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Decolonizing business history: the case of Unilever historiography

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Abstract

The rise of the radical right in the context of neoliberal capitalism within an era of decolonization and the new age of empire has been triggered by revisionisms supporting the radicalization of North-South coloniality on a global scale denied by history. In this context, we investigate the absence of Latin America when interrogating the historiography of Unilever, one of the most important in the field of business history (BH). We also seek to overcome this absence in BH through a transmodern decolonial approach from the perspective of the majority of the population living "histories others," which promotes an innovative South-North dialogue between the Euro-British and the decolonial historic turns in management and organization studies (MOS). We developed a decolonial practical perspective of historiographic investigation to overcome the pattern of conformist plurality in the North toward liberating transmodernity in both the South and North. The research suggests that the historiography of Unilever embodies an ambivalent pattern of historicization ignored by both the Euro-British and the decolonial historic turns. We argue that inter-imperial dynamics and radicalization inform the institutionalization of BH by the Anglo-American world as a post-imperial turn of North-South binarism championed by the field of imperial history. With implications for research and teaching in BH and MOS, we conclude that transmodern dialogues from the perspective of a growing population living colonialism-imperialism presents enable the renewal of solidary decolonial struggles in the South and North against inter-imperial dynamics of silencing and appropriating-limiting "histories others" also lived by scholars.

Keywords: Business History. Decolonial. Organizational studies. Historiography. Unilever Latin America.

Decolonizando business history: o caso da historiografia Unilever

Resumo

A ascensão da direita radical no contexto do capitalismo neoliberal numa era de descolonização e império vem sendo impulsionada por revisionismos historiográficos que informam a radicalização em escala global da colonialidade Norte-Sul negada pela história. Nesse contexto investigamos a negação da América Latina pela historiografia da Unilever (HU) co-produzida pela área de *business history* (BH). O objetivo é investigar a negação da América Latina na HU e buscar a superação desse quadro em BH por meio de uma abordagem decolonial transmoderna engajada com a maioria vivendo "histórias outras" que promovem um diálogo Sul-Norte inovador entre as viradas históricas euro-britânica e decolonial da América Latina em estudos organizacionais e da gestão (EOG). Como metodologia desenvolvemos uma perspectiva decolonial práxica de investigação historiográfica visando ir além do padrão de pluralidade conformista no Norte, rumo à transmodernidade libertadora no Sul e no Norte. A investigação sugere que a HU incorpora um padrão ambivalente de historicização que é ignorado por ambas as viradas históricas. Argumentamos que a institucionalização do campo de BH pelo mundo anglo-americano como uma virada pós-imperial é informada por dinâmicas inter-imperiais e radicalização do binarismo Norte-Sul protagonizadas pela área de *imperial history*. Com implicações para pesquisa e ensino em BH e EOG, concluímos que diálogos transmodernos engajados com crescente população vivendo presentes coloniais-imperiais permitem a renovação de lutas decoloniais solidárias no Sul e no Norte contra dinâmicas inter-imperiais de negação e apropriação-contenção de "histórias outras" vividas também por acadêmicos.

Palavras-chave: História de empresas. Decolonial. Estudos organizacionais. Historiografia. Unilever América Latina.

Decolonizando la historia empresarial: el caso de la historiografía de Unilever

Resumen

El ascenso de la derecha radical en el contexto del capitalismo neoliberal en una era de descolonización e imperio ha sido impulsado por revisionismos historiográficos que informan la radicalización a escala global de la colonialidad Norte-Sur negada por la historia. En este contexto, investigamos la negación de América Latina por parte de la historiografía de Unilever (HU) coproducida por el área de *business history* (BH). El objetivo es investigar la negación de América Latina en HU y buscar superar esta situación en la BH, a través de un enfoque decolonial transmoderno comprometido con la mayoría que vive "historias otras" que promueva un diálogo innovador Sur-Norte entre los giros históricos euro-británico y decolonial latinoamericano en estudios organizacionales y de gestión (EOG). Como metodología, desarrollamos una perspectiva de praxis decolonial de investigación historiográfica con el objetivo de ir más allá del patrón de pluralidad conformista en el Norte, hacia la transmodernidad liberadora en el Sur y el Norte. La investigación sugiere que HU incorpora un patrón ambivalente de historización que es ignorado por ambos virajes históricos. Argumentamos que la institucionalización del campo de BH por parte del mundo angloamericano como un giro posimperial se fundamenta en la dinámica interimperial y la radicalización del binarismo Norte-Sur liderada por el área de la historia imperial. Con implicaciones para la investigación y la enseñanza de BH y EOG, concluimos que los diálogos transmodernos comprometidos con una creciente población que vive en los presentes colonial-imperial permiten la renovación de las luchas decoloniales solidarias en el Sur y el Norte contra las dinámicas interimperiales de negación y apropiación-contención de "historias otras" vividas también por académicos.

Palabras clave: Historia empresarial. Decolonial. Estudios organizacionales. Historiografía. Unilever Latinoamérica.

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INTRODUCTION

The rise of the far-right in the context of neo-imperial neoliberal capitalism in an era of decolonization and empire (Andrews, 2021; Santos, 2018) has been accompanied by historical revisionisms informing the colonial/imperial moment lived in the South and the North (Duffield, 2005). These revisionisms block the historiographic plurality in the North (White, 1986) and fight liberating theories/practices mobilized by a growing southern population who are living histories others (Dussel, 2016; Sandoval, 2000) silenced by Eurocentric history. We observe and live the emergence of different perspectives of the past in management and organizational studies (MOS) led by the Euro-British historic turn (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004), followed by a marginalized decolonial critique (Ibarra-Colado, 2006) and, more recently, by a pluralist turn in business history (BH) (Friedman & Jones, 2011; Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg, 2017; Toms & Wilson, 2017). The virtual absence of dialogue between the historic turn and the decolonial critique in both MOS and BH reaffirms North-South binarism as one of the central expressions of the radicalization of coloniality on a global scale, which we live and challenge in this article[1].

In our practices as Global South researchers committed to the decolonial investigation of the imperial face of Unilever, based on a critical historiographical corpus (long built by one of the authors of this article) and within an academic context that uncritically reverences large corporations, the radicalization of North-South binarism was materialized in a surprising, irritating, and sensitive way within our "histories others." We found that the historiography of the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever – one of the most significant cases in BH – does not mention Latin America despite its overwhelming presence in the region since the beginning of the twentieth century. Operating in more than 190 countries (23 in Latin America), Unilever's subsidiaries in the region account for 12% of its global sales and for a growing potential for economic accumulation. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and (other) Latin American countries represent 58% of the company's global operations – Unilever Brazil's growth is three times more than the company's global average, ranking second behind only the United States (Unilever, 2018).

We also found that the denial of Latin America is co-produced by BH. This field of knowledge led by the Global North also ignores the growing majority of victims of history living 'histories others'. BH researchers within MOS who embraced the Euro-British historic turn informed by a postmodernist critical theory (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004; Durepos, Maclean, Alcadipani, & Cummings, 2020; Mills, Suddaby, Foster, & Durepos, 2016) to promote methodological (Decker, Kipping, & Wadhwani, 2015), narrative (Popp & Fellman, 2017) and democratic (Laird, 2016) plurality, are discouraged by scholars who argue that plurality and alternative histories threaten the ontological status of the historical truth BH has been promoting for over five decades (Toms & Wilson, 2017). In this era of coloniality on a global scale driven by the radicalization of North-South binarism and hyper-conservative revisionisms produced by the populist far-right in the South and North, northern historicizations deny the decolonial critique produced in Latin America and challenge and reaffirm an enduring context of conformist plurality.

