

Local development versus neoliberal globalization project: reflecting on market-oriented cities

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The purpose of this article is to discuss what has been disseminated and reproduced as local development, seeking to understand the problems arising from this phenomenon, particularly highlighting the promotion of market-oriented cities. We question the processes of development and public policies, advancing in the debate based on Karl Polanyi's double-movement thesis duly revisited and updated historically and geographically. As contributions, we highlight the engagement with de-coloniality to treat temporal and geo-epistemic gaps of the Polanyian thesis. In addition, it is possible to identify that the Polanyian counter-movement depends on the actions of several social actors, with emphasis on societies and governments, through public policies.

Keywords: Local Development; Market-oriented Cities; Public Policy; Neoliberalism; Polanyi's Double-Movement.

Desenvolvimento local versus projeto de globalização neoliberal: refletindo sobre cidades orientadas ao mercado

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir o que vem sendo propagado e reproduzido como desenvolvimento local, procurando aproximar e compreender os problemas decorrentes desse fenômeno, sobretudo ao destacar o fomento à formação de *cidades orientadas ao mercado*. Busca-se questionar os processos de desenvolvimento e políticas públicas, avançando no debate com base na tese de duplo movimento de Karl Polanyi, devidamente revisitada e atualizada histórica e geograficamente. Como contribuição, destaca-se o engajamento na decolonialidade para tratar lacunas temporais e geoepestêmicas da tese polanyiana. Ademais, pode-se identificar que o contramovimento polanyiano de mercado depende da ação de diversos atores sociais, com destaque para sociedades e governos, por meio de políticas públicas.

Palavras-chave: desenvolvimento local; cidades orientadas ao mercado; políticas públicas; neoliberalismo; duplo movimento polanyiano.

Desarrollo local frente al proyecto de globalización neoliberal: reflexión sobre las ciudades orientadas al mercado

El propósito de este ensayo es discutir lo que ha sido propagado y reproducido como desarrollo local, con el objetivo de aproximar y comprender los problemas resultantes de este fenómeno, al destacar especialmente la promoción de la formación de ciudades orientadas al mercado. Se busca cuestionar los procesos de desarrollo y las políticas públicas, promover el debate con base en la tesis de doble movimiento de Karl Polanyi, debidamente revisada y actualizada histórica y geográficamente. Como contribuciones, se destacan el compromiso con la decolonialidad para el tratamiento de las lagunas temporales y geoepestêmicas de la tesis de Polanyi. Además, es posible identificar que el contramovimiento polanyiano de mercado depende de la acción de distintos actores sociales, con énfasis en las sociedades y gobiernos, a través de políticas públicas.

Palabras clave: desarrollo local; ciudades orientadas al mercado; políticas públicas; neoliberalismo; doble movimiento polanyiano.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advance of the process of industrialization and social commodification, especially under the aegis of neoliberal globalization project, has created an illusory image of the development concept, associated primarily with the strong reputation of social improvement through the generation of decent jobs and income. In this paper, as in Harvey (2007) and Litonjua (2010), the idea of the neoliberal globalization project is understood from its neoliberal ideology and its global reach and implications. This logic promotes political, economic and social transformations, especially in peripheral and semiperipheral countries, from the neocolonial processes that overlap the sovereignty of these governments.

The opening and expansion of the labor market, through the processes of industrialization, promoted the mass migration of workers to “opportunity centers”, not only based on the logic of maintaining subsistence, but also the strong expectation of improving life through work. The whole process of social attraction and consequent migration of labor towards the opportunity centers, especially those anchored to large corporations, reproduces the assumptions of Eurocentric modernity and therefore strongly encourages the corporatization process of cities on a global scale, in counterpoint to the possibility of social politicization (Springer, 2011; Abdalla, 2014; Abdalla & Faria, 2014; Akçalı & Korkut, 2015).

This dynamic of marked expansion and creation of urban spaces, through the commodification of work processes - one of Polanyi’s fictitious commodities (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]) - and corporatization of cities required the conception of fields of thought focused on understanding these phenomena. The field of economics, particularly its mainstream variety, under a traditional (and colonialist) global perspective, historically neglected regionalization and location characteristics of what is being treated as development (Fujita, Krugman, & Venables, 1999; Ferreira, 2012; Hall, 2012). This diversity of studies, especially when directed at a location and driven by the neoliberal logic, through the local development idea, has been guided specifically to analyze and answer questions such as: *How can the establishment of company “x” promote growth and development of city “y”? What benefits has the arrival of company “x” brought to city “y”?* (e.g., Alvarenga, Matos, Machado, Sobreira, & Matos, 2013; Bagautdinova, Gafurov, Kalenskaya, & Novenkova, 2012; Chatterji, Glaeser, & Kerr, 2014; Dias, 2013; Paparounas, 2017; Silva, 2012). This suggests that a significant part of research interest has been oriented toward analysis and understanding of what is called by economists the positive externalities generated by the seductive process of corporatization of cities, while less importance is being given to social and geopolitical issues resulting from this process and its genesis.

