

# FORUM

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## TO THINK FROM LATIN AMERICA IN DIALOGUE WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF DECOLONIAL SOCIAL STRUGGLES: EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

*Pensar desde a América Latina em diálogo com a organização das lutas sociais descoloniais: Explorando possibilidades*

*Pensar desde América Latina en diálogo con la organización de las luchas sociales descoloniales: Explorando posibilidades*

### ABSTRACT

The proposition of thinking about the Organizational Studies from Latin America (LA) is based on the acknowledgement that epistemology is political and that there exists an epistemology of domination inseparable from its material foundation. First, this essay discusses the meaning of LA, arguing that it is both a geopolitical space and a category of analysis. Then, it analyzes Organizational Studies in LA from a Brazilian perspective. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of knowledge based on a critical ethics that contributes towards making organizational processes that confront the multiple concrete expressions of coloniality visible, which is also relevant to struggling communities and collectives.

**KEYWORDS** | Latin America, social struggles, coloniality, critical ethics, Organizational Studies.

### RESUMO

A proposição sobre pensar os Estudos Organizacionais desde a América Latina (AL) tem como premissa reconhecer que a epistemologia é política e que há uma epistemologia da dominação inseparável de seu fundamento material. O texto faz uma discussão sobre o significado da AL, defendendo que ela é simultaneamente um espaço geopolítico e uma categoria de análise. Em seguida, realiza uma aproximação aos Estudos Organizacionais na AL desde o contexto brasileiro. Por fim, destaca a importância de um conhecimento fundado em uma ética crítica que contribua para tornar visíveis processos organizacionais que confrontam as múltiplas expressões concretas da colonialidade e que, ao mesmo tempo, seja relevante para as comunidades e coletivos em luta.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** | América Latina, lutas sociais, colonialidade, ética crítica, Estudos Organizacionais.

### RESUMEN

La proposición de pensar los Estudios Organizacionales desde América Latina (AL) tiene como premisa reconocer que la epistemología es política y que hay una epistemología de la dominación inseparable de su fundamento material. El texto plantea una discusión sobre el significado de AL, defendiendo que esta es simultáneamente un espacio geopolítico y una categoría de análisis. Después, realiza una aproximación a los Estudios Organizacionales en AL desde el contexto brasileño. Finalmente, destaca la importancia de un conocimiento fundado en una ética crítica con aportes para hacer visibles procesos organizacionales que confrontan las múltiples expresiones concretas de la colonialidad y que, al mismo tiempo, sea relevante para las comunidades y colectivos en lucha.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** | América Latina, luchas sociales, colonialidad, ética crítica, Estudios Organizacionales.

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## INTRODUCTION

The proposition of thinking about Organizational Studies from Latin America (LA) is inspired by the work of [Bautista \(2014\)](#). His basic premise refers to knowing ourselves considering the relationship between the facts of domination and the production of knowledge, between a form of social relation and its pertinent cognitive form, and to recognize that epistemology is political and that there is an epistemology of domination inseparable from its material fundament.

However, it is not enough to affirm LA as the locus of enunciation using the terms defined by [Mignolo \(2008\)](#) to refer mainly to geocultural and ideological spaces wherein discourses are enunciated. [Medieta \(2008\)](#) expanded this notion to indicate that the production of knowledge is always connected to a spatial imaginary that expresses its locus of enunciation and, simultaneously, projects a certain image of the planet, global space, and polis. Besides, he considered it necessary to make the relationship between reason and social structures explicit, clarifying the normative criterion and what social collectives or institutions the knowledge is produced for. In other words, making the political consequences of an epistemological project clear.

To bring these propositions to the purpose of this essay obliges us to make clear that we adopt an ethical-material principle as the normative fundament of our work as teachers and researchers as well as in our actions as political beings. In the words of [Dussel \(2001\)](#), “those who acts ethically must produce, reproduce and develop human life in community (p. 74)”, with humanity and all life on the planet as ultimate reference and therefore, with a universal claim of practical truth. This principle is developed starting from the thematic verification and elaboration of the negativity that is the fact of the “not-able-to-live of the oppressed, the exploited, the victims”, and from an interpellation for us to effectively and practically put ourselves close to them “not only in a position of observational participation [...], but as co-militants who enter in the practical horizon of the victims (material-negativity) whom we decide to serve by means of a scientific-critical research program (explanatory of the ‘causes’ of this negativity)” ([Dussel, 2001, p. 28](#)). We will return to this author and his propositions later in the essay. For now, the intention is to explain the political-ethical attitude that orients our work.