This study interrogates the denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever co-produced by the field of BH. It aims to contribute to overcome conformist plurality by taking the perspective of most of the population living 'histories others' on a global scale. The study offers an innovative South-North dialogue in MOS, between the Euro-British historic turn and the decolonial critique. We organized our historiographical work considering everyday struggles against decolonization and empire (Andrews, 2021) we experience within and outside academia (Santos & Meneses, 2020). The study is based on the following questions: how did the field of BH co-produce the denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever? How can BH in the Global South be decolonized, adopting the perspective of the growing majority of victims of history? Based on practical information emerging from the borderline between thinking and doing in MOS (Faria, 2013), we embrace transmodernity as a decolonial theory-method (Dussel, 2016) to investigate the denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever co-produced by BH. This study adopts an innovative South-North transmodern dialogue (Faria & Hemais, 2020) with colleagues in the Global North. These scholars also experience the current colonialism/imperialism and decolonial dynamics (Andrews, 2021; Duffield, 2005). They try to resist the hegemony of history-as-theory, advocating a view of history-as-method and seeking critical plurality via historical practice for a better future (Durepos & Mills, 2017; Van de Lent & Durepos, 2019).

[1] In the original version of this article, written in Portuguese, the term "business history" was maintained in English to highlight the Anglo-spherical hegemony in this field of knowledge and our South-North relationship with northern colleagues. Business History carries an ambivalent meaning of reproduction and contestation of imperial structures of domination portrayed by the field of imperial history. The original version in Portuguese uses terms in English and Portuguese, according to an expanded perspective of decolonization involving the majority of the population living other histories in the South and the North. We are grateful to the reviewers who contributed to improve the writing in Portuguese and hope this English version manages to express our intentions accurately.

EMBRACING DECOLONIAL TRANSMODERNITY AS THEORY AND METHOD

In the context of neoliberal and neo-imperial capitalism, the rise of the far-right in a radical era of decolonization and empire on a global scale (Andrews, 2021; Kennedy, 2018) has been accompanied by growing concerns about disputes over the past. In historiographic projects for a better future, hyper-conservative revisionisms led by the Global North radicalize present colonialism/imperialism in the South and North (Santos, 2018). They also radicalize the North-South binarism (Duffield, 2005) by inhibiting or intimidating the northern radical historiographical plurality (White, 1986) and fighting liberating theories and practices mobilized by a growing southern population, who lives histories others silenced by the Eurocentric history.

This study investigates Unilever's enduring imperial side considering a decolonial perspective. Based on an extensive critical historiographical corpus – long built by one of the authors of this study who is professionally engaged with the historiography of the company and with decolonial critique – we observe that the company does not mention Latin America despite its enormous influence in the region, particularly on Brazilian daily life. Unilever's silence about the region occurs by following the structure of monopoly capitalism carried out by transnational corporations – during the military dictatorship in Brazil, for example (Rodrigues, 2002) – and by adopting pro-Americanism advertising (Durand, 2008). It ignores Latin America in its own historiography, which is the most influential in the field of business history (BH) (Fieldhouse, 1978; Jones, 2005).

This study explores the company's historiography in the context of the radicalization of North-South binarism that endangers the lives of the majority of the population and the planet as a whole, firstly by embracing the decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011). Then, we seek inspiration in histories others lived in the cracks between the decolonial and colonial imaginaries (which we also live) (Pérez, 1999). In this sense, we embrace the transmodern decolonial perspective (Dussel, 2016, 2011) and, from there, carry out a historiographic analysis focusing on the interrelationships between scholars and the contexts that influence and are influenced by historiographical practice (Bergquist, 1990).

As a starting point, we argue that the denial of Latin America in the main historiography of the field of BH in search of plurality in the Global North is connected to the radicalization of North-South binarism on a global scale, which we reproduce and challenge daily. This radicalization has been driven by hyper-conservative revisionisms and imperial historicizations that present the Global South as anti-Western essentialist hegemony (Huntington, 1996), i.e., a new empire (Santos & Meneses, 2020) or sub-empire (Pradella & Marois, 2015), that "invades" and threatens the Global North's daily life (Duffield, 2005). This context supports the denial of the decolonial critique even by scholars who internally criticize the Euro-British historic turn in management and organizational studies (MOS) in transition to organizational history (Durepos et al., 2020). This present of colonialism/imperialism and interconnected liberating movements experienced in both the South and the North (Kennedy, 2018; Santos, 2018) offers the basis for the emergence of the decolonial critique in MOS (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Misoczky, 2011) on the silence of northern historicizations regarding the southern contribution.

MOS researchers in the North live contemporary colonialism/imperialism led by conservative counterinsurgent forces in neoliberal universities and business schools (Contu, 2018). Some stand for decolonization (Dar, Liu, Martinez Dy, & Brewis, 2020), accompanied by decolonial criticisms on MOS complicity with the normalization of economic inequality (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015) and racial and gender-class discrimination (Nkomo, 2018). Researchers in the South mobilize a decolonial theory in MOS, based on radical alterity (Misoczky, 2011) that unveils MOS as an artifact of the coloniality radicalization inaugurated by Eurocentric modernity more than five centuries ago (Dussel, 2008). In other words, MOS is "one of the most important forms of epistemic coloniality of the last 150 years" (Ibarra-Colado, 2006, p. 464).

This decolonial theorization destabilizes and reaffirms North-South binarism by subordinating transmodern praxis (Dussel, 2016) and the method of cross-border thinking and doing (Pérez, 1999) historically mobilized by the victims of history in the North and South, and by the expanded decolonial turn (Maldonado-Torres, 2020)[2]. Therefore, as in the "delinking" (Mignolo, 2007) decolonial theory and decolonial transmodernity (Dussel, 2016), we develop an innovative, practical vision of historiographic analysis in a dialogue with colleagues from the North and from the perspective of the majority of the population who live histories others. Thus, we study the denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever not only to unveil the darker side of coloniality but also to help overcome the radicalization of North-South binarism and conformist plurality in BH and MOS.

[2] The decolonial turn (*virada decolonial* in Portuguese or *giro decolonial* in Spanish) does not refer to a single theoretical school, such as that developed by the MCD project; The decolonial turn refers "to a family of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern (as well as postmodern and information) age, and of decolonization or decoloniality as a necessary task that remains unfinished" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 2).