In view of this, it is arguable that the attractive fallacy of job and income creation, as well as the idea of increasing urban infrastructure through public policies that attract companies to the poorest regions, has overshadowed the asymmetry of benefits provided by this model of imperialistic territorial expansion, which invariably favors large corporations, especially those from hegemonic nations, to the detriment of companies that support them (Austine, Sunday, & Raymond, 2014; Balasubramanyam, 2015; Gilmartin, 2009; Jegede, Joshua, & Olorunyomi, 2012; M. Santos, 2000). This panorama reveals the occurrence of a reality, placed at the margin of the development phenomenon (local and regional) and of ample, concentrated and disordered population growth around these “opportunity centers”. This reality, according to Harvey (2007, p. 171), triggers the formation of locations where everything proliferates, “[...] from gangs and criminal cartels, narco-trafficking networks, mini mafias and favela

bosses, through community, grassroots and non-governmental organizations, to secular cults and religious sects.” According to the author, these alternative social conformations serve to fill the gaps left by the state and other institutions.

When directing efforts toward theorization, specifically the social problems arising from this panorama, it is possible to see first that this framework of social marginalization, produced by corporatization of cities, is a recent phenomenon and exclusively belongs to the peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, Bresciani (1984) reports a similar situation of strong social degradation surrounding the “opportunity centers” created in the cities of London and Paris in the nineteenth century, the result of an uncritical effort for modernity and developmentalism, which over the years exclusively favored the elites and the market. Aligned with identification and critique of the ills produced by wholesale commodification of everything, Karl Polanyi, in his seminal work *The Great Transformation*, describes with prescience the social problems experienced in England during the Industrial Revolution, “a veritable abyss of human degradation”:

“Before the process had advanced very far, the laboring people had been crowded together in new places of desolation, the so-called industrial towns of England; the country folk had been dehumanized into slum dwellers; the family was on the road to perdition; and large parts of the country were rapidly disappearing under the slack and scrap heaps vomited forth from the ‘satanic mills.’” (Polanyi, 2001 [1944], p. 39).

The local and regional development promise, sustained not only by companies intending to obtain benefits by settling in a particular area (e.g., tax and political benefits), but also *commodified* by the executive and legislative branches, as alternatives for growth and income generation, has obfuscated the historical social problems highlighted by Polanyi (2001 [1944]), resulting from the economic order oriented to the market. This combination of misguided public policies, fomented by the neoliberal globalization project, has produced a phenomenon that we call *market oriented cities*. In other words, one can understand it as the formation of large structures and social conglomerates, defined (but not circumscribed) by a given geographical area, designed to (and based on) *commodification* processes, mainly guided by the neoliberal perspective. From this, as put by Karl Polanyi, we argue in this theoretical essay that belief in the market as the driver of society is a mistake, resulting in numerous social problems, like disordered population density and the process of gentrification. In this sense, the main objective of this paper is to discuss what is being propagated and reproduced as local development, seeking to understand the problems arising from this phenomenon, particularly highlighting the promotion of market oriented cities, from wrong public policies.

To better organize the arguments and reflections, this theoretical essay is divided into five sections including this introduction. In the next topic we discuss the way in which the study of local development has been approached by researchers, powerful business groups, politicians and international institutions like the World Bank and IMF, to justify the expansion of the neoliberal globalization project. From this, we question the concept of “development”, as it has been theorized, suggesting that this process is responsible for *developing* and specifically expanding social

asymmetries. In the third section, we hark back to the double movement thesis of Karl Polanyi, to deal with the identified problems. In the fourth part, from a decolonial and transmodern perspective, we highlight the possibility of addressing the problems inherent to the market oriented cities that result from thoughtless local development, through a counter-movement of various social actors. Finally, in the fifth part we provide some final considerations and reiterate the contributions of this theoretical essay.

2. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A MASK FOR EXPANSION OF NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION PROJECT

Essentially, the concept of local development presents a proposal that outwardly is engaged with social improvements, by means of endogenous growth. This matter is clarified by Coffey and Polèse (1984). The authors point out that the idea of local development is supported by a form of delimited development in which endogenous elements are central. Cunha and Cunha (2005), in the same line, suggest that local development is guided by a combination of mutually reinforcing concepts associated with evolution, inclusion, participation, solidarity and production, directly opposing concentration, competition, exclusion, poverty, inequalities, and other problems. In addition, Fischer (2012) systematizes these ideas by arguing that local development processes are mobilized by interorganizations, in other words, by the connection of different organizations operating for the same purpose.