To close these introductory clarifications, it is necessary to make explicit our locus of enunciation in terms of the area of Organizational Studies (OS). Regarding this, we aim to be coherent with the ethical-material principle we adopt and with the commitments it demands. In this sense, we address as our object of studies the organizational processes of social struggles

in defense of life and ways of living in relation to nature. We defend the legitimacy of this choice and highlight the specific contributions we can make from a perspective focused on organizational phenomena. However, we do so in markedly interdisciplinary dialogues and recognize that is not easy to make it in an area increasingly dominated by management.

Thus, our reference to the production of knowledge in OS from LA implies our interest in exploring possibilities to make it in accordance with [Rauber \(2004, p. 12\)](#). According to her, the organization of organic-political processes does not overlap the subjects of the transformative action. This, besides being part of the production of plural collectives wherein the practices that confront domination and overcome alienation are formed and established. We are interested in what is happening in the reality in which we are immerse. We are convinced of the impossibility of properly understanding the plethora of organizational processes of these collectives unless we articulate the knowledge that is theoretically elaborated and the one that emerges from below and remains, most of the time, restrained to the processes and spaces of struggle ([Misoczky, Dornelas Camara & Böhm, 2017](#)).

Therefore, it calls for paying attention not only to the claims around which the struggle or the movement is organized, but also its prefigurative practices. This notion emerged in the European and North American movements for social justice of the 1960s and 1970s to describe the coherence between organization and political purposes ([Gorz, 1968; Boggs, 1977](#)). In our context, this logic was appropriated by [Tragtenberg \(1986\)](#) to address the organization of workers’ struggles and horizontal relations that negate verticalism (be it by the state, party or the union) in the socialization of the struggle and shared existence. For him, these processes oppose capitalist sociability, which is performed from top to bottom by centralized boards that alienate workers. The meaning of prefigurative refers to the possibility of, meanwhile organizing the struggle, experiencing sociabilities that are alternative to those defined and indispensable to the reproduction of the oppressed and excludent.

Now we can introduce the parts that follow. We provide a discussion on the meaning of LA, defending it is simultaneously a geopolitical space and a category of analysis. This constitutes the majority of this essay and is justified because, as we will see in the section regarding an approximation to the OS in LA, from the Brazilian context it remains a predominant tendency to speak of LA without making explicit to what we are referring to. We conclude by addressing the possibilities of studying the organization of social struggles that factually confront the colonialities of power and knowledge.

## LATIN AMERICA: GEOPOLITICAL SPACE AND CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS

According to Brandalise (2013), the enunciate LA emerged in the 19th century. It was part of the reflection of intellectuals from the region in the face of the fear of United States' imperialist expansion in the subcontinent while being reticent about the European influence. Some authors attribute the creation of the expression "Latin America" to Napoleon III in his intention to expand the French domains in the subcontinent. For Ardao (1980) and Mix Rojas (1991) however, this term stemmed from a Latin American conscience arising from the Saxon/Latin antithesis, from the perspective of a cultural and political self-identification, at the same time that was anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist (Brandalise, 2013).

The poem *Las dos Américas*, by José María Torres Caicedo (1857) indicates the intellectual atmosphere of that time. In another record, the essay *Nuestra América* by José Martí, written in 1891, affirms LA in opposition to imperialist threats. It defends the need to assume indigenous cultures as part of our roots and to organize the material and cultural life taking into consideration our own specific conditions (Rodríguez, 2016). His ideas developed based on the principle "for our life, our laws (Martí, 2010, p. 170)." The enunciate LA emerged and developed in a context of political and economic relations of domination that were not only local, but global, leading to the constitution of theoretical and practical fronts, both anti-colonial and anti-imperialist. Such processes of mutual recognition facing the empire already produced a sense of LA that expresses more than a geographical position or one or another linguistic appropriation.