As a first measure, we examine the Latin American decolonial theorization developed by the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) project (Escobar, 2007). Led by Argentine semiologist Walter Mignolo, the MCD project expanded the decolonial concepts enunciated by Peruvian sociologist-politologist Anibal Quijano (2000) in dialogue with one of the phases of the work of Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel (1993). Coloniality is the term enunciated based on the decolonial theorization proposed by Quijano. It designates the matrix of Eurocentric-capitalist domination that remained since the conquest/discovery of the Americas in 1492 and remains in countries that achieved political decolonization in the 1960s (Mignolo, 2011). *Decolonial* and *decolonialidade* (in Portuguese) differ from similar terms used in Spanish and English to designate processes of independence from formerly colonial countries from imperial metropolises. Based on a long-term perspective from Latin America (Braudel, 1985), coloniality is the continuity of the matrix of domination of power, being, and knowledge (Quijano, 2000), which is radicalized on a global scale in an era of neoliberal globalization supposedly postmodern and postcolonial, led by the Global North (Quijano, 2000).

Coloniality persists in an era of decolonization and imperialism, represented by normalizing the silence regarding the "colonial difference" (Dussel, 2016; Mignolo, 2011) that resumes the colonizer-colonized domination through a continued transformation of differentiation into racial and geopolitical values. Concepts enunciated in the North, such as new world, third world, emerging countries, are epistemic-racialist classifications mobilized by the colonial matrix and by the geopolitical project of knowledge control that inform the pattern of "epistemic coloniality" in colonial centers (Mignolo, 2011) and also in MOS (Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

Coloniality is a constitutive and inseparable dimension of modernity (Dussel, 1993). Modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin, just as development and underdevelopment are inseparable sides of historical capitalism, according to the dependency theories produced in Latin America in the years 1960 and 1970 (Sunkel, 1972). These theories emerged in response to the idea that development is achieved by underdeveloped countries along the evolutionary stages enunciated by (neo)imperial theories of development and modernization (supposedly) post-imperialism led by the United States[3]. Latin America, the patriarchal name imposed by European conquerors in 1492 on the peoples of Alba Yala without history, theory, and soul, is not only different from Europe. Also for Hegel, this is a "non-being" zone of the world (Fanon, 1967) that remains racialized, appropriated, rejected, and classified as inferior, backward, and threatening by the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2011).

Arguably, the main objective of decolonial theory produced in Latin America is to unveil the darker side of modernity/coloniality that racializes "peoples without history and theory" along with the recovery of knowledge or ways of knowing subordinated by the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2011). When shifting the focus from what is enunciated to the "locus of enunciation" (Mignolo, 2011), we must ask ourselves "who and when, why and where is knowledge generated […]?" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 4). Based on the argument that Latin America is a privileged context of colonial domination and liberating struggles for over five centuries[4] (Mignolo, 2007), decolonial theory defends the "delinking of Eurocentrism" by radical alterity. It is "a delinking that leads to de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 453). This project, grounded on the theorization enunciated by Anibal Quijano, goes beyond the binarism imposed by the colonial difference to show, from the cracks of modernity, that modern reason and history cover an "original, constitutive and irrational violence" (Dussel, 1993, p. 76, our translation). By proposing the replacement of Eurocentric universality by decolonial pluriversality that allows everyone a world in which different worlds can coexist (Dussel, 2016), the decolonial theory of delinking proposed by the MCD project reproduces a self-assertive pattern of Latin Americanism in its different versions and characteristics (Dussel, 2008), which has been challenged mainly by proponents of the expanded decolonial turn (Grosfoguel, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2020).

[3] The book The *stages of economic growth* (Rostow, 1960) describes the anti-communist theory of development, enunciated in the United States as a post-Eurocentric theory that underlines the end of Imperial History (British) and challenges stage theories of socialism. This theory sets out sequential stages of modernization or development for third world countries, according to the Point Four Program announced by President Truman after his re-election in 1949.
[4] According to the vast decolonial literature, delinking refers to going beyond the Eurocentric universality based on the colonial difference and corresponding binarisms, such as civilization-barbarism, progress-regress, and people with and without history, considering a pluriversal conception of being/knowing/living in a world in which different worlds coexist (Mignolo, 2007).

As a project led by Latin American scholars based on institutions in the United States, the MCD is one of the components of the decolonial turn under construction that goes beyond North-South binarisms and practical theory. Decolonial theorization is necessary but not sufficient for decolonization[5]. It both destabilizes and reaffirms the coloniality of power by subordinating the cross-border decolonial praxis, mobilized by subordinates who live histories others (Anzaldúa, 2015; Cusicanqui, 2018; Dussel, 2016; Sandoval, 2000). The theorization strengthens the idea that the Global South embodies a project of imperial or sub-imperial purpose in both South and North (Santos & Meneses, 2020; Pradella & Marois, 2015).

When considering transmodernity as one of the main bases, the decolonial turn goes beyond Latin American nativism and theorizations that subordinate decolonial praxis marked by tolerance of ambivalence and contradiction (Maldonado-Torres, 2020; Pérez, 1999). Decolonial transmodernity is not a new universal abstract imperialism; on the contrary, it is "an invitation to think about modernity/coloniality critically, based on positions and according to the multiple experiences of subjects who differently suffer the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being. Transmodernity involves radical dialogical ethics and a critical de-colonial cosmopolitanism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 162).

According to the perspective of the borderline between thinking and doing in MOS (Faria, 2013), decolonial theorizations produced in Latin America are necessary but not sufficient for the liberating praxis of undo and redo, detach and reconnect, resist and re-exist (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Dussel's transmodernity goes beyond the first phase of his work in the 1960s and 1970s by engaging victims of history in the South and North (Dussel, 2016). No longer having Latin America as a victim or privileged entity of liberation, the ethics of liberation supports the solidary struggles carried out by center and periphery, man and woman, civilization and nature, races and classes, peoples with and without history (Dussel, 1993). The ethics of liberation is no longer for Latin America but for the world – or "a critical philosophy born in the periphery that intends to be relevant on a global scale" (Dussel, 2016, p. 47, our translation)[6].

Dussel promotes dialogues with the North and transmodern reappropriations in this pluriversal and praxis expansion (Dussel, 2016). The author challenges (anti-)imperial historicizations to remind us that significant advances in modernity and postmodernity enunciated in the North result from appropriations of epistemes and materiality co-constructed in multiple interconnected spaces marked by colonial differences. The transmodern method or approach includes (instead of excluding) Eurocentric concepts and relinks, rather than delinks, 'histories others' marked by tolerance for contradiction and ambivalence (Anzaldúa, 2015). In other words, transmodernity is "generous and inclusive, not reactionary and exclusive" (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 230) because it distinguishes the positive elements of modernity and postmodern criticism as well as "the valuable elements of the exterior of the southern world of life to imagine an alternative project of liberation, ethical and necessary for the majority of humanity" (Dussel, 1999, p. 88, our translation).

The Euro-British historic turn in MOS – disputed by critics-pluralist colleagues – reproduces emancipatory discourses of domination through post-structuralist/postmodernist theory (Booth & Rowlinson, 2006; Clark & Rowlinson, 2004). Such theory both destabilizes and reaffirms the hegemony of presentist positivism in the field led by the US and protects the universalist history of decolonial barbarisms interconnected with the southern internal oppositions. Postmodern theory, also driven by transnational neo-imperial capital led by capitalist elites in the US, appropriates and contains multiple cultures and histories others of interconnected "peoples without history and theory" that mobilize transmodern transformations in the South and North that go beyond North-South binarisms, theory-practice and decoloniality-coloniality (Faria & Hemais, 2020). The theoretical binomial modernity-postmodernity mobilized by the disputed historic turn works as a defensive inter-imperial duopoly that appropriates southern materiality and epistemes in the South and the North by rejecting regions, spaces, and cultures re-signified as "insignificant," "emotional," "meaningless," "barbarians," or "non-culture" (Dussel, 2016).

