

Intersectionality and Decoloniality: ruptures and possibilities in civil society.

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For social organisations, the need to incorporate critical perspectives capable of problematising diverse phenomena that involve the defence of human rights in contemporary societies is becoming increasingly urgent, especially towards those subjectivities that, being traversed by multiple systems of oppression, tend to remain in contexts where social inequality, state violence, armed conflicts and deterritorialisation are exacerbated. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic scenario has informed a critical moment for democratic politics on an international scale, expressed in the growth of social gaps and hate crimes, which calls for a deep understanding of how patriarchal, colonial and capitalist domination continues to (re)produce modes of relation that contradict any intention to guarantee rights, not only at the level of governance, but also within civil society agencies.

Recognising the complexities of citizenships that are increasingly plural in their social demands invites us to consider the different ways in which neoliberalism is eroding the very terrain where human rights are promoted, as well as the risk posed by the advance of ultra-right-wing policies at the global level to guarantee the life chances of the most vulnerable populations, especially when it is positioning openly racist, sexist, anti-LGBTIQ+ and warmongering governments, determined to generate legal setbacks and to deploy all their

repressive force against social mobilisation. This panorama of extreme racial and gender violence is one of the greatest planetary challenges that we must face as civil society actors, where it is essential to seek both mechanisms for political action with differential approaches, as well as spaces for participation that allow us to overcome the political limits that conservatism imposes on our historical struggles for justice and equality.

A great opportunity to nurture these reflections took place last October during the online workshop on "Intersectionality and Decoloniality", jointly organised by LSVD and the Cultural House Association "El Chontaduro", in the framework of the CCP Synergy programme of the ifa Institute. On this occasion, a transnational dialogue was proposed on these two critical perspectives that have been gaining strength within civil society movements, insofar as they propose epistemic ruptures in the understanding of identities within a hegemonic Eurocentric and capitalist rationality, offering, at the same time, the possibility that these two perspectives can be used as a basis for a new way of understanding identities. In turn, they offer the possibility for subaltern experiences to be reborn from the silences of history and to raise their paths of resistance and collective liberation, where empirical knowledge represents their greatest expansive force, even to reconcile it with the voids of what we can call radical humanism. In this meeting, we had the participation of members of the Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (LSVD) and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) and the Casa Cultural "El Chontaduro" in Colombia, as well as other scholars and activists who also made important contributions to the discussion from their agencies and political incidences. The workshop offered a theoretical approach to the concepts of Intersectionality and Decoloniality, revealing their close and necessary relationship with other critical theories

such as black feminism, race and ethnicity studies and queer theory, for the analysis of historical phenomena that compromise the struggle for economic, racial, sexual and gender justice. In addition, each panellist shared the ways in which these perspectives link to their organisations or social movements.

The social production of war

According to Beatríz E Balanta (Duke University), Intersectionality and decoloniality are key concepts for understanding how the geo-political spaces of the world have been organised through historical power relations. Therefore, decoding power in terms of the administrative and juridical bases that have shaped the figure of nation-states reveals that domination has been engendered according to geographical poles. Authors such as Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo put forward the notion of Empire to explain the division of the modern world from the scheme of subjugation to the West that produced the expansion of colonialism through the transatlantic slave trade. In this, war must be seen as one of the strategies that, when combined with the invention of race and the sex-gender system, sedimented the discourses of authority to institutionalise racism and patrol the moral enemies of national identity.

Balanta affirms that war has been a permanent mechanism for establishing patterns of hierarchy where an inside and an outside of the social are determined, that is, the conditions that configure the oppressed or privileged subject, according to proximity to or distance from the Western. In this way, in countries such as Colombia, contemporary imperialism takes the name of extractivism, whose logic depends on the reproduction of racialised subjects,

disciplined bodies, standardised desires and discourses that support the large-scale exploitation of nature. In this context, a question arises as to what kind of subjects and identities extractivism produces in the Global North, and how these identities produced over 500 years lead to different subjectivities today. In the case of Colombia itself, the state has been responsible for installing one of the greatest architectures of social inequality on the planet, based on the production of subjects who embody marginality and premature death within an idea of citizenship that makes them violent, disappearable and annihilable in different ways by the forces of global capitalism.

The imbrications of the coloniality of power in the present are rooted in war and extractivism. These two factors have generated grammars of the racial and gender question in which Western hegemony is strengthened. An example of this is the category of "black women", which has suffered the renewal of colonial constructions such as sexual violence. Currently, this occurs through international prostitution networks that move black and diverse female bodies through the different geographies of extractivism in Colombian regions such as Chocó and the Amazon. Likewise, the armed conflict in this country helped to foster different forms of disciplining bodies that were defined as enemies of patriotic values, usually bodies that process their desires outside patriarchy and heteronormativity and for whom a framework of legality was imposed based on the power relations under which the attributes of race, gender and sexuality have been assigned.

Balanta makes a strong call not only to think of decoloniality as a process that directly affects the countries that have experienced colonisation, but one that requires a reconfiguration of geo-political relations.

The frontiers of pink capitalism

The importance of reflecting on the relationship of countries integrated into the invention of the third world with the Global North also lies in the concern to unveil the elitist/capitalist vision that guides much of the policies of inclusion for the LGBTIQ+ community. The conventional paradigm of sexual and gender diversity manifests itself close to a predominantly neoliberal, white, cisgender subject, living in large metropolises, who, imagining themselves as deserving of all wellbeing, can only imagine another unfortunate subject who is susceptible to exploitation. From there, the inadequacy of the humanist discourse begins to become evident, which also needs to be decolonised. It is rather a matter of transforming the emotional, bodily and welfare needs of the subject of the Global North, from a necessary critique of the civilising project of the white world, whose essence is profoundly colonial and capitalist. It is not only a colonial conception to believe that one is entitled to everything, but also to want to help. For this reason, it is urgent to redefine how the North sees itself and how to build bridges to reorganise the ontologies and epistemologies of inhabiting and transforming relations in and from these geopolitical spaces.