This historical record shows that we cannot understand LA except in its relationship with the macro-categories of North and South (Roig, 2008) and in how they condense political, cultural, and economic elements. Thus, we cannot avoid the reference to geopolitical praxis. Regarding this, we follow the definition of León (2017), for whom in a more general and abstract sense, "geopolitics is the human capacity to intervene in the spatial and territorial orders that govern life in society (p. 14)." Still in a broad sense, "the geopolitical, in LA, is the current historically spatial praxis in its unitary form and in each of the processes it contains (p. 15)." This praxis can be methodologically separated into three dimensions that are constantly and contradictorily articulated: (i) power, (ii) knowledge, (iii) struggles and resistance.

To further this reasoning, it is necessary to introduce a definition of category. When we use this term, we refer to an ordering of the theoretical thought that arises from reality but is not to be confused with it when reconstructing it in an

abstract order. It arises from reality and not from ideas. Thus, the determination of the real are moments of existence that, abstracted in the analytical process, are expressed in definitions of abstract determinations as concepts and in instruments of interpretative mediations as categories (Dussel, 2012).

In our understanding, it is essential to articulate the geopolitical with the categorial. That is, with the treatment of LA as an interpretive mediation abstracted from reality to, returning to it, explain it. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the geopolitical and the categorial in their mutual determinations. We begin with the theme of geopolitics of power in conjunction with the geopolitics of knowledge, resuming the seminal work of Aníbal Quijano: a text originally published in 1972 in the context of celebrating 500 years of the invasion of America. In his words: "The current globalization is, in the first place, the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and Eurocentred colonial/modern capitalism as a new pattern of global power (Quijano, 2005, p. 117)." In an earlier text, Quijano (1991) had introduced the concept of coloniality to refer to the structures of control and hegemony that emerged from colonialism but are still present today. In other words, coloniality expresses the transhistorical expansion of colonial domination and its contemporary effects.

For Quijano (2005), "America was constituted as the first space/time of a new model of power of global vocation, and both in this way and by it became the first identity of modernity (p. 117)" based on two fundamental axes. One was the idea of race: "a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others (p. 117)." Based on it, the *conquistadores* classified the population of America and later, of the world. Another was the "articulation of all historically known previous structures of control of labour - slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity - together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market (p. 118)." The author uses the term America but is evidently referring to the process of Iberian invasion and colonization of Latin America and part of the Caribbean. Within this America, a whole universe of new materials and intersubjective relations was initiated. Therefore, the concept of modernity accounts for the changes in the material dimensions of social relations and for the changes that occur in all dimensions of social existence. We emphasize that in these propositions there is a connection between modernity and capitalism because capitalist determinations "required, in the same historical movement, that these social, material and intersubjective processes could not have a place except within social relations of exploitation and domination (Quijano, 2005, p. 125)."

In summary, coloniality is a neologism that gives meaning to a constitutive aspect of modernity and of its economic expression (capitalism) which cannot be thought outside the Eurocentric pattern of knowledge and its claim to universality. This contribution points in two simultaneous directions: one is analytical - the concept of coloniality opens space for “the reconstruction and restitution of silenced stories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledge and languages”; another is programmatic – it indicates the need to decolonialize power and knowledge (Mignolo, 2007, p. 451).

Enrique Dussel (2018) shares with Quijano the interpretation that modernity is born with the constitution of the tropical Atlantic as the global geopolitical axis, when simultaneous aspects of the same phenomenon originate: (a) politically - coloniality begins as a global process with the invasion of LA in 1492; (b) geopolitically - the displacement of the centrality of the Mediterranean world to the Atlantic with the rise of Spanish and Portuguese power and the displacement of the Ottoman empire; (c) economically - capitalism based on mercantilism and on the original accumulation with the exploitation of mines in LA, of tropical products, and slavery; (d) culturally - Eurocentrism turns European everyday life and all modern social sciences into a fetish; (e) anthropologically and ontologically - the instauration of the narcissistic and competitive ego of human relations of domination creates an ethics, a policy, an aesthetic, an oedipal psychoanalysis and, therefore, shapes, within its own modality, gender (as patriarchy), race (as white superiority), and other human relations of submission and exploitation; (f) cosmologically - the scientific, technological, and everyday interpretation of nature as an infinitely exploitable object as opposed to the respectful attitude of some original cultures.