[5] For Dussel, the praxis makes the path. The author emphasizes that it "the path cannot be made without points of reference that permit one to traverse topographies and labyrinths unknown. One needs a compass and to know in which direction to walk." In short, the theoretical compass provides general guidance, but "direction is discovered only in concrete application, with the material day-to-day, militant, and solidarity-based praxis" (Dussel, 2014, p. 322).
[6] The transfer of the Cold War to the region in the late 1950s, a geo-historical context called "the last colonial massacre" (Grandin, 2011), was fueled by the growing belief that a revolution in an era of decolonization and imperialism was imminent and this would be determined in the Global South. Dussel's liberation ethic is driven by the surprising and contested emergence of dependency theories produced in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s (Wasserman, 2014). In this context, Dussel reinforces the resurgence of decolonial imagery associated with Latin Americanism in the social sciences. In the early 1970s, the author argued in a self-assertive way that "the Latin American intellectual worker – not just teachers or students, union members, journalists, thinkers, etc. – must deal with Latin America to provide universally valuable work and be respected in the world of science. Universality can only be achieved in perfecting what is particularly effective" (Dussel, 1973, pp. 20-21, our translation).

By reproducing the argument that modern history is a "discourse about, but categorically different from, the past" (Jenkins, 1991, p. 7), postmodern theorization undisciplined modern history through an extended universalist theorization that criticizes "the so-called 'metanarratives' or 'systems of thoughts such as History'" (Munslow, 2012, p. 97). This internal critique reproduces dynamics of silencing, appropriating, and limiting the southern epistemes-theories and double subalternation of histories others to challenge the "historians' creation and possible imposition of a particular narrative of the past" (Munslow, 2012, p. 96), defending "the end of the peculiar ways in which modernity conceptualized the past" (Jenkins, 1991, p. 9). This inter-imperial "defensive" duopoly makes it easier to reject the expansion of dynamics of materiality and epistemes appropriation in the South and the North. By subordinating knowledge supported on the daily struggles and practices against oppression and colonial difference (Santos, 2018), the postmodern/poststructural turn can correct theoretical positivist empiricism by appropriating practical, liberating developments degraded as structural, binarist, and essentialist theorizations (Jenkins, 1991).

Because of the radicalization of North-South binarism, postcolonial and decolonial theorizations united and separated by the theoretical apartheid regime in the academic system led by the United States (Sandoval, 200) also challenged and reinforced the present colonialism-imperialism that we live in the South and the North. It is a present marked by renewed inter-imperial disputes and by the normalization of extractive practices contrary to the life of the majority of the population and the planet (Grosfoguel, 2020). It fosters a growing volume of "ideas that flow like rivers, from the south to the north, and transform themselves in tributaries and great waves of thought" (Cusicanqui, 2018, p. 63, our translation). In other words, the denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever is not a problem unique to the region, to be addressed by Latin American researchers from a South-North theoretical-methodological perspective. Transmodernity, in the colonial matrix operating in the North and the South, regulates the conformist pattern of plurality in MOS and BH that allows and restricts resistance on a global scale. This regulation should position the region in an unprecedented historical business narrative in MOS and BH that should be, from now on, plural and transmodern.

EXPLORING THE DENIAL OF LATIN AMERICA IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF UNILEVER

The historiographic practices carried out in this study revealed surprising, irritating, and sensitive findings. It was possible to identify another history that confirms the radicalization of the North-South binarism. Unilever's subsidiary website in Brazil did not mention Latin America as part of the company's historiography. The menu "company history" shows only the Anglo-Dutch Eurocentric history, which is a pattern observed in other subsidiaries in different countries of the region[7]. The statements of the company's executives fueled our irritation with the denial of the organization's history in Latin America. According to Fernando Fernandez, president of Unilever Latin America, "we invest 3% to 4% of sales in the renovation of productive assets to improve efficiency and productivity in one of the most important operations of the company. And we are the largest investors in advertising in the country and the region"[8]. Paul Polman, former global CEO (2009 to 2018, followed by Alan Jope, the current CEO), mentioned in a statement published in the company's financial reports: "we present good overall performance despite the severe economic disruptions, particularly in India and Brazil, two of our biggest markets." [9] In that report, Unilever registered record total revenues of EUR 52.71 billion and a net income of EUR 5.18 billion, an increase in the overall result of 5.6%, against 6.5% increase observed in emerging markets (comparing the years 2015 and 2016). Three years earlier, in the 2013 financial report, Paul Polman declared: "Latin America continues to be the main source of growth and profit for the company."[10] The continued relevance of Latin America in the company results contrasted with the complete denial of the region in the historiography of Unilever, which is legitimized by the Euro-British historical turn.

Among the many works produced by Anglo-Dutch authors, this article cites three major studies responsible for Unilever's historiography, all of which were produced in the Anglo-sphere by Anglo-American authors. The most recent is the study by Geoffrey Jones (2005), "Renewing Unilever. transformation and tradition." The historiography focuses on endogenous aspects of the corporation in the post-World War I period, contributing to silence the literature describing Unilever as an

[7] Retrieved from https://www.unilever.com.mx/about/who-we-are/our-history/1940-1949.html
[8] Retrieved from https://www.istoedinheiro.com.br/a-recuperacao-esta-um-pouco-mais-lenta-do-que-nos-esperavamos/
[9] Retrieved from http://www.valor.com.br/empresas/4848232/lucro-sobe-e-receita-encolhe-na-unilever-em-2016
[10] Retrieved from http://www.valor.com.br/empresas/3315462/faturamento-da-unilever-cai-65-no-3

imperial corporation (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1995). The author is a professor at Harvard Business School (HBS) and, at the time of publication of the book, he thanks, among several colleagues and collaborators, Alfred D. Chandler Jr., heir of the Du Pont family and main theorist in the field of strategic management.

The second study is "Unilever overseas: the anatomy of a multinational (1895-1965)," published in 1978 by the prominent historian DH Fieldhouse, professor of imperial and naval history at the University of Cambridge. Finally, the most emblematic and extensive work, called "monumental" by business historians, was conducted by the historian Charles Wilson, also from Cambridge, "The history of Unilever - a study in economic growth and social change," published in 2 volumes in 1954. This study remains the most important work in BH, together with the study by R. W. Hidy and M. E. Hidy, "Pioneering in Big Business: History of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), 1882-1911," published in 1955 in the United States. Wilson published, in 1968, "Unilever 1945-1968," an extension of that first study.