The idea of regional endogenous growth proposed by Coffey and Polèse (1984), and followed by other authors (p. ex., Mello, Dorion, & Herédia, 2018; Sedita, De Noni, & Pilotti, 2017), suggests that local entrepreneurship can act as a driver of the development of regions from within. However, this apparently less commodified, less neoliberal, less colonialist and more community-oriented logic has been supplanted by the addition of the local development idea, attracting large transnational companies and foreign investment (Bastos, 2006; Campans, 2000; Chatterji et al., 2014), camouflaging the advance of the neoliberal order through stimulation of globalization and the subsequent processes of domination and colonialism (Abreu, 2014; Escobar, 2001; Giddens, 1994; Oliveira, 2002; B. S. Santos, 2006; M. Santos, 2000).

It is important to clarify, before embarking on the debate proper, that the observations and the consequent position we take do not represent the adoption of an anti-developmental and anti-industrialization stance. Rather, our position recognizes the problems caused by neoliberalism and market-based social development, and is strongly opposed to this asymmetric and colonialist logic. As advocated by Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, maintaining a market-based perspective will lead to the perpetuation of the problems of Western industrial societies (Ramos, 1981). It is necessary and urgent for industrialization and development efforts to be preceded and monitored through intense reflection, so that society and governments, not the free market, operates as the backbone. Based on this alternative, society as a whole can truly benefit from development, unlike the current state of affairs in which the neoliberal hegemony accentuates social differences each day. Never in economic history has humanity witnessed such asymmetry between the richest and the poorest, and worse still, the prognoses are for accentuation of these differences (Giffin, 2007; Piketty, 2014). Therefore, it is important to examine the occurrence of disparities between and within nations.

The process of asymmetry between nations was carefully studied and described by the Brazilian economist Celso Furtado, who confronted and deconstructed the idea that underdevelopment was a pre-development stage. In fact, both are part of the same cyclical structural phenomenon, based on the capitalist system, in which underdeveloped nations remain at a constant disadvantage vis-a-vis developed nations, especially through the process of indirect industrialization (Furtado, 1961; Tenório & Wanderley, 2018). The process of asymmetry between nations was also widely discussed by Harvey (2006, 2007, 2012, 2013), in pointing out that throughout history, hegemonic nations have systematically enriched and sustained themselves through direct exploitation of colonized nations, either through the process of plundering natural resources or directly exploiting the labor of subordinate countries through neocolonialism.

The second case is of particular interest here, as it relates directly to the creation of the supposed “opportunity centers”, each time a major multinational corporation, especially coming from hegemonic nations, decides to settle in a backward nation under the neocolonial rationale. The stark process of exploitation, under the cloak of generating development and income, greatly amplifies the enrichment of a small elite at the expense of a mass of excluded, who are deceptively attracted to this labor market. The suffering of this multitude of the socially invisible has worsened with the advance of disordered population density due to the market oriented cities model. All these dynamics, specific to modernity, are imposed by the neoliberal globalization project, and strongly promoted by institutions like the World Bank, WTO and IMF, in order to maintain the status quo. Exacerbating this situation of domination and asymmetry between nations, now China’s and India’s economic growth is reproducing neocolonialism, through exploitation of cheap labor in Africa by Chinese and Indian industries (Balasubramanyam, 2015), a kind of “internal” neocolonialism among the BRICS.

Within nations, it is possible to note asymmetries between organizations (and also between regions) and between individuals. In all cases, competition seems to be the gist of the problem. The first case results from the Darwinian processes of competition between companies, which often result in the generation of monopolies and oligopolies, since companies that are (politically) stronger tend to expunge (or absorb) the weaker and less prepared companies in the *free market* (Guerreiro Ramos, 1981; Harvey, 2007). It is also necessary to highlight the competitive process mobilized by underdevelopment regions to attract companies, especially through public policies that mostly benefit large corporations at the expense of public revenue — e.g., fiscal warfare through tax exemptions between jurisdictions (M. Santos, 2000).