According to Dussel (2018), while constructing this he asked himself about the meaning of LA. In his search for answers, he reconstructed the presence of Byzantine and Muslim traits in Iberian history. He recognized that the historical-cultural horizon of LA is related to histories, peoples, and myths excluded or made subaltern in the narratives of European modernity. That is why he proposed the interpretation of this process from the notion of 'exteriority'. However, this proved insufficient in explaining processes that not only erase cultures and histories, but also negatively impact the production and reproduction of life. The encounter with the initial propositions, in Prebisch (1950), of what would become a broad theoretical set on dependence allowed him to recognize, in addition to the cultural dimension, the fact of domination and exploitation in its economic dimension. Thus, he arrived at the fundamentals of his Philosophy of Liberation, which include cultural conditioning, but and mainly adopt “the perspective of the interests of determined classes, groups,

genders, races, etc.” (Dussel, 2018, p. 35). In this construction, exteriority acquires an expanded meaning to emphasize not only localized identities silenced or suppressed, but the concrete experience of existing as a material and living exteriority of the system. This includes the Other of capital, the living work that is exploited when sold and that, before being sold, is nothing for capital (Dussel, 2008). It is therefore a philosophy elaborated from an interpellation that comes, “sincerely and simply, from the face of the poor dominated indigenous, from the oppressed mestizo, from the Latin American people (Dussel, 1973, p. 162).” It is built in intercultural and political dialogues with peoples who also suffered the economic, political, military, and cultural power of the central hegemonic countries.

Dussel (2013) denies the possibility that the future alternative may be a non-capitalist modernity, since modernity and capitalism are two aspects of the same: “modernity is the whole, and foundation of the particular aspect in the economic field consists of the capitalist system (p. 360).” Hence the proposition of a transmodern world that includes a pluriverse episteme. Transmodernity is a project with a claim to universality that opposes capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and coloniality. It will not emerge from the same Eurocentric modernity despite being inspired by some aspects of the critical current of European modernity (Dussel, 2016).

However, this pluriverse dialogical episteme is not based on the procedural morality of discourse ethics wherein the empirical materiality of history is secondary or irrelevant. It presupposes, in addition to formal morality, an ethical-material morality that determines the criterion of universal and concrete truth: the production and reproduction of human life in community (Dussel, 2004). It is therefore a dialogue “between critical creators of their own cultures” from the exteriority that is not pure negativity, it is also a distinct positivity (Dussel, 2018, p. 59). Some Latin American indigenous cultures, for example, affirm relations of respect and belonging to nature; as well as social blocks of the oppressed, from the exteriority of capital, develop collective potencies in processes that involve critical consciousness, organization and struggle.

Thus, transmodernity as a possibility and a project emerges from both ancestral positive experiences and those generated within the colonial cultures, and from dominated and excluded groups. It emerges from the moments and processes in which collectives organized around themes of gender, race, ways of life in their relation to nature discover themselves as valuable; from memories, histories, victories, and heroes of the past; from defeats and new beginnings; from sharing advances on the various fronts of struggle to build a new pluriverse humanity,

“rich in analogical similarities and differences, which avoids the univocal uniformity of the universalization of only one culture and the irreconcilable confrontation of all against all” (Dussel, 2013, p. 165). A humanity that avoids, also and as a logical consequence of the normativity of an ethical-material principle, relativism and dialogue as a value in itself.

In summary, both Quijano and Dussel show the interdependence between the dimensions of power and knowledge. In this same sense, for Bautista (2014), thinking from LA does not mean denying the previous, it means building a categorical framework that allows “to understand the specificity of the Latin American problems of underdevelopment, dependence, oppression, colonialism, misery, ignorance, denial, suffering and exclusion.” It is about “taking the political-economic terrain as an interpellation of the reason that thinks the real and itself, but from itself” (Bautista, 2014, p. 25). It is about thinking “our own condition as peoples historically situated at a series of particular crossroads (Roig, 2008, p. 51).”