In his work, Wilson (1954) used 100 of the 430 pages of volume I (Wilson, 1954, pp. 191-193 and pp. 213-312) and nearly 200 of the 450 pages of volume II (Wilson, 1954, pp. 195-372) to cover the markets in which the company operates in Europe, superficially mentioning other markets, mostly central countries, such as Japan, China, and Canada (Wilson, 1954, pp. 191-193); Australia and the US (Wilson, 1954, pp. 197-206); and China and Africa (Wilson, 1954, pp. 225-226). When the work was published in 1954, Unilever had not only acquired raw material extraction companies in Africa and Asia – which generated records and archives, therefore privileged sources for professional historians – but had also started an expansion in thriving trade in exports and in factories or trading and import companies in three countries in Europe (1903), Canada (1903), Australia (1906), and the United States (1906), in addition to the Pacific and Latin America, in Argentina (1926), Brazil (1929), Mexico (1939), and Colombia (1942)[11]. Thus, the exclusion of Latin America in this work is not justified, which, knowingly, due to the context of the editorial production, would be fundamental for the field of BH.

Years later, Fieldhouse's study (1978) should have closed this gap by "placing Unilever in the context of colonization and decolonization" (Wilkins, 1980, p. 23). However, this ambivalent BH that destabilizes and reinforces the field of "imperial history"[12] denies the work of critical authors who describe Unilever and other North Atlantic corporations as central constituents of enduring colonialist dynamics (McClintock, 1995; Rushkoff, 2009). For example, Walter Rodney, the prominent Guyana historian and activist who reestablished the dependency theory in Africa, describes Unilever as one of the main beneficiaries of epistemic-material colonial exploitation in that region (Rodney, 1973). However, working for the liberal university and having become an internal critic of the field of imperial history – specialized in rejecting, appropriating, limiting, and demeaning the dependency theory put forward by authors in Latin America (Howe, 1998) – Fieldhouse did not challenge the silence in Wilson's (1954) seminal work. Fieldhouse did not visit Unilever's subsidiaries in Latin America in the 1970s, even though he traveled to visit the company's subsidiaries in India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia during the three years he worked on this second great historiographical work about Unilever.

Although the academic interest in BH for Latin America only emerged in 1954, initially with a specific focus on commercial banks (Miller, 2008), the silence about Latin America in the historiography of Unilever is not a mere contingency of the field. It was supported by counterinsurgent and counterrevolutionary dynamics mobilized by the British post-imperialism abroad and at home (Darwin, 1988; Mockaitis, 1995). In more specific terms, we refer to the fight against dependency theories and the decolonial imaginary that emerged in Latin America in the early years of decolonization and empire in which the Cold War shifted from the East-West to the North-South axis.

[11] Argentina (1926), Colombia (1942), Chile (1962), Venezuela (1967), and Dominican Republic (1999) are examples of the company's investment phases in the region. Notwithstanding, Wilson's work published in 1954 – almost 30 years after the beginning of Unilever's operation in Latin America in 1926 – did not mention the region.

[12] Imperial history is a field of knowledge and practices created by the British imperial metropolis at the end of the nineteenth century to celebrate colonization and to deny other histories that subordinated populations lived, impacted by the colonial practices that helped the constitution of the British metropolis itself (MacKenzie, 1984). Originally used as an ideological component of the British empire, the field of imperial history was internally destabilized and reinforced – from the 1990s onwards – by three factors that drive the radicalization of coloniality and North-South binarism on a global scale. First, the emergence of subordinated and post-colonial studies in the neoliberal university of the United States is supported by North-South dynamics of silencing, appropriating, and limiting other histories. Second, the enduring influence of studies considering the neoliberal counterrevolution within the academia in the Global North. And finally, the emergence of the US-led field of the world or global history to replace the discipline of Western civilization in the curriculum of the multicultural neoliberal university (Kennedy, 2018). These inter-imperial dynamics destabilize and reinforce the imperial history and revive the North-South binarism in the Anglo-spheric world while helping to promote decolonial theorizations in the United States and Latin American countries and establishing the pattern of conformist plurality in MOS in the Global North.

The radicalization of the neo-imperial Anglo-spheric pattern of silencing is consolidated by Jones (2005), who ignores the peripherical world as a whole. The denial of Unilever's formal and documented presence in Latin America since the mid-1920s illustrates the global-scale radicalization of North-South dynamics, the appropriation-limitation of transmodern developments, and the fostering of the pattern of conformist plurality in the North.

This repeated memoricide, forgetting, or "burying in the past" the lives of others in regions of the globe considered "backward" or racialized threatening areas (Dussel, 1999) constitutes the darker side of modernity/coloniality (Mignolo, 2011). In the postmodern sense, "forgetting" is an issue situated, discursive, and naturalized as acceptable. Paul Ricoeur, who influenced Derrida and Lyotard, appropriates the short story *Funes o memoroso*, written by Jorge Luís Borges, to challenge the absolute memory that is seen as impossible and oppressive (Ricœur, 2007). Since the full memory promised by modernity is not possible in the historiographical practice, Kant's theory of modern history and Hegel's notion of "peoples without history" become contestable elements. Controlled by an enlarged minority, history becomes an unfinished discursive project of modernity (Habermas, 1987), based on the emancipatory-theoretical argument that there is no memory without forgetting. Total memory is not possible, just as history as absolute knowledge is impossible. This is the paradigm that sustains modernity. By naturalizing the memory-forgetting binarism imposed by modern history, postmodern theorizing radicalizes in the North the rejection of southern material and epistemic alternatives in an era of decolonization and neo-empire in a supposedly borderless postcolonial world of a "truncated globalization" (Amin, 2010), in which goods and capital circulate freely, but racialized/borderline/undesirable bodies do not.

Based on the limits of the memory of those who control the authority and responsibility to historicize, Euro-centered postmodern historiography transforms self-generated modernity into a self-correcting project and the neoliberal university into a simultaneously emancipatory-regulatory and exterminator-appropriating project in the South and North (Santos & Meneses, 2020). Ricoeur, the philosopher of subjectivity and the heuristic role of fiction, refers to a) memory as a practical field of selecting records to challenge modern history, b) the universalist history based on the racialist Balkanization of "peoples without history," and c) the false teleological retention of totalities, to justify the history that forgets so it does not have to problematize those exterminated/forgotten/enslaved by the colonial imagination. These limits of universalist memory are circumscribed by the colonial imagination that reinforces the darker side of history and silences subaltern histories and the decolonial imagination (Pérez, 1999). Ricoeur forgets that the contested Latin America, which has been racialized by patriarchal modernity/colonialism since 1942 (Mignolo, 2005), remains submitted to appropriation, rejection, and silencing (Dussel, 1993). In the following sections, we seek to overcome this pattern of plurality, engaging the historiography of Unilever from a transmodern perspective.

ENGAGING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF UNILEVER FROM A TRANSMODERN PERSPECTIVE

We highlight the historiographical practice in the context of imperial history led by neo-imperial Anglo-sphere in our transmodern engagement with the historiography of Unilever that aims to register the subalterns living histories others in both South and North. This ambivalent face of business history (BH) is ignored by the historic turn in MOS and decolonial critique. In the UK in the post-war period, scholars began to challenge the academic hegemony of imperial history that started in the 1920s. Led by Oxbridge historians John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, imperial history was destabilized in the 1950s by the 'history from below' movement led by E.W. Thompson and driven by non-Western intellectuals living and appropriating histories others. These historiographies are enunciated in the interstices between colonial and decolonial imaginaries in North and South. They are appropriated, limited, and classified by an expanded imperial history as "post-colonial" history, a lower category that emerged in the 1990s with the beginning of internal contestations and the radicalization of North-South binarism (Kennedy, 2018, 2015).