Lilith Raza, member of LSVD, offers an overview of the experience of LGBTIQ+ refugees in Germany through the Queer Refugees Deutschland Project. For her, intersectional and decolonial perspectives allow us to understand the complexity of violence and other oppressions experienced by refugees in urban contexts, when they must confront a migratory reality where socio-spatial divisions limit the right to full citizenship, due to living at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and geo-political configurations. Similarly, for Jurgen Rausch, member of LSVD and coordinator of Competence Network for the Reduction of

Homosexual and Trans Hostility, intersectionality is the interaction of different experiences, so it is essential to understand and recognise how the different levels of these interactions are linked. According to Rausch, there are many cases in which people do not know that they are discriminated against, because they have experienced a systematic stripping of their rights and the level of demand also poses vital risks. So the competence starts from this lack of knowledge in order to complexify their particular experiences and then transform them into collective political actions that manage to mobilise society in order to increase the guarantees for the enjoyment of rights.

A look from Africa

Botho Maruatona, member of the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) highlights her organisation's commitment to freedom and justice for all African women from a perspective of political, territorial and bodily autonomy. CAL seeks to strengthen lesbian women's consciousness and leadership around their own intersecting experiences of race, gender and sexuality. CAL's analysis of intersectionality demonstrates that the lack of autonomy and freedoms perpetuated by hegemony located in the Global North is a common factor in the ways in which subaltern people (sex workers, LGBTQTIQ+ people, migrants, human rights defenders, etc.) experience life. In this way, the intersectional approach enables them (as advocates) to unravel the power relations in the structure of African societies, in order to draw new lines of justice and historical reparation.

In the sense that CAL understands decoloniality as the disengagement from the legacies of racial, gender and geopolitical inequalities, for the African context this represents a praxis

rooted in the affirmation of self-thinking, territorial autonomy, black feminism and the reclaiming of identities that are authentically African in their worldview and that remain within the continent despite the colonial heritage, often disguised as humanitarianism. Similarly, CAL believes in the transnationalisation of the struggle for racial and gender justice and has, on countless occasions, called on states to exert pressure on issues that generate disproportionate violence against women of African descent in the Global South. In the face of the impending neglect and marginalisation that the manage of the COVID-19 pandemic reflected on women's bodies and racialised queer identities around the world, CAL believes that black communities experienced a significant return to community care practices and ancestral values such as "ubuntu"(I am because you are) for accessing and exchanging resources, which propose both a decolonisation of wellbeing, by detaching from the individuality that characterises self-care in the Western, and a reconstitution of the memory of the African continent and its diaspora, through strengthening the processes of self-enunciation and historical re-writing of the elements involved in the constructions of identity and community in the key of resistance.

What do we call justice

Vicenta Moreno, director of the Asociación Casa Cultural "El Chontaduro", addresses the historical and social dimension of exile through efforts to build spatial justice in an impoverished and racialised territory such as the East of Cali in Colombia. For Moreno, exile means the violent detachment that Afro-Pacific communities have suffered from the times of enslavement to the armed conflict that continues despite the recently signed peace agreements. Colombia continues to be one of the countries with the highest level of

dispossession in the world. The environmental and social devastation that transnational capital has produced in the Afro-Colombian rural areas through plundering, has also subjected the majority of its population to a permanent exodus to urban contexts where they are condemned to live in marginality. Thus, a paradigm of legality has been institutionalised that has put black people in a non-place or a place of death.

In a city like Cali, it is normal for black people to die prematurely and violently. The paradigm of inclusion has become the way to manage the rejection of blackness as part of the civic culture, better known as "caleñidad", where the black body is given a place as a cultural good that is administered and intervened under the conventions of social and economic development outlined by multiculturalist policies, but is never recognised in its broadest and most dignified sense as a citizen. This explains why Cali, being the second largest urban enclave of African descent in Latin America, has the lowest levels of quality of life and social protection for black people. In fact, the east of the city, inhabited mostly by Afro-descendants, is referred to as the raw material for construction and domestic service jobs, with no regularisation of these trades. Thus, social inclusion policies have no more scope than to teach black people how to intergenerationally manage the very poverty to which they are condemned.

Moreno affirms that, in the struggle for racial-spatial justice, the body represents the first territory where the right to freedom is demanded and exercised. It is precisely this geographical notion of corporeality that invites the construction of autonomy and the rethinking of the dominant concept of the human from performativities that escape the confines of Eurocentric rationality. In this way, an intersectional and decolonial political

agency must be committed to historical justice, taking into account the colonial logics that are recreated on a daily basis and whose deepest consequences have been borne by the peoples of the South and the Middle East. It is vital to continue questioning the discourses and practices surrounding the construction of justice and the defence of rights in the global North, insofar as colonial logics survive in our societies and have found new ways of producing exclusion and death. To this end, efforts must focus on cooperations that stimulate a re-imagination of the world based on trust, respect and solidarity, far from the dynamics of erasure and annulment that coloniality has left as an inheritance to the social institutions that continue to determine the course of our contemporary societies.