These records lead us to ask ourselves about the relationship between nations (Brazil, in our case) and LA, between the national and the Latin American. Following Roig (2008), we understand that the national does not limit us to our village or parish since when it is concretely assumed, it is the indispensable basis for the universal. The nation is, of course, synonymous with people, social classes, ethnicities, gender, youth, etc. It is from this concreteness that the struggles and social movements are organized in defence of life and ways of life in relation to nature. Therefore, dialectically and contradictorily, to define LA as a space of life and a locus of enunciation implies the elimination of some differences and the affirmation of others. The consciousness of difference is what allows us to give meaning to the different ways of being that coexist in transmodernity. However, this consciousness should not include a localist emphasis outside of history and political economy. According to Roig (1999), we can ask ourselves about the ways of objectification by which the people of the countries that make up LA organize and carry out their social life, as well as their material and symbolic culture. However, we must recognize a reality crossed by contradictions and within the framework of a Latin American history that is both shared and conflictive.

In this way, we reject a dichotomous or hierarchical relationship between the national and the Latin American. In contrast, we articulate the theme of the social thinking of national origin in the Latin American context. First, however, a clarification on the meaning of social thinking is needed. For Heredia (2010), social thinking “is linked to the more general conceptions of social matter, from the ways of apprehending

the knowledge and the norms, as well as previous concepts and boundaries that are placed on these intellectual processes, on the ideological belongings of the involved (p. 7).” Marini (1994), in turn, defines social thinking as the reflection of a society on itself, a theorization aimed at ensuring a certain order of things from a class point of view. As the economic system becomes more complex and the opposition of interests more present, the social thinking becomes contradictory, leading to the emergence of divergent currents.

Accepting these definitions of social thinking, we present, as an illustration, the contributions of two Brazilian authors who dedicated themselves to thinking about Brazil and simultaneously, LA: Manoel Bomfim and Darcy Ribeiro.

Bomfim (1993), writing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, analyzed and confronted the Eurocentric model of classification applied to Latin American societies as a condition to understand the critique that the Brazilian historiography was making of national characteristics based on the acceptance and propagation of European ideas about the region. In other words, he sought, in the European propositions about LA, the means for understanding the production of Brazilian authors about Brazil. Thus, when confronting the legitimizing discourse of European colonialist interests in Latin America, he identified biological and racist contents and identified the way in which local elites, colonial metropolises, and imperialist powers parasitized the Brazilian working classes when appropriating the wealth produced by them.

Ribeiro (2001), a better-known author, linked the possibility of an autonomous, sovereign, and independent Brazil to a project articulated with the rest of LA. In his academic and political activism, he affirmed that we Latin Americans are “peoples still struggling to make ourselves (p. 241).” Defending the existence of LA as a geopolitical reality and as an interpretive category, he recognized the differences between the Luso-American and the Hispanic-American contents. These were founded “on a small linguistic variation that is not an obstacle to communication, even though we tend to exaggerate it (Ribeiro, 1986, p. 12).” For this author, the expression AL “reaches highly significant connotations in the opposition between Anglo-Americans and Latin-Americans, who, in addition to their diverse cultural contents, contrast even more strongly in terms of socioeconomic antagonisms” (Ribeiro, 1986, p. 21).

We hope to have made it clear that the postulation of thinking from LA does not include nativist, originalist or culturalist conceptions. Rather, it postulates an ethical critique based on the original proximity to the subject who reveals the person in her reality as such and not as a mere thing for the capital. To be critical, then, is to recover the Other as distinct from the system that

reifies them. Respecting their otherness is the essence and origin of the critique, the protest and the rebellion against the current systems which are the result of institutionalization processes of domination (Dussel, 2016). It is not enough, therefore, to narrate or describe processes, histories or facts occult by official histories. It is necessary to produce knowledge so that these histories appear with their real meaning - of epistemic exclusion and domination, economic exploitation and social exclusion, massacre of peoples and destruction of nature and ways of life associated with it.

In this section, we addressed, in a relational way, the geopolitical and categorical character of LA, presenting some fundamental elements for its understanding and highlighting the dimensions of the coloniality of power and knowledge. After a digression, which is in the next section, focusing on OS in LA, we will resume the dimension of social struggles in their relationship with the coloniality of power and knowledge.

## TO THINK ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES FROM LATIN AMERICA: AN APPROACH FROM THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

In 2008, the Organization Theory Division of EnANPAD, then coordinated by Roberto Costa Fachin, organized an International Panel with the participation of Eduardo Ibarra-Colado as panelist and Maria Ceci Misoczky as debater. The title of Ibarra-Colado's presentation was a question about whether it would be possible to understand and transform OS from LA and not die in the attempt. More than 10 years hence, this question is still valid.