The BH produced in the United States, influenced by the ideology of liberal managerialism enunciated in the 1940s (Burnham, 1941), highlights the imperial face of British businesses to defend and promote the superiority of the supposedly post-imperial modern industrial corporation "made in the US" (Chandler & Mazlish, 2005). Wilson's historiography of Unilever, produced by a still pre-scientific BH (Forjaz, 2008), destabilizes and reinforces the imperial history's contested dominant position. Wilson's historiography helps to erase from collective memory Unilever's lasting past in Africa and the corresponding imperial-corporate connections with the East Indian Company and of the East Indian Company with the West India Company

in other regions, including Latin America (McLean, 2004). For the UK in particular, and for Anglo-American capitalism in general, the historiography of Unilever allows theorizing and historicizing businesses under the managerial perspective of capitalism (Chandler, 1959). This perspective erases the persistence of a) the racial-imperial capitalism in the post-war period, b) the racial-imperial corporation, and c) the extractive and racist super-exploitation *longue durée* inaugurated in 1492.

Wilson's historiography links the large modern industrial corporation "made in the US" to the UK and, to a lesser extent, Europe. At Harvard, Chandler (1962), considered the father of BH, celebrated this large modern industrial corporation as universal. By strengthening managerial capitalism, this ambivalent BH destabilizes and reinforces the enduring past of the imperial colonial enterprise, the respective systems of indirect administration that also influence the metropolitan university (Cooke, 2004), and the corresponding dynamics of privilege accumulation mobilized by the white corporation in the broader context of Euro-Anglo-American racial-imperial capitalism (Kaplan, 2003). This pro-business Anglo-American turn in the context of India's decolonization in the 1940s and 1950s occurred against a backdrop of anti-colonialism revolutions accompanied by dynamics of decolonization-recolonization and neocolonialism-socialism in Africa and Asia, and through the movement of non-aligned countries after the Bandung Conference in 1955.

Fieldhouse's (1978) careful historiographic efforts work as an internal conservative critique reinforcing the pattern of conformist plurality experienced by critical-pluralist colleagues in the North. The author's work based on liberal theories of imperialism appropriates and limits historicizations that treat colonialism as an imperial crime by denying and disqualifying dependency theories-practices that circulate in the Anglo-American world. According to the author, "most men of power and responsibility found it necessary to build formal empires because the tide of events swept them past all alternative solutions to the rapidly worsening crisis of the periphery. Colonialism was not a preference but a last resort" (Fieldhouse, 1984, p. 463).

Fieldhouse's historiography of Unilever also mobilizes Marxist historiographies supported by the Soviet Empire to consolidate the radical abasement of "emotive affirmations, and to operate without any apparent guidelines as to what constitutes historical evidence" (Howe, 1998, p. 216) attributed to a theorization of dependency that mobilized transmodern developments attacked by Eurocentrism's most convenient versions (Wasserman, 2017). The author challenges and reinforces the colonial pattern of imperial history while helping to contain solidary anti-imperialism dynamics involving insurgents in the South and dissidents in the North (Gopal, 2019). In challenging and reinforcing the hegemony of imperial history in BH, Fieldhouse emphasizes "the honesty, efficiency, and selfless concern for their subjects of most colonial administrators" (Howe, 1998, p. 214). Ignoring Latin America thus means silencing and appropriating transmodern historiographies and interconnected struggles via histories others in the colonies and the metropolis against slavery/imperialist/colonialist practices carried out by Unilever in both South and North (Jones, 1996; Konings, 1998; Udofia, 1984).

The third turn of the historiography of Unilever was led by Geoffrey Jones at Harvard, who replaced Chandler's leadership in the field of BH in the US, which was sponsored by central institutions of neo-imperial-racial capitalism disguised as "managerialist" (Allen, 2001; Harvey, 2007). Burying lasting expropriation pasts and reaffirming North-South binarism, works discussing the benefits generated by multinational corporations in postcolonial territories such as "Business imperialism and business history," written by Stuart Jones in the 1990s, were transformed into historical truth, and South-led anti-globalization movements emerged on a global scale. Quijano enunciates the decolonial historicization that describes globalization led by large Northern corporations as disguised imperialism (Quijano, 1995). In addition, the area of imperial history accommodates internal critiques that reinforce the pattern of conformist plurality (Kennedy, 2018) experienced by pluralist researchers from MOS and BH in the North.

Jones (1996, pp. 2-20) describes South Africa's history as "full of ironies since a handful of large corporations dominated South African economy." For the author, these companies are "products of apartheid, and responsible for the growth of the country's economy." The good history of BH shows that Unilever's success is not due to the super-exploitation of cheap local black labor, but to the market, to the corporation's "technical know-how or marketing skills" – in other words, "profitability does not seem to have benefited unduly from supposedly cheap black labor." Low wages do not explain the success in the country, given that a multinational company, "whose profit comes from the sale in the market where its manufacturing subsidiary is located, cannot consider low industrial wages as an asset."

Beyond Unilever, Jones examines the textile industry and other sectors of the South African economy, such as diamond mining, which became a monopoly operated by Cecil Rhodes and later by Oppenheimer. Jones reinforces Fieldhouse's counterrevolutionary historiography by arguing that "corporate imperialism was entirely beneficial to the country [...],

formed of these three ingredients, capital, skill, and entrepreneurship." Just as the historiography of Unilever ignores Latin America and "the peoples without history" living in the peripheries, the BH produced in business schools in the North, driven by conservative forces and counterrevolutionary capital, challenges the enduring imperial past. The BH denies the hyper-accumulative expropriation of periphery labor and natural resources by the large corporation as a critical factor in capitalist-imperial accumulation in an era of decolonization and imperialism.

ENGAGING BUSINESS HISTORY FROM A TRANSMODERN PERSPECTIVE

Along with the entrepreneurial history, BH was formally created at Harvard post-war as a post-imperial academic field – although its main roots are in the UK in the nineteenth century when the contested liberal imperialism considered the private factories as revolutionary materialities of the universalist liberal thought that confirmed its historical superiority (Pitts, 2009). According to the "official history," the academic institutionalization of BH occurred thanks to the pioneering actions of Gras, Donham, and Cole. The official history denies that the chair inaugurated by Gras (1927) is the component of dynamics that transform BH into a resource of the counterinsurgent strategy that reaffirms the United States as a post-colonial state that becomes the central power of post-war international liberalism, founded on a culture of racist/nationalist/imperialist conformity. Crucial marks of this ambivalence are the foundation of the Business History Society in 1926 and the launch of the Journal of Economics Business History in 1928. These events occurred in a progressive era when racial segregation and imperialism led by the white corporation became dominant characteristics of the national supremacist identity of the United States (Kaplan, 2003). BH appropriates and limits transmodern alternatives of liberation in the metropolises (Mills, 2017) and in the periphery, especially theories-practices that materialized by dependency theories lived and enunciated by a heterogeneous intersectional majority also in the United States (Marable & Hinton, 2011).

