

# FORUM

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## ORGANIZING ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES IN CHILE: HISTORY OF THE CREATION OF THE MINGA GROUP

*Organizando os Estudos Organizacionais no Chile: História da criação do Grupo Minga*  
*Organizando los Estudios Organizacionales en Chile: Historia de la creación del Grupo Minga*

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### ABSTRACT

This article addresses the experience, history, and particularities after the process of shaping Minga, an academic group of Organizational Studies in Chile. Following a historical-narrative methodology, a biographical account of this group is built, in which its protagonists participate as researchers and authors of the process. To analyze this story, a decolonial view is adopted, simultaneously investigating the leadership styles and the knowledge network that this experience mobilizes, paralleling the tradition of the minga chilota. The results show how the question for organizational studies in Chile coincides with a process of epistemic detachment from the global north, through which the collective and shared leadership among its members is consolidated in Minga, as well as its functioning as an inter-organizational academic network. The conclusions cover some of the learnings that the history and conformation of this group offer for other groups with similar intentions in the field of Organizational Studies in Latin America.

**KEYWORDS** | Organizational studies, Chile, decolonialism, leadership, organizational networks.

### RESUMO

Este artigo aborda a experiência, a história e as particularidades após o processo de formação do Minga, um grupo acadêmico de Estudos Organizacionais no Chile. Seguindo uma metodologia histórico-narrativa, é construído um relato biográfico desse grupo, no qual seus protagonistas participam como pesquisadores/as e autores/as do processo. Para analisar essa história, é adotada uma visão decolonial, investigando simultaneamente os estilos de liderança e a rede de conhecimento que essa experiência mobiliza, paralelamente à tradição da minga chilota. Os resultados mostram como a questão dos estudos organizacionais no Chile coincide com um processo de distanciamento epistêmico do norte global, através do qual a liderança coletiva e compartilhada entre seus membros se consolida em Minga, bem como seu funcionamento como uma rede acadêmica interorganizacional. As conclusões abrangem alguns dos aprendizados que a história e a conformação deste grupo oferecem a outros grupos com intenções semelhantes no campo dos Estudos Organizacionais na América Latina.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** | Estudos Organizacionais, Chile, decolonialismo, liderança, redes organizacionais.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda la experiencia, historia y particularidades tras el proceso de conformación de Minga, un grupo académico de Estudios Organizacionales en Chile. Siguiendo una metodología histórico-narrativa se construye un relato biográfico de este grupo, en el cual sus protagonistas participan como investigadores/as y autores/as del proceso. Para analizar este relato se adopta una mirada decolonial, indagando simultáneamente en los estilos de liderazgo y la red de conocimiento que esta experiencia moviliza, haciendo un paralelo con la tradición de la minga chilota. Los resultados muestran cómo la pregunta por los estudios organizacionales en Chile coincide con un proceso de desprendimiento epistémico del norte global, a través del cual se va consolidando en Minga el liderazgo colectivo y compartido entre sus miembros, así como su funcionamiento como una red académica interorganizacional. Las conclusiones recorren algunos de los aprendizajes que la historia y conformación de este grupo ofrecen para otros colectivos con similares intenciones en el campo de los Estudios Organizacionales en Latinoamérica.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** | Estudios Organizacionales, Chile, decolonialismo, liderazgo, redes organizacionales.

## INTRODUCTION

The question concerning Organizational Studies (OS) in Latin America is an open inquiry of extensive discussion and debate followed by an inconclusive answer. The development of OS in Latin America involves the cumbersome translations encountered in this field while considering its origin through specific epistemological and political tensions between Europe and the United States (Ascorra, Rivera-Aguilera, Mandiola, & Espejo, 2018; Gonzales-Miranda, 2014; Ibarra-Colado, 1991; Sanabria, Saavedra, & Smida, 2013). This openness has also enabled the creation of organizational ways of thinking from the margins of a pre-constituted field of study, thereby reflecting on what could become its foundations from local organizational experiences. In this context, it is especially relevant to review the Latin America praxis of OS and to consider its varied trajectories, the degrees of its legitimacy, the states of its consolidation, and the breadth of the national academic networks in this field. In the specific case of Chile, it involves examining its own understandings and stories of the organizational realm as well as analyzing what it might mean for a local community of OS to emerge as an interlocutor facing a Latin American and international dialog. Notably, the growth stage of OS in Chile is incipient, where debate and progress confront disciplinary tensions and policies closely linked to the country's recent history (Ríos, Toro, Perez-Arrau, Mandiola, & Espejo, 2018). More specifically, we could say that in Chile this field is fragmented by various standout disciplines such as administration, organizational psychology, and work sociology—with special reference to the organizational development of the 1980s. In this way, the installation of the North American business school model was not discussed within the academic community, being imposed on Chile in that particular decade. This made the incipient idea of the “organization” obsolete, replacing it with the concept of “company” to address the world of work. Thus, a single way of organizing has prevailed, in which the *why* and *what for* questions are blurred and focusing only on the *how* to meet objectives that are taken for granted (Mandiola, 2010, 2013). Today, in this scenario, there are divergent rationales and epistemologies used to approach this organizational phenomenon; however, the analysis of productive contexts, institutional interventions, and work relations are predominant. All of them additionally have repercussions in the field of organizational consultancy and subsequently concentrate a wealth of professional experiences that represent the above (Ríos et al., 2018).