In his presentation, Ibarra-Colado (2008) starts by noting our inability to establish "a systematic dialogue between our own Latin American communities," highlighting "the paradox of a region that considers itself as a common area for its historical and cultural ties, but which is extremely fragmented and disconnected (p. 1)." Adding:

Our common references have not been our Latin American lands, nor have been the historical ties or shared cultural heritage, or the common problems associated with our origin as a colonized space marked by exclusion. No, our references have been Anglo-Saxon theories, their journals, their conferences and the admiration we feel for their personages and *oeuvre*; but it has also been the denied or unacknowledged intention, maybe

unconscious, to look or get to be like them, to become modern experts in "modern organizations," to talk to them about their problems as if they were ours, to discuss with them on their terms as if they were ours, to employ their theories and methods as if they were ours, to assume, following them, their own research agendas as if they were ours (Ibarra-Colado, 2008, p. 2).

As an indication of ways to overcome this situation, Ibarra-Colado (2008) proposed that we follow a triple determination: (i) that we worry "less with theory and more with reality, since reality is the source for theory production;" (ii) that we are updated "not only with the latest academic literature, but also with the problems of our communities and nations," listening not only to "those who know because they study, but to those who know because they live it;" and (iii) "to get our hands dirty with fieldwork" to feed our essays and interpretations (pp. 9-10).

In the debate, Misoczky (2008) followed the same direction, adding the institutional dimension by highlighting that, in the Brazilian field of OS, the predominant logic is the reproduction and translation of ideas out of place that is legitimized through "an institutionalized circuit that disseminates a model of dependent and subordinate relationship between our academic community and the communities of central countries (p. 2)."

Retrieving notes on comments made by the audience after the two presentations, we found that the first question was exactly whether it would be possible to speak of LA as a category of its own if it was not a creation imposed from another reality. This comment gave evidence that, at least until that moment, LA either as a category or as a geopolitical reality tended to be overlooked in its relevance. We emphasize that it is not a case of defending a single definition of LA or even opposing it to another, but of recognizing that the very existence of LA was neglected in the Brazilian context of OS.

This debate followed two years later at the Latin American-European Meeting on Organization Studies (Laemos) held in Buenos Aires in a panel organized by Miguel Imas. Possibly inspired by the debate at the EnANPAD panel, Misoczky (2010a) returned to the theme of LA as a category forged in a Latin Americanism that fought the pan-Americanist project of the then North American president James Monroe, who in 1823, famously stated, "America for the Americans." A Latin Americanism that also fought the subsequent occupation by North American troops of Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Panama. Misoczky (2010a) then made a distinction between pan-Americanism and Latin Americanism, affirming the anti-imperialist character

of the latter and ending her introduction with the statement that, “although we speak different languages, we understand each other amongst other reasons because we share the same dependent insertion in the context of international relations, as well as the same intense contradiction between abundance and material misery” (p. 4). A statement made from the audience which we again found in our records questioned whether Brazil could be considered part of LA because of the distance generated by the language.

These episodes illustrate that the theme of LA has been part of the reflections of some researchers, finding a place in academic events for over 10 years. It is also worth mentioning the year 2006 as the one in which the production of knowledge from our context of practice (Dussel & Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Misoczky, 2006) was formally added to our agenda, albeit from a culturalist approach, according to the critical interpretation of Misoczky and Dornelas Camara (2015). It is also worth mentioning a set of works that aimed at thinking LA from the perspective of management and business. Among these, we highlight the publications by Guedes and Faria (2010), Alcadipani and Reis Rosa (2011), and Alcadipani and Faria (2014).

For the sake of recognition beyond any chronological order, it is necessary to value the contribution of the *Núcleo de Estudos de Administração Brasileira* (Abrás) since 1988, coordinated by Paulo Emílio Matos Martins. Its objective is to study the “organizational space-dynamics” as a “historical, political, economic and cultural phenomenon, that is: as the locus of (re) production of the symbolic about work, its place of occurrence and its management, having as theoretical reference social thinking and interpreters of Brazil (Núcleo Abras, 2019).” This research program of more than 30 years highlights the concrete possibility of applying interpretive categories developed from our reality to the OS. Additionally, the study of Brazilian authors who do not dissociate Brazil from LA led to the initiative to organize, in partnership with other research groups from Brazil and other countries in the region (mainly from Ecuador), the *Encuentro Administración y Pensamiento Latino-Americano* held annually since 2012.