BH was formally institutionalized with Charles Wilson's "The History of Unilever" in the UK in 1954. It was a post-imperialist historical turn that destabilized and reinforced the field of imperial history. Harvard Business School helped to disseminate this post-imperial identification by associating BH with the managerial revolution, which confirms the thesis of the managerial capitalism superiority – according to Chandler, in his book "Strategy and structure," published a few years after the Cuban Revolution (1962). BH appropriates-limits histories others to challenge and deny the reestablishment of imperial history lived daily by others in academia, reinforcing the large modern corporation as a protagonist of prosperity and peace on a global scale, primarily in European countries affected by World War II (such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Portugal), Asia (especially Japan), and later in third-world countries (particularly those in Latin America).

BH emerges in a context of anti-colonialism liberation struggles in Africa and Asia interconnected with anti-imperialism movements in the United Kingdom (Gopal, 2019) and anti-discrimination and anti-racism movements in the United States, inside and outside predominantly white universities and colleges. In response to the 1955 Bandung Conference, post-imperial meetings and colloquia of the Business History Conference were held in countries that reinforced the pax Americana by local elites facing domestic and international resistance. The rise of the Black Civil Rights Movement, interconnected with anti-racism and anti-colonialism movements in the third world, boosted and driven by other solidary stories and corresponding theories-practice of liberation enunciated in the third world after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. In Latin America, driven by the threat of the expansion of communism and by nationalist military dictatorships, BH quickly reached the region's central countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela (D'Ávila & Miller, 1999).

In a transmodern dialogue with neo-Marxist theories in an era of decolonization and empire, dependency theories historicize global capitalism under a structural view. They challenge the dominant idea of a dual economy to argue that the underdevelopment of the periphery coincides with the development of the center, i.e., the thesis of the "development of underdevelopment" (Frank, 1967). Embraced by a growing majority living histories others in both South and North in an era of decolonization and empire, this and other "insurgent" theories-practices that were appropriated by the neo-Marxist theories are classified by

the changing Cold War university as atheoretical (Palma, 1978) and "essentially subversive" (Allardyce, 1990). By ignoring and diminishing these insurgent theories-practices, they are appropriated/tabulated/resignified by the theorizations of the modern world system (Wallerstein, 1974), thus preventing transmodern reappropriations by southerners living in the South and North.[13]

As a component of global history (Geyer & Bright, 1995; Mazlish, 1998), a post-Eurocentric project inaugurated by the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, which appropriates-limits other histories and destabilizes-reinforces imperial history (Berg, 2013), promoted superficial polycentric plurality based on the disuses of Braudel's theses of "temporalities" and "world-economies" in his book "The Mediterranean" (1949). This post-imperial global history project focused on "interaction among peoples of diverse cultures" (McNeill, 1998) appropriates-limits center-periphery structuralist theory to supposedly promote the post-Eurocentric replacement of the world's Eurocentric imperial history based on the South-North binarism.

In this context marked by dynamics of decolonization-recolonization in an era of decolonization and empire, researchers in the United States embrace dependency theories through a notion of radical pluralism that makes it increasingly less possible for the Cold War university to evolve into a corporate neoliberal university (Mignolo, 2003). For example, the Canadian scholar Hymer (1978) defended his doctoral dissertation in the 1960s at MIT, but only published in 1976, when decolonial movements in the predominantly white and Eurocentric university had been violently defeated by recolonization mechanisms led by the FBI. Hymer examined the internationalization of multinational corporations under an international political economy and imperialism bias. His work was followed by scholars outside the field of BH, including mainstream economists, despite being interrupted by Hymer's premature death. For example, Brewer (1993) expanded Hymer's work from the postulate resource-seeking projects, derived from John Dunning's eclectic model of determinants of international production (Dunning, 1973).

Soon after being hired by Harvard University, Chandler became the main author of BH in the 1960s and one of the founders of the strategic management area, where he theorized the growth of multinational companies strategically managed as the most important historical factor of exceptionality and economic progress of the United States. As heir to one of the most privileged and contested families in the country – the Du Pont are as powerful as the Rockefellers – Chandler helped to consolidate the areas of BH and strategic management during the Cold War, supported by an economic historicization that erases the imperial side of the big industrial and financial corporations. These epistemic artifacts of managerialism (Burham, 1941) reaffirm North-South binarism and reinforce the privileges of large corporations and their managers in the South and North (Scotte & Hart, 1991). His work precedes the silence imposed on BH and MOS with a historical-scientific idea that distinguishes the modern US corporation from the imperial corporation of the Eurocentric past. It socially and academically institutionalizes, through BH, a contested historical "truth" where "the most significant innovation in the US economy in the 1880s and the turn of the twentieth century was the creation of the large modern industrial corporation" (Chandler, 1959, p. 31). Lived by a growing majority in the Global South, the enduring imperial past ignored by BH is central to the historicization generated by dependency and liberation theorists and practitioners in Latin America (Grosfoguel, 1996). In practice, this historical truth frees the Global North from the imperial past by ignoring, appropriating, and limiting other histories lived by the majority of the population. It also appropriates and limits transmodern historicizations enunciated by African American authors in the United States (Marable & Hinton, 2011), connected to the work of other authors working at the borders of the Middle East (Edward Said), Asia (Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak), Africa (Frantz Fanon), and Latin America (Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado, and dependency theorists).

The managerial revolution historicized by Chandler influences generations of scholars and institutions in several countries. In the 1970s and 1980s, young European scholars at Harvard University, such as Leslie Hannah, Jürgen Kocka, Patrick Fridenson, and Franco Amatori, consolidated the Harvard paradigm when going back to their countries (Forjaz, 2008). In the 1990s, these scholars historicized the large corporation as a non-imperial American and European institution (business corporation) (Whittington & Mayer, 2005). In Latin America, similar initiatives were fostered by the Point Four Program launched by US President Truman, which helped finance the spread of knowledge about administration and development from the US to countries of the so-called third world during the Cold War, to contain the advance of the "evil empire." The program offered

[13] Driven by "other histories" lived in the South and North, dependency theories/practices emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America, faced strong resistance within and outside academia (Wasserman, 2014). They became partially "global" within and outside the university system in the interconnected North and South (Santos, 2018). While white supremacy helped to theorize the black power movement in the United States and thus subordinate its praxis dimension to classify it as hegemonic separatism by the Cold War university (Rooks, 2006), dependency theories were partially driven by extractivist dynamics in the South and imperial mechanisms of counterrevolutionary cooptation in the North (Sandoval, 2000). These theories were classified as another insurgent and separatist theorization from the South with imperial pretensions (Palma, 1978), thus preventing transmodern reappropriations by scholars and the majority of the population living "other histories" on a global scale.

the basis for the US post-war project of leading the expansion of imperial-racial capitalism, presented as managerial capitalism, able to capture the desire of both the North and the South for a new post-imperial era internationally and domestically.

BH conferences were then held in Rio de Janeiro – the region's intellectual capital at the time – where the "agricultural vocation" of Latin America was discussed (Dosman, 2011), adopting Rostow's (1960) perspective (which fights the socialist 'stageism' and denies the *longue durée* of coloniality experienced by the majority in the South and North in an era of decolonization and empire. These conferences gathered scholars from the conservative-racist-patriarchal business school system (Contu, 2018; Dar et al., 2020). It is a system lived by pluralist-critical colleagues and allows for internal resistance and criticism supported by the pattern of conformist plurality that denies and appropriates liberating praxis transformations that go beyond the North-South binarism mobilized by victims of history who live "other histories" interconnected in the South and the North.