The business monopolization amplifies the exploitation process and also the population density, as companies, organizations and people, out of economic and geopolitical considerations, tend to concentrate in geographic proximity. This concentration of businesses and people, in addition to the natural attraction of local workers, promotes influx of migratory labor, resulting in a strong gentrification dynamic (Akçali & Korkut, 2015; Janoschka, Sequera, & Salinas, 2014), which triggers, among other ills, real estate speculation, directly affecting the poorest sections of the population. In light of such situations, it is hard to understand how the hegemonic discourse continues to propagate ideas like those proposed by Hayek, von Mises and Friedman, that everyone can gain from the *liberty* engendered by the free market (Porter, 2008; Porter & Kramer, 2006). This kind of competition for

monopoly also accentuates unemployment and therefore poverty and social problems arising from it, as organizations tend to streamline their work processes in favor of expanding profitability by minimizing costs.

The level of disparities between individuals, competition and its results are even more problematic. No doubt there are individuals who benefit from the neoliberal project and the Darwinian model of competition - a tiny portion of society - but there is a huge and growing population exposed to impoverishment and misery. To have an idea of the size of these social differences, especially in the United States, "in 2005 income of the CEOs of major companies represented 262 times the salary of the average worker, compared to 24 times higher in 1965" (Giffin, 2007, p. 1494). The worst part of this growing asymmetry is that personal failures are invariably attributed to individual traits, so that the victims of the neoliberal globalization project are blamed for such failures (Fligstein, 2014; Harvey, 2007; Piketty, 2014), being labeled as incompetent, inept, lazy or disinterested.

In view of the above, it is possible to suggest that the neoliberal logic, which aims to promote an infinite accumulation process, specifically by a minority, has caused the disordered growth regions around the commodification of labor. According to Davis (2004), the inability of the state to create jobs, by public policies, favors migration flows and therefore the agglomeration of people around towns, cities or regions oriented to the market. For the author, the result of this process of urbanization of poverty, which began with the neoliberal dynamics of housing privatization proposed by Margaret Thatcher, is the extraordinary proliferation of slums in the world. The British model of privatization of public housing initially enabled the lower classes could achieve the "dream" of owning their own homes rather than paying rent. However, real estate speculation, the result of gentrification, was relentless, making the prices of housing located close to central London prohibitively high, and the poor were summarily expelled to the peripheral regions, giving way to gentrified urban centers (Harvey, 2006, 2012) under the market oriented city logic. This context of social marginalization, imposed by the neoliberal logic (Harvey, 2007) and by the imperialist expansion model, reflects some of the problems of "local development", as has been advocated by many researchers, by powerful business groups, politicians (especially through opportunistic electioneering, evident in peripheral and semi-peripheral regions) and international institutions strongly oriented towards maintaining the status quo, such as the World Bank, the WTO and the IMF. This reality is much closer to a mask to hide the neoliberal globalization project expansion, than local development per se, in the sense (relatively naive and romantic) of Coffey and Pòlese (1984).

The Brazilian geographer Milton Santos drew attention to the problem of companies that are presented as altruistic entities, local saviors, highlighted by their enormous capacity to solve social problems in towns through insertion and subsequent local development (Santos, 2000). The situation reinforces Harvey's (2007) observation of asymmetries between nations, as hegemonic countries intensively exploit peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, under a claim of altruism, such as the American and European holdings in Latin America, Asia and Africa, in addition to the recent reproduction of Eurocentric colonialism through the exploitation of African workers by Chinese and Indian companies (Balasubramanyam, 2015). Milton Santos points out also that the aura of benevolence established by companies has produced the belief in their indispensability, as a result promoting battles between local governments to attract corporate investments, and leaving

local governments open to blackmail, as companies “[...] threaten to leave if their demands are not satisfied” (Santos, 2000, p. 34). This picture is highly favorable to the neoliberal globalization project, by weakening and subordinating the state to the *marketcentric* approach, stimulating the expansion of *laissez-faire*. The situation is contrary to that advocated by Celso Furtado, when he defended the relevance of the State (not the market) as the main inductor of development processes, deconstructing the capacity for self-induction and self-regulation of the market (Furtado, 1961; Wanderley, 2015).

On the other hand, this scenario is immensely harmful to the inhabitants of those market oriented cities, as the state gradually abandons its paternalistic role, transferring it to companies through their corporate social responsibility programs (CSR). Under this logic, again relying on the words of geographer Milton Santos: “[...] if the state cannot be supportive and the company cannot be altruistic, society as a whole has nothing to rely on” (Santos, 2000, p. 33). Especially in times of economic instability, both corporate employees and society in general are penalized by the neoliberal globalization project. While workers suffer all sorts of problems such as massive layoffs, expanding pressure for productivity, adoption of working time reduction schemes (and consequent wage reduction) and other “strategies” that call into question the stability and dignity of the average worker, society as a whole suffers from cutbacks in spending on social programs in times of crisis. Numerous examples of this problem can be seen from the economic crisis of 2008 in the United States, Portugal, Spain, Greece, throughout Latin America and in several other parts of the world. In view of this, we try, in the next section to confront the neoliberal globalization project, supported by the reflected and decolonized use of Karl Polanyi’s thesis of double movement.