Still regarding academic events, in 2015 at the III Brazilian Congress of Organization Studies, the conference “Challenges of integrating Latin American Organization Studies” conducted by Rodrigo Muñoz Grisales and Jorge Alberto Rosas Castro took place. We registered, in the institutional dimension, the agreement in force since 2015 involving the Brazilian Society of Organization Studies (SBEO), the *Red de Postgrados de Investigación Latinos en Administración y Estudios Organizacionales* (Red Pilares), and the *Red Mexicana de Estudios Organizacionales* (Remineo).

These kind of meetings and institutional links culminated into the *Red de Estudios Organizacionales de Latinoamérica* (REOL), formalized in July 2019. Its founding letter states that in LA, OS developed in a heterogeneous and diverse way. It also indicated the necessity to critically appropriate it for the reality of our region based on our specific needs and going “beyond the simple reproduction of the *status quo* originated in other latitudes (REOL, 2019, p. 1)”. This network of networks and societies (initially including *Red Argentina de Estudios Organizacionales*, *Red de Estudios Organizacionales de Colombia*, *Red Chilena de Estudios Organizacionales - Minga*, Remineo and SBEO) elaborates, in the process of its constitution, a diagnosis and proposes challenges:

We also recognize that the pluridisciplinarity and paradigmatic plurality that characterize the field have historically been conditioned by the colonialism of knowledge [...]. Until very recently, we focused on the global North and knew little about the academic production of neighbouring countries. Often, we would meet in academic spaces offered and organized outside our region and communicate with each other through their intermediaries. Today, shoulder to shoulder, we know that the differences in our national trajectories do not constitute barriers between us, they are specific characteristics that can become contributions and possibilities to advance and reflect and that, instead of separating us, they will do nothing more than unite us (REOL, 2019, p. 2).

In this diagnosis, we find echoes of Ibarra-Colado’s words in 2008. The novelty to face the challenge that remains basically the same, even in other terms, is the process of organization based on the recognition of differences and the constitution of spaces for articulation and sharing. This is in line with the propositions of Bautista (2014) mentioned above: not to deny the previous, nor to reject theorizations or authors from the North, but to develop theories and categorical frameworks to understand our specificities.

Of course, OS is an area of plural knowledge. Within its scope we find projects with different political connotations in their respective objects of study, adopting different epistemologies and theoretical foundations. These projects include varied analytical approaches and propositions to the practice of Administration in organizations and, in times of extensive globalization, they tend to emphasize management in “its intimidating position that

presupposes epistemic superiority” at the service of projects that “involve transfers, extractions, and the development of capital, people, resources and information across borders (Davis, 2018, pp. 10-11).” We also find an internal critique of management that has become institutionalized as Critical Management Studies. However, it compromises its critical dimension due to the logical impossibility of negating its own object.

This is not the space for the already well-established discussion, from different perspectives, on the meaning of management as an instrument of practical-operational intervention imbued with an ideological dimension (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2002; Gaulejac, 2007; Klikauer, 2013; Parker, 2002; Vizeu, 2010; among others). It is only worth mentioning that a critique of management has not yet been adequately developed from a perspective of the decolonialization of power and knowledge. Doing so would imply the negation of management because it would have to be recognized that it is inherent to neoliberal modernity, being a construction that reflects the improvement of the process of real abstraction carried out at the service of the market, with its own implicit ethics based on a conception of modern and Eurocentric science and rationality; also at the service of preserving and expanding relations of power that are consolidated in the division of labour on the world stage.

As has already been widely recorded, the Brazilian critical tradition in OS (Misoczky, Flores, & Goulart, 2015; Paula, 2015; Paula, Maranhão, & Barreto, 2010) authorizes and even provokes us to go beyond a self-limited critique (Klikauer, 2015) and to value OS as a space in which, despite its growing colonization by management, there is the possibility of creating paths based on an ethical critique and also based on our own reality, taking into account the struggles against business and management technologies that negatively impact the production and reproduction of life and ways of life in relation to nature.