Accordingly, since some of us are familiar with the multiple approaches, objects, and forms of study that characterize the heterodox field of OS in other territories, we identified the

opportunity to bring these debates to our own context. We connected the local academic community with other vocabularies and references in the organizational field. It is in this context that Chile has become the scene of three meaningful events for OS in Latin America. One of these events is the sixth Latin American and European Meeting on Organization Studies (LAEMOS). Then there is the fifth Congress of the Graduate Network of Latin Research in Management and Organizational Studies (PILARES); its abbreviation is in reference to its name in Spanish, which is *Red de Postgrados de Investigación Latinos en Administración y Estudios Organizacionales*. Finally, there were two successive meetings that took place at both events which led to the formation of the Latin American Network of Organizational Studies (REOL); its name in Spanish is *Red de Estudios Organizacionales de Latinoamérica*. These events were fertile ground for the evolution of the academic group known as Minga, the Chilean Group of Organizational Studies.

For this article, we investigated the history of Minga, which runs parallel to the organization of the above-mentioned events. We will explore the varied episodes that have marked its development from its inception to the present day. Through this exercise, we built a historical narrative that allows us to contextualize the different initiatives that have contributed to generate spaces for OS in Chile. We analyzed our own experiences as members and founding partners of Minga and exposed the collective reflections generated by narrating this story among its protagonists. In this sense, we created a narrative construction of the history of this group from three analytical axes: the decolonial outlook (Quijano, 2000), the view of their internal leadership process (Yammarino, Salas, Serban, Shirreffs, & Shuffler, 2012), and the perspective of knowledge networks (Pugh & Prusak, 2013). Each of these axes allows us to reveal valuable aspects that make our organization unique along with its forms of organizing and the way in which it has become independent from the instituted routes for the formation of academic groups.

## METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our methodological design was inspired by some of the principles that characterize historical organizational research (Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg, 2016), ascribing to a biographical and narrative perspective, in which the positions of informant, researcher, and author overlap (Busse, Ehses, & Zech, 2000). The qualitative character of this design responds to our interest in developing

an exercise of organizational reflexivity based on an investigation into the collective history of our organization. This inquiry allows us to conduct an analytical process that unfolds throughout the exercise of historical narration condensed around the three above-mentioned axes.

## History, Narrative, and Organizational Research

The process of building an organizational history involves organizing the story that is going to be told. This organization entails the choices regarding what is going to be narrated—a process in which emphasis and omissions are played out—subject to the point of view of the narrator. Likewise, the organization takes place at a point in time in which the story being told is composed and unfolded. For this reason, paying attention to the way the story and the resulting narrative is organized enables us to study the political and cultural dimensions “revealing how wider organizational issues are viewed, commented upon, and worked upon by its members” (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004, p. 114). As Czarniawska (2004) states, “what is considered a vice in science—openness to competing interpretations—is a virtue in narrative” (p. 7). This statement invites us to overcome the differentiated legitimization of science and history as forms of organizational knowledge, where the production of the latter emerges from the same narrative process in which the story has been articulated and presented in the form of literature (Coraiola, Foster & Suddaby, 2015; Czarniawska, 2000; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Adhering to these premises, we carry out a collective exercise of narrative production around the history of Minga. As witnesses, and at the same time, key informants of its history, the process of the historical narrative of Minga takes on an autobiographical tone. From this perspective, the position of those who build knowledge is not alien to the known phenomenon as native actors of the organization whose history is narrated (emic perspective). In other words, in the adopted historical perspective, those who conduct research are also the protagonists, narrators, and authors of the story that will be analyzed and where those who study the research process will collide (Musson, 2004). In this choral dimension, it is noteworthy that those who research from the historical perspective take on the role of a “fellow-traveler on the narrative” (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004, p. 115), accepting the ambiguity and contradictions within and between different stories.