3. THE NEED FOR A REFLECTED POLANYIAN COUNTER-MOVEMENT

The imposition of the neoliberal globalization project, particularly through the conception of market oriented cities, encouraged us to call on Karl Polanyi’s studies as a way of confronting this situation of domination. Since the 1940s, he has warned of the problems arising from a *marketcentric* society. Among several proposals of Polanyi, we place special emphasis on the double movement thesis. In this theory, Polanyi (2001 [1944]) proposed that the quest for autonomy and deregulation of the market is harmful to society, treated by him as the market ‘movement’. This ‘movement’, analogous to a vector point against society, causes a proportional process of stress that can reach the breaking point, leading to social disintegration. The opposite movement (or ‘counter-movement’), can be put as analogous to an opposite vector, and is a reaction mechanism for social self-protection.

The work of Polanyi presents an alternative to the liberalism, challenging it head-on. To develop critical and theoretical propositions, Polanyi relies heavily on two major paradigms - the historical and economic. Polanyi develops a scathing critique of liberalism, using as argument historical accounts of societies that, while practicing trade (or exchange), were imprisoned by free market forces. Although criticizing the concept of the market, it can be seen that his theorizing is directly aligned with the central economic discourse, when he mentions that “two market elements should be considered specific, namely the supplier groups and demanding groups [...]” (Polanyi, 2012a, p. 325).

Furtado (1961) evolved the debate from the confrontation of the dichotomy between development and underdevelopment, arguing that the free market was a great misconception and perhaps one of the great responsible for the underdevelopment condition of some nations, like Brazil. For the author, the State needs to act in favor of society, not in favor of the market (Furtado, 1974; Wanderley, 2015).

Moving forward on the ideas of Karl Polanyi, the Brazilian sociologist Alberto Guerreiro Ramos vehemently criticized the condition of a market-centered society, classifying the phenomenon as a behaviorist syndrome. According to the author, the “pathology” causes the economic paradigm, and hence the “free market” laws, to dominate the modus operandi of individuals and societies, causing them to adopt these concepts for the most varied situations of the life. Alternatively, Ramos (1981) proposes that the para-economic paradigm is an important outlet for the marketcentrism, since society is made up of several enclaves, of which the market is only one more. In this way, Alberto Guerreiro Ramos reiterates that the market-centric logic is a big misconception.

Later, although also tied to the hegemonic economic assumptions, Neil Fligstein describes the market as a phenomenon embedded in society and, like Furtado (1961, 1974) and Ramos (1981), describes the existence and relationship of numerous other actors and forces operating in the market (Fligstein, 1996, 2001; Fligstein & Dauter, 2007; Fligstein & Freeland, 1995; Fligstein & Habinek, 2014; Fligstein & Sweet, 2002). In his strong desire to oppose the “*marketcentric*” model of society, Polanyi presents concepts and examples of societies disconnected from the contemporary market configuration and additionally does not advance the proposition of elements such as the politics, sociology and geography of markets, while recognizing and proposing there is more to explore in these issues, thus leaving some important gaps to be filled (e.g., Polanyi, 2012a, p. 329).

As a way to move forward in tackling the proposed problem and expanding the contributions of this study, we feel compelled to address two gaps identified in Polanyi’s thesis. In the first gap, it is worth mentioning the double movement thesis. In it, Polanyi (2001 [1944]) develops an important argument by proposing the search for social support, but as asked by Munck (2004) and Dale (2013, p. 31), there is a lack of mediation and clarity about the counter-movement, since the author does not define “[...] precisely who would act spontaneously against the unregulated and rootless market system and why?” Subjacently, Polanyi (2001 [1944]) suggests that society itself fulfills that role, referring to the process of self-protection, a kind of social turnaround. However, there is no clarity in the proposal. Perhaps this suggestion was resulted from focusing on criticism of the liberal market, seen as the only alternative market (as opposed to his advocacy of cooperatives and other forms of relationships not necessarily economic and financial).

While we agree with the idea that the neoliberal market is problematic for society (see, e.g., Harvey, 2007, 2013), a market-society modeling can seem somewhat incomplete, to the extent one assumes that the market is just one of many social enclaves (Ramos, 1981). In other words, we can assume that market is permeated by society and vice versa (e.g., Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein & Dauter, 2007; Fligstein & Habinek, 2014), making it impossible to operationalize these elements purely as opposing forces. Vadell and Carvalho (2014, p. 87) reinforce the argument by bringing together the theorizing of Polanyi and Gramsci, claiming that “[...] in the field of civil society, the relations between society

and market are restored in the search for a new form of capitalism, now incorporated into society.” Therefore, we propose that the dynamics of the counter-movement do not occur in binary and simplified form, but in a complex, multifaceted and multipolarized way through various actors and geopoliticized relations.