## THE DECOLONIAL DIMENSION IN SOCIAL STRUGGLES AND POSSIBILITIES OPENED FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES FROM LATIN AMERICA

Returning to the indications of Bautista (2014), to think from LA also implies “taking on the political-economic terrain as an interpellation of the reason that thinks the real (p. 25)” adopting categorical frameworks that allow us to understand our specificities without isolationisms. Returning to what we presented previously, we take a decolonial perspective that, based on the tradition of

Latin American social thinking, affirms that modernity begins with the invasion of America and, therefore, is inseparable from capitalism. In this sense, talking about decoloniality implies including, in addition to the epistemic dimension, the dimension of the concrete life of communities, peoples, and social collectives that have it under threat or as a practical impossibility. This choice is based on a material ethical-normative principle that forces us to abandon any position of neutrality in our area of study. It urges us to assume a critique that is made in active solidarity with those who organize and struggle against concrete expressions of the coloniality of power mediated by the coloniality of knowledge.

In addressing these organization phenomena, we adopt a definition of organization that states it as “a means to carry out liberating action through territorialized processes and practices guided by strategic-critical reason (Misoczky, 2010b, p. 50).” The term strategic-critical reason refers to one of the principles of the ethics of liberation developed by Dussel (2000) and refers to feasibility:

Who aims to implement or to transform a norm, act, institution, system of ethnicity, etc., cannot disregard the conditions of possibility for its objective, material and formal, empirical, technical, economic, political feasibility, in such a way that the act becomes possible taking into consideration the laws of nature and the human ethical requirements (p. 568).

Of course, this principle is subordinate to the human needs or the reproduction and development of life in community and to the participation of those affected by the decision making.

We understand that, as indicated by Hinkelammert (1977), the development of concepts and categories not only allows to know the new, but makes it possible to conceive other realities as possible and affirm the existence of transformative political and organizational processes. Thus, a definition of organization like the one mentioned above allows to make these processes visible respecting their own logic.

If decoloniality refers to the dissolution of structures of domination and exploitation shaped by the coloniality of power, its expression in social struggles implies the negation of oppression and the affirmation of possibilities economies for life; the production of pre-figurative indications of political and organizational processes of a pluriverse and transmodern world. Again, to think about these processes from LA does not imply a position of isolationism or the ontological privilege of our existence. It means that this is our reality and that our academic



practice gains relevance when we contribute to illuminate the understanding of what happens in our reality, remembering the indication of Ibarra-Colado (2008) about the importance of being updated with the problems of our communities and nations, and listening to those who know because they live them.

Therefore, we refer to the multiple processes organized from the will to live that confront the destitution of the Other and the destruction of nature. For example, (a) anti-extractive struggles in defence of common goods that confront transnational corporations allied with national governments and oppose management technologies that aim to destroy community ties (such as corporate social responsibility practices) by affirming their ways of life and, in many situations, ancestral values; (b) popular feminisms that, since their heterogeneity and the confrontation with modern western hegemonic feminism, “find common points in voices that speak of lives marginalized by racism, capitalism and heterosexism (Barroso, 2014, [s / p]);” and (c) the daily struggle of peoples and families for the reproduction of their lives in poor communities and even on the streets, who develop life forms and organized strategies for their survival.

Finally, we refer to dialogues with the knowledge produced from below in specific contexts in which the system and its instruments, the coloniality of power and knowledge are confronted by the social bloc of the oppressed. Based on an ethical critique of the system and its practical-operational instruments, to think in solidarity with the people-exteriority of capital in their imperative need to organize to produce and reproduce their lives in community. To think from LA, in addition to taking our real problems as a reference for the production of knowledge, it is necessary to understand the limits of the dialogues with Eurocentric epistemologies adopting a scepticism founded on the experiences and concrete lives of our peoples and communities, with their cultural, political, and economic characteristics.

We argue that this doing, which is both academic and political, explores and expands the possibilities of producing knowledge in OS going beyond the epistemological critique of the coloniality of knowledge. A knowledge that contributes to making visible organizational processes that confront, in everyday life, the multiple concrete expressions of coloniality and that, at the same time, is relevant for the communities and collectives in struggle.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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