (and costs) of these alliances were not evenly distributed, so there were still many losers among these 'winners'. But in the context of his argument, the question of who conquered whom, and the use of the word 'conquest' itself, becomes productively complicated.

Present and Future Colonialisms

This level of nuance is missing from Cervantes' work, which in the end resorts to an uneasy Eurocentric paternalism. In his conclusion, he offers a visual analogy that, in his mind, should serve as our guide in interpreting the legacy of colonialism. It is the painting *Portrait of Juan de Pareja,* by Diego Velázquez. Juan de Pareja was Velázquez's slave, a man of mixed Muslim descent who obtained his freedom and decided to stay on as an apprentice to Velázquez. His portrait is unquestionably a masterpiece. But its most distinctive feature, according to Cervantes, is the look on Pareja's face. "The look is that of a man who knows his dignity because he also knows it is a gift" (2021, p. 354). This gift, apparently, can only be bestowed on the oppressed by their oppressors.

Why is any of this important to us? When faced with these narratives, we need to do more than *obey without submitting* ("obedezco pero no cumplo"). We must confront and reject these colonial fantasies as if lives depended on it, because when it comes to the legacy of colonialism, they do. As Weld (2020) reminds us, the recent rise of Latin America's far right is directly tied to these issues, and has a lot to do with the region's colonial past. Despite what nationalistic narratives would have us believe, most of the struggles for Latin American independence and liberation in the nineteenth century were carried out by a half-white elite who obviously sought not to hand power to black, brown and indigenous populations, but to keep it for themselves, along with the infrastructures of dispossession.

When their efforts were challenged, ruling classes fell back on a nostalgia for the ‘uncomplicated’ order of colonial days.

Whiteness, manifesting as Hispanidad or “Spanishness”, was an important aspect of this nostalgia, particularly when used to reference Spain’s Conquista and Re-Conquista — the history of expulsion, extermination, or assimilation of racialized others. That previous dictatorships and governments in Latin America made used of this rehabilitation of colonizers to rationalize the brutal elimination of their opponents, and that they may do so again (inspired perhaps by narratives such as Cervantes’), is a project we must reject.

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