A second point to consider in the theory of Polanyi is not necessarily a gap, but rather a problem of geopolitical origin and its respective positioning. The issue concerns the geography of knowledge in which Polanyi produces this thinking and the temporality of this knowledge produced, since “[...] remember that Karl Polanyi observed a society undergoing transformations that differ from those faced today” (Vadell & Carvalho, 2014, p. 85). Apparently his Eurocentric perspective hindered the adoption of cosmopolitan and pluriversal views, enabling dialog relations with other contexts (Abdalla, 2014). A good example of this can be portrayed in the passage in which Polanyi (2012b, p. 253), based on a Western historical perspective, argues that “one of the first markets urban markets or fairs, if not the first of all, was none other than the agora of Athens.” Well, what about the Chinese, the Arabs, the Moors and the whole East in his (a-geo-) history? Haesbaert and Porto-Gonçalves (2006, p. 18), criticize the maxim that Europe is the cradle of knowledge. For them “[...] the entire legacy that Europeans consider their own, such as the tradition of Greek philosophy, came to them at the hands of the Arabs, mainly through the Iberian Peninsula, with the Moorish presence.”

It is important to emphasize the relevance of Polanyi’s work for the social sciences as a whole, but it is also necessary to contribute improvements to this line of thought, in order to adapt and to respect geographic bias of this knowledge based on the studied phenomenon. Under this logic, we embrace the decolonial option (Abdalla & Faria, 2017; Escobar, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2008, 2012; Lander, 2000; Mignolo, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014; Wanderley & Faria, 2012) and transmodern perspective (Bragato & Castilho, 2012; Dussel, 2005, 2013) as a way to deal with the multipolar character, especially the various sites subject to unthinking development and the consequent emergence of market oriented cities. This perspective prevents reproducing mistaken understandings of the coloniality of knowledge, since phenomena of the South are analyzed from the South itself, but in theoretical logic that is cross-bordered and cosmopolitan, which does not segregate or belittle knowledge from the North, but embraces it from a pluriversal perspective.

4. CHALLENGING MARKET ORIENTED CITIES: ALTERNATIVES AND POSSIBILITIES

For the Brazilian Geographer Milton Santos, social conflict is imprinted in the spatial relations of cities, denounced by economic and social inequalities, especially in underdeveloped countries. The cities allow the intersection of what he called verticalities and horizontalities. For the author, “verticalities are vectors of a superior rationality and the pragmatic discourse of the hegemonic sectors, creating an obedient and disciplined daily life”; while “horizontalities are both the place of the purpose imposed from the outside, from far and from above, and from the locally generated contrafinality” (M. Santos, 1996, p. 193). Under the line of thought proposed by Milton Santos, Harvey (2012) highlights the polarization and the asymmetry present in the distribution of wealth and power, suggesting that the phenomenon is present in spatial forms assumed by the cities

(especially those oriented to the market), through growth of slums as opposed to gated communities, and privatized public spaces kept under constant surveillance. According to the author, “the neoliberal protection of private property rights and values becomes a hegemonic form of politics, even to the lower middle class” (Harvey, 2012, p. 15).

High population density, the result of unthinking actions for “local development”, and the consequent irregular occupation process cause, in addition to the marginality already highlighted in this work, several other social problems, like precarious educational infrastructure, roads and public health, especially in cities situated in underdeveloped countries. This fragility of infrastructure caused by social abandonment and the lack of coherent public policies favors a vicious circle: the emergence of a socially unprepared generation that tends to work in low-paying and unskilled jobs, swelling the pockets of poverty, or accentuating the problems of crime, as young people are ‘delivered’ to drug trafficking (Abdalla, 2014).

We argue that among the main causes of the formation of market oriented places and market oriented cities is the unthinking and digressive dynamics of “local development”, particularly based on the neoliberal globalization project and the commodification of work processes, resulting in extensive labor migration in search of “opportunity centers”. This intense labor migration leads to irregular land occupation, generating pockets of population density and consequent urban chaos. This situation expands initially due to minimal state action and the consequent failure of the government by failing to properly plan and control the urbanization processes. Shortsighted populist electioneering attitudes help explain this scenario, where governments turn a blind eye and provide a modicum of infrastructure to locations with irregular occupation, legitimizing illegality.