In operational terms, the construction of the historical narrative of Minga was organized and based on four successive moments. The first moment was the periodization of the organization’s history based on key events recognized by all of

its members. Second, there was a distribution of the writings and narrations from these periods. This was from an agreement for a minimum of style and criteria that would encourage storytelling rather than mere reporting. Based on the resulting narratives, the narrators implemented recursive triangulation exercises. The purpose of this third moment was not to correct the narratives, the order of the events, or the accuracy of their content, but rather to delve deeper into the issues that each narrative triggered among the members in order to include these elements in new rounds of writing. Finally, the stories were re-linked to develop a transversal reading of the history of the organization.

## Three Analytical Perspectives: Decoloniality, Leadership, and Knowledge Networks

To conduct the analysis of our history, we have chosen to focus on the three axes of reflection that retrieve the most relevant discussions and ideas that have emerged from the collective process of narrative construction. They are as follows: decolonial, internal processes of leadership, and the articulation of a knowledge network. The decolonial gaze assumes that after the formal end of Western colonialism, many of its dynamics of conquest and control have continued through other forms of domination, such as the epistemic domination. The latter emphasizes how, in the name of modernity and rationality, stories have been silenced, subjectivities have been repressed, and knowledge and languages have been subalternized. In Latin America, a line of thought and activism has developed around what has been called a “decolonial turn.” In the words of Aníbal Quijano (2000), this shift proposes “epistemic detachment” as a way of changing the terms of the conversation and not just its contents. Echoing the above and looking at the organizations, Escobar (2007) argues that what is understood to be organizational, and what has been disseminated among us, is its Anglo-Saxon conception. Hence, the privilege of instrumental reason that in our latitudes—both in theory and in practice—we repeat, reproduce, import, translate, and imitate. The production of Latin American organizational knowledge is scarce and unequal in part due to the colonial way of structuring academic practice through dissemination, writing, and publishing in English. Coinciding with this idea, Eduardo Ibarra-Colado (2006), one of the most important Latin American authors in organizational theory, invites us to problematize the very concept of “organization.” He tells us that the functionalist organization does not reflect the historic evolution of peoples who have articulated themselves around community and solidarity, silencing politics in the installation of that concept. In summary, the decolonial

view is an invitation to reflect about our own realities and needs, to critically examine the concepts and practices of management and organization, and to raise and resolve them through strategies and solutions that are also our own. Notably, for example, the discussion about the prevalence of competition as an articulating element in cultures and customs that have traditionally cultivated collaboration as an organizational practice.

Another perspective that we apply to our analysis comes from the new ways of understanding and organizing leadership. Applying this view at Minga speaks not only about the uniqueness of its members, but also about the way they relate to each other in terms of common tasks and purposes. Recently, literature on leadership is increasingly giving more importance to collective processes. Groups without assigned hierarchical leadership can come to develop different forms of collective leadership. Leadership in a group can be defined as interdependent connections that ensure that leadership roles are fulfilled through influential interactions within the group (Cullen-Lester & Yammarino, 2016). These processes of influence occur among different members of the group as necessary, both to fulfill the task (task leadership) and for the good functioning of the group at a personal level (relationship leadership) (Coluccio, Adriasola, & Espejo, 2019). Yammarino et al. (2012) distinguished different types of collectivist leadership such as network leadership, complexity leadership, team leadership, shared leadership, and collective leadership. The first two types tend to consider comprehensive systems in which teams are inserted, thus they do not conform to the analysis of the case of Minga, whereas the third one focuses on the team and its formal leader and not so much on the interactions among its members. Both collective leadership, which is based on harnessing diverse knowledge and experiences to a collective resolution, and shared leadership, which is based on the adoption of the roles of both the leader and the follower at different times by different members of the team, can help in the comprehension of the processes occurring in Minga.

Finally, a third view that we will develop in the analysis consists of the knowledge networks. We believe that the origin, development, and dynamics of the functioning of Minga constitute a unique opportunity to understand the recent phenomenon of academic knowledge networks in the Latin American social and cultural context. Despite the fact that networks have been a subject of growing interest in the literature of OS, their study in the Latin American context has not been thoroughly explored, which makes it difficult to understand in this specific environment (Weersma, Fernandez, & Shintaku, 2019).