Through counterrevolutionary dynamics, military dictatorships, local elites, and foreign investments help to normalize mechanisms of epistemic coloniality in BH and MOS (Ibarra-Colado, 2006) with emphasis on the role of the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller foundations in the dissemination of the *American way* for the region (Barros & Carrieri, 2013). Also, these foundations operated in the creation of business and administration schools based on decolonization-recolonization dynamics, such as Fundação Getulio Vargas (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015).

The rejection of the history of Latin America via the reaffirmation of North-South binarism reproduced by BH and MOS in an era of decolonization and empire is consolidated by radically silencing, appropriating-limiting the dependency and liberation theories and practices. This phenomenon occurs based on the contested construction of the hegemony of the Chandlerista-Schumpeterian approach of "organizational synthesis" (Galambos, 1970) in the field of management education (D'Ávila, 2008) and the institutionalization of research focusing on technical aspects and managerial innovation of the large industrial corporation (Erro, 2003; Guevara, 1996). Edith Penrose's work, "The theory of the growth of the firm" (1959), continues to guide research on economic and business history in Brazil (Pelaez, 2008). In Colombia, the 20 universities that adopt BH also use Schumpeter-Chandlerianas contents (Guevara, 1996). This pattern is observed in other third-world regions, such as South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

BRIEF ANALYSIS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Through a transmodern dialogue designed for specific historiographic study, we argue that the surprising and irritating denial of Latin America in the historiography of Unilever was co-produced by an ambivalent area of BH and by the historic turn in MOS committed to a better (imperial) future. A central issue faced by colleagues from the North who challenge American exceptionality through inter-imperial disputes in the field of history is the radicalization of North-South binarism.

From the perspective of the population majority living histories others in the South and the North, we argue that postmodern historiography and modern history supporting historicizations in MOS and BH – as opposed to American exceptionality – are, simultaneously, different and equal projects. In an era of decolonization and empire, postmodern historiography criticizes the imperial myth of history as an objective description of the past, claiming that knowing the past is an ontological impossibility (Munslow, 2012). History "is always for someone" (Jenkins, 1991, p. 17) and never comes to an end – for example, "those who only know one interpretation of the Cold War, do not know an interpretation in all of this phenomenon" (Ankersmit, 2001, p 120, our translation).

Despite representing history as 'discourse,' limited by memory and denying enduring materialities experienced by professional historians and victims of history in the South and North, Eurocentric postmodern historiography is equally "theoretical until the end" (Jenkins, 1991, p. 2). In other words, the postmodern theorization that supports the Euro-British historical turn in MOS challenges and reproduces the North-South binarism that inferiorizes peoples without history and theory and dynamics of appropriation-limitation of other southern histories lived in the South and North. By confronting and reproducing inter-imperial disputes for a better (imperial) future – intensified by the rise of a Global South with imperial intentions (Pradella & Marois, 2015; Santos & Meneses, 2020) that invades and threatens everyday life in the Global North (Duffield, 2005) – historicizations in MOS and BH challenge and reinforce, on a global scale, the radicalization of North-South binarism.

By classifying historiographies produced in the Global North as Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism that change the content of the conversation – but not the content of colonial difference (Mignolo, 2011) – the Latin American decolonial theory is critical

and reaffirms the myth of self-generated universalist modernity. It is modernity challenged by decolonial transmodernity, reinforcing the fear of the rise of the Global South with imperial intentions in the South and North, subordinating decolonial praxis tolerant to ambivalences and contradictions mobilized by the majority living interconnected 'histories others', including researchers in the North and the South who also live colonial/imperial presents (Jammulamadaka, Faria, Jack, & Ruggunan, 2021). For example, even though the decolonial critique in MOS, which advocates an alternative to MOS-driven history (Ibarra-Colado, 2006), continues to be ignored by the contested and growing field of organizational history (Durepos et al., 2020), scholars from the North have tried to challenge the radicalization of North-South binarism. They are limited by the pattern of conformist plurality "within history" through the inclusion of Latin American decolonial historiography (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015; Wanderley & Barrros, 2019; Wanderley & Faria, 2012) as postcolonial history, Southern historiography, history based on a Latin American perspective, history based on a decolonial perspective, and other denominations considered inferior, contributing to promoting a better (imperial) future within history.

While decolonial theory reveals the darker side of universalist modernity/coloniality to propose alternatives to history, Eurocentric par excellence, the transmodern vision promotes practical reappropriations of the liberating side of history. This side is ambivalent, an ambivalence that supports histories others lived in the South and the North goes beyond inter-imperial disputes for a better future. Transmodernity, or intercultural dialogue (Dussel, 2011), reappropriates its Latin American face along with the European-Eurocentric idea of modernity as an unfinished project theorized by Habermas (1987) and the liberal multiculturalism project theorized in the United States by John Rawls in "The law of people" (2014) as a "naive (or cynical) dialogue based on a non-existent symmetry between debaters" (Dussel, 2016, p. 57, our translation). In this context of inter-imperial disputes that radicalize North-South binarism and threaten the life of the majority and the planet, when we argue that there is no alternative to the southern decolonial theory, there will be no alternative to the inter-imperial theoretical disputes for a better future that subsidizes the radicalization of North-South binarism and the current imperialism-colonialism (Kennedy, 2018).

Transmodernity engaged with the majority who live histories others moves beyond the North-South binarisms, theory-practice, and lives-in-history/lives-that-are-history, elements that subsidize the surprising and irritating silence about Latin America that we observed in this research when allowing the reappropriation of theorizations and reconnection of these theorizations with plausible liberating practices mobilized daily by victims of history in the South and the North, who reconcile resistance and permanence, denunciation and alternative, subversion and conformity (Santos, 2018). Engaged with this majority and with colleagues from the North living histories others, we reaffirm our purpose to promote reappropriations of the liberating side of history in the North and the South, inside and outside academic institutions. We expect not only the academic decolonization of BH, as the title of this article suggests, but, in particular, we expect collective and solidary reappropriations of the liberating side of history, in BH and MOS, challenging the radicalization of North-South binarism and of binarism of lives-in-history/lives-that-are-history, which threaten the life of the majority of the population and the planet.

Transmodern education and research projects in BH and MOS in the South and North should promote the overcoming of the binarism lives-in-history/lives-that-are-history that are reinforced and challenged by areas of history. Inter-imperial disputes that constitute the purpose of the historiography of Unilever continue to be ignored by other areas of the historiographic field, such as business history, economic history, and the history of historiography. Together, these fields challenge and reproduce the inter-imperial history of capitalism (Panitch & Gindin, 2017), led by the colonial corporation of black slavery (Cooke, 2004), the dispossession of native territories (Barker, 2015), and white supremacy (Allen, 2001). We hope that this article helps to promote and reinforce developments focused on daily life (Ribeiro, 2018; Sandoval, 2000) that allow us "to be history," i.e., negotiating lives inside and outside history, and inside and outside academic institutions – both in the South and in the North – that also live everyday life inside and outside history.

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