However, a closer look allows understanding that the problem may be more complex than indicated. This does not necessarily just involve the legitimacy of irregular occupation, but also the reasons citizens and their families seek such apparently extreme alternatives. According to Milton Santos, the model of totalitarian capitalist rationality demonstrates its limitations when a significant portion of humanity, whether through disinterest or incapacity, is not able to obey laws and norms inherent to this model, providing “[...] the proliferation of illegal, irregular and informal” (Santos, 2000, p. 59). Unfortunately, the neoliberal globalization project confounds social perceptions, clouding the perception of the ills caused to people by accentuating social inequalities and extreme poverty. Gentrification through speculation makes the cost of real estate prohibitively high, and other problems prevent the average citizen from obtaining decent housing. As a result, the poorest strata of society are often forced to seek marginal alternatives, subject to various social problems such as crime, in addition to facing greater environmental risks (flooding, landslides, etc., due to substandard infrastructure), causing material and moral losses, sometimes irreparable, in addition to the many lives taken (Abdalla, 2014).

It is necessary to reflect on problems caused by the phenomenon of market oriented cities and the respective failings of public policy, especially originated in the unthinking dynamic of “local development”. As the market has no sense of place, while most of the benefits derived from the exploration processes are exported to hegemonic countries, the Market Oriented Cities remain socio-environmental impacts (Escobar, 2001). Without intending to be prescriptive, we argue that the development of cities could occur through centrality and social protagonism, supported by the

government, and in the final analysis, the market, reversing the current dominant order in which *marketcentrism* predominates, followed immediately by the action (sometimes timid) of the state, leaving the oppressed society for last. In this sense, public policies that would ensure better municipal management would be very welcome, as well as promotion of better social conditions, stimulated by increased job opportunities, in contrast to the current endless accumulation mechanisms fostered by the neoliberal globalization project. Tânia Fischer's propositions help to deconstruct the Market Oriented Cities model, with a focus on local empowerment, through territorial development and social protagonism, with State support (Fischer, 1992, 2012). There is no doubt that the effects of this change in perspective will occur slowly, especially for the poorest stratum of the population. However, such a change will save lives and preserve material goods, since irregular settlement and misguided urbanization often are accompanied by tragedies resulting from phenomena such as floods and other disasters. In addition, urban planning and control of population density in certain regions would help to minimize urban chaos, caused in part by the asymmetry between infrastructure supply and demand. It is unfortunate that only the positive side of local development is propagated.

Based on the observations above, it is possible to suggest that the Polanyian gap pointed out by Munck (2004) and Dale (2013) can be partially answered, as governments, especially municipal one, can operate on behalf of society, in a counter-movement to the phenomenon of market oriented cities, through public policies more favorable to multiple populations. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that these governments, guided by society (as advocated by Celso Furtado), confront the advance of neoliberal globalization project, through policies that are not typical of governments. The authorities must abandon the *laissez-faire* attitude and instead resolutely promote the welfare of society and oversee the market, materialized by companies, demanding that they seek more plural results (not just those defined by the economic-financial binomial).

Caution is needed when dealing with commodification of the impacts generated by companies in cities, as has been the case of the carbon market, which has produced new fictitious commodities in light of Polanyi's framework. On the other hand, it would be naive simply to turn our backs on the market. It is therefore of central importance to impose compensatory measures on companies, due to their environmental and social impacts on cities and their populations. Resources need to be reverted to produce social benefits for those who are affected most by business activities. To the extent that governments assume the role of overseeing these obligations, but fail to revert real benefits to society (due to corruption and/or negligence), it is possible to convert degradation into a new fictitious commodity, as alluded to by Polanyi. In unfortunate cases like this, Milton Santos pointed out that "[...] it is not that the State is absent or becomes smaller. It just overlooks the interests of the people and becomes stronger, more agile and more present in service to the dominant economy" (Santos, 2000, p. 33), especially with respect to the negotiations of compensatory funds.

It is notorious that governments of various countries (especially underdeveloped), given its institutional multiplicity and diversity of political and ideological positions taken by their members, provide poor services to social interests. This neglect can be explained by the expansion of the interests of the strongest actors, such as companies, in detriment to the aspirations and demands of society. This asymmetry is usually 'justified' by the concessions made by companies, especially in the form of power, influence, donations to political parties, and other 'means of exchange' that are part

of the lobbying game (Barley, 2010; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). This illustrates and helps explain the crushing of part of society in favor of ‘best interests’ (sic), exposing a multitude of the invisible to social vulnerability (Faria & Abdalla, 2014).