The term knowledge network has been defined as a group of people and teams that cross organizational, spatial,

and disciplinary borders; it creates and shares knowledge for the purpose of coordinating, learning, innovating, translating/adapting, and supporting its members (Pugh & Prusak, 2013). The reason for the growing importance of networks in the functioning of organizations is to improve access to opportunities in the environment, share risks, use complementary resources, and facilitate the responsiveness to changes (Jones, 2000). Moreover, networks are a way of learning in that they enable the sharing of the individual experience with the collective, thus taking advantage of the lessons learned (Cross, Parker, Prusak, & Borgatti, 2001). Finally, a network is also a powerful source of influence in a specific disciplinary field, as it informally facilitates the accessing of sources of power, which are difficult to acquire through traditional bureaucratic connections (Weersma et al., 2019). Considering that the more dynamic the knowledge environment of an organization is, the greater the tendency to form external knowledge networks (Powell & Giannella, 2010). Universities are fertile ground for inter-organizational knowledge networks to emerge, as they consist of researchers whose field of knowledge is common (Zucker, Darby, & Armstrong, 2002). As a result, Minga can be considered as an inter-organizational network of knowledge creation and development in the field of OS.

## THE STORY OF MINGA

The word *minga* refers to a practice of solidarity deployed by the members of a community for the benefit of all or some of its members. As an ancestral social practice, it still exists among the native peoples of South America, particularly in the Andean region. In the specific case of the Chiloé Archipelago, which is located in southern Chile, *minga* is a traditional collective work whose origins are traced to the Huilliche culture of the Pre-Hispanic period (Doughters, 2016). The *minga* comes into play when the volume of work—usually agricultural—exceeds the capacity of a family. This usually leads to a collaborative effort among the neighbors, who in turn are compensated with traditional food and drinks served at a party characterized by symbolism, rituals, and community ties. Similarly, when the task is of a shorter duration, the feast may be replaced by a tacit agreement of “returning the favor,” where the person benefiting from the *minga* commits to working for his or her neighbors for a period similar to the one they received. In both cases, the fundamental principle of reciprocity and the value of mutual compensation take place (Slater, 2017).

As the Chilote *minga* suggests, both reciprocity and mutual support are principles supported by neighborly relations among those who share a territory. Coincidentally, our *minga* arises from

binding university trajectories, relations of academic friendship, and field kinship. Juan Pablo Toro was Marcela Mandiola's undergraduate professor and Marcela was Nicolás Ríos González's undergraduate professor. Gregorio Perez-Arrau and Marcela met while they were finishing their doctorate degrees in England and were returning to Chile. One thing they share is that they are all familiar with the international field of OS. While Álvaro Espejo was engaged with the academics of EGOS (European Group for Organizational Studies) during his PhD endeavors, Marcela and Gregorio maintained connections with EGOS and Critical Management Studies (CMS)—with the latter being shared with Juan Pablo.

These academic links and trajectories are expressed in a view that is starting to become shared with regard to the disarticulation, isolation, and/or formation of ghettos in the field of OS in Chile. In addition, the predominance of a functionalist approach limited to the field of management is recognized which gives way to a search for inclusive heterodoxy to open spaces for new questions, focuses, alternatives, and critiques.

All of the above-mentioned subjects mature into matching projections involving the need to create, share, and articulate interdisciplinary organizational knowledge that is complex and sensitive to the Chilean context and to the evolution of its sociocultural and economic transformations. It is also a need to enrich one's own perspectives and teaching and research paths in areas such as work studies, educational organization, knowledge management, and organizational behavior.

It is these shared links, views, and projections that explain our group that has come to articulate, collaborate, and support each other in a challenge that has exceeded the individual capacities of each member. We refer to the organization, in Chile, of the sixth LAEMOS conference, the academic gathering for OS which is dependent on the European network EGOS. With a 10-year history, LAEMOS has been bringing together OS researchers from Latin America and Europe since 2006.

Initially, the contacts for organizing the conference had two independent paths. In particular, Marcela and Nicolás, during the fifth LAEMOS conference, expressed their willingness to organize the next event in Chile with EGOS. At the same time, EGOS had already made a first contact with Álvaro for the same purpose. These Chilean academics did not know each other; they had strengths to act as organizers, but they also had gaps—at individual and institutional levels—to fit the part. Thus, the idea of forming an organizing collective came up as an interesting alternative.

Organizing the conference was not only about the production of the event itself, it was also the chance to show and

develop OS in Chile. A challenge like this demanded more than two people and so a broader team was necessary. Accordingly, Marcela began to recruit other colleagues such as Paula, Juan Pablo, and Gregorio. Thus, the team already existed when the European organization gave its approval for the joint work between Álvaro and Marcela. It was comprised of people from five different universities—one of them public, and four of them private; there were three men and two women, two cities, three business schools, and two schools of psychology represented. Until that moment, it was the best bet for diversity within the Chilean academic practice interested in organizations. Nicolás—the sixth member of Minga—was added. He was the youngest and was still a graduate student and had no institutional affiliation; above all, he made (and still makes) possible the material articulation of the group. He combined production skills and group cohesion with a deep understanding of the subject matter that brought us together. The organization of the sixth LAEMOS gathering in Chile was the first collaborative work experience among these six colleagues.

## LAEMOS

The first meeting of the group took place in a pizzeria in June 2014. The objective was to get to know each other and prepare the proposal for LAEMOS, which was due soon. Nicolás wrote and shaped the initial proposal based on the issues raised at the meeting. Collaboration was the theme chosen for convening the conference, and subsequently identifying it with the concept of Minga. The general proposal was accepted but we had to solve some issues relating to our headquarters, the university that would assume the financial risks, and the scope of the central theme of the conference. Once these were resolved and we received the final response from EGOS in October 2014, the group began to meet on a regular basis until the date of the conference. Our team's first definitive action was to receive the "inspection visit" from a European delegation, and so we had to finance the travel and accommodation expenses of the three representatives of EGOS from Europe. This made us realize that our partners saw us as executors of their planning, rather than as proposers of the conference. It became visible to us that we needed to play a more proactive role in the organization in order to give agency to the Latin American voice that was supposed to be relevant for the conference. We set out to influence the development of LAEMOS through important decisions that were not exempt from complex negotiations with EGOS. For example, to announce the convening of the conference in three languages (English, Spanish,

and Portuguese) which would take into account local geopolitics, instead of communicating only in English—which had been heavily criticized. In the same spirit, we proposed to have simultaneous interpretations for the three keynote speakers, which would be available throughout the conference for any stream upon request. It was also recommended that in different streams, the works could be presented in any of the three languages while maintaining the written text and visual support in English. All of these decisions were reached by consensus at Minga meetings.

The conference was a success, and for us, it was a great challenge and learning experience. Respecting the framing, during our time at LAEMOS we managed to present several aspects that were not considered before which sought to highlight the Latin American participation offered by the conference. These proposals emerged from our group and we collectively decided to promote and defend them. Consequently, our collective perception of the group became more evident as did a form of organization that still holds today that is inspired by horizontality, transparency, and collaboration as organizational principles put into practice in relation to this event. Differentiating ourselves from our counterparts and identifying the aspects that supported that differences triggered our perception of community and with it, a collective identity of sorts that even led us to propose a relationship with the influential EGOS that would go beyond the mere organization of this particular event.

## The Continuance of Minga

The conclusion of LAEMOS was not synonymous with the dismantling of the group as we “almost naturally” decided. We had projects in common, partly because we had produced an objective that went beyond the conference; last, but not least, we also felt good about working together from the friendship and fellowship that had been generated. In particular, our immediate challenge was the dissemination and development of OS in Chile. We wanted to focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, organized collaborative work, strengthening national authorship, and seeking “forms of organization” that transcended and challenged Anglo-Saxon heritage in favor of situated knowledge and practices. Until then, Minga had only been the theme of the conference, but we discovered that we could also give this meaning to our way of working (i.e., collaborative and collective benefits) so we informally adopted the same concept as the name of our collective—and thus, Minga was born.

Far from building rules, policies, or obligations that would bring the team together, we decided to establish our existence

through conclusive activities that would keep us together and committed. These certain activities would provide us with achievements and would make the collective visible by motivating and interesting others. For this objective, we decided to continue the coordination role played by Nicolás, which was necessary for the effective functioning of the team. The main goal of the nascent Minga was its articulation as the first Chilean network of OS. To accomplish this, we defined three work strategies: to explore and build a proposal for understanding OS for Chile, to hold a national academic meeting, and to publish a special issue on OS edited for a national journal.

## First Achievements

The first of the assumed tasks was the organization of a national seminar, under the question about OS in the country. This seminar was “Organizational Studies in Chile? Opportunities, Perspectives, and Projections.” Preparing the