The confrontation of inefficiency and poor performance of the government and enterprises can emerge from the counter-movement of society. A counter-movement by society themselves was perhaps the great expectation of Karl Polanyi, through a major social turnaround. Based on extensive research, Abdalla (2014) identifies that, due to the processes of oppression and sub-socialization, imposed by more than five centuries of colonialism on the peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, societies of these nations have been unable to exercise this social turnaround. Currently society, government, the market and its various actors coexist in a complex multipolar structure, as a rule asymmetrical as highlighted by Guerreiro Ramos, through the so-called “enclaves” (Ramos, 1981). Part of society has played an important role, by organizing, questioning and constantly monitoring business actors and public authorities. It is highly salutary that members truly representative of society are spontaneously engaged in the process of social protection, especially defending the portion that does not have a voice, either by natural inefficiency, resulting from the subaltern (Spivak, 2010) and the poor conditions of the educational structure, or by the process of social invisibility, caused by abandonment of the State and the expansion of imbalances triggered by the neoliberal globalization project. In this sense, it is worth remembering Celso Furtado, in arguing that the state must operate in favor of society, not the market (Furtado, 1961).

In this preliminary discussion, it is possible to see that, unlike Polanyi’s thesis, different actors can operate the counter-movement to the market, challenging head-on the problems arising from neoliberal globalization project under the local development mask, confronting adversities caused by market oriented cities. Given the essentially colonialist and transmodern character of this essay, it contributes to the field by introducing a debate marginalized by the hegemonic way of thinking. Is it possible even to suggest that empirical research guided by this discussion should consider the existence of several other component actors of the counter-movement, depending specifically on the particularities of the selected knowledge locus.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We sought, from a decolonial and transmodern perspective of knowledge, to rethink the unreflective and digressive processes of “local development” as identified from these phenomena, the dark side of public policies, through the formation of market oriented cities and market oriented places. Hence, we argue that identification of the phenomenon is the first contribution of this theoretical essay. From the identification of the neoliberal globalization project and commodification of labor as the main causes of this problem, we tried to understand the results of these formations. We identified that the intense labor migration in search of employment and income causes a dynamic of irregular land occupation, generating unanticipated pockets of population density, urban sprawl, and consequent urban chaos. This entire process is aggravated by the failure of public services and infrastructure to keep pace with the growing demand from the also growing population, especially the failure of the government (mainly in underdeveloped nations), the scarcity of financial resources, by a *laissez-fair* mentality and the dominance of the ‘free market’ and the neoliberal globalization project.

We have tried to contribute not only to the academic world, but especially to the social reality, by confronting this complex and asymmetrical picture, in which large corporations, especially originating from rich and hegemonic countries under an imperialist expansion model, receive privileges at the cost of exploiting less developed regions and cheap labor. We chose the theory of double movement of Karl Polanyi, by means of counter-movement to the market, as a way to challenge the status quo. Associated with this theory and engaged with decolonial option and pluriversal transmodernity, we sought to establish two types of adaptation to Polanyi's thesis – geopolitical and temporal – since his ideas date from the 1940s.

In addition, the essay makes an important contribution by filling an important gap in the thesis of Polanyi identified by Munck (2004) and Dale (2013, p. 31), by signaling that Polanyi does not indicate “[...] specifically who would act spontaneously against the unregulated and unrooted market system, and why?” We argue that several actors can (and should) act against the free market and in favor of society, but we believe that this process is in its early stages, as it lacks broad social maturity, first demanding that the historical coloniality of knowledge, imposed for centuries on subaltern countries, be flatly challenged. While the “social turnaround” of Polanyi progresses slowly, the neoliberal globalization project moves forward with long strides, projecting a bleak outlook for those who want and believe in a pluriversal world with fewer social differences.

We argue that various social actors are potential elements of the counter-movement, to the extent they really exercise their respective roles in society. The centrality of society as the actor in the counter-movement is fundamental to this process, since it primarily promotes confronting the *marketcentric* model and therefore challenges the neoliberal globalization project, and secondly, by its own protagonism in overseeing the actions of other actors, especially the public power. By developing and promoting the participation in social governance process of society, public authorities and companies (as parts instead of centers), rather than leaving the matter to be developed exclusively by large corporations and the elites of hegemonic nations, we have the ability to contribute to building a more inclusive, pluriversal and transmodern world, as advocated by Dussel (2005, 2013), thus confronting the problem of market oriented cities. This is also an important way to confront the domination (imperialists and colonialists) imposed and promoted by neoliberalism and actors such as the World Bank, with the purported aim of democratizing, civilizing and developing locally ‘backward’ countries by imposition a supposedly globalized civil society. That appears to be the true meaning of such propagated local development, which in reality seeks to increase the wealth of the elite at the expense of exploiting the poorest regions, widening social gaps and establishing heavy dependence of cities on companies and the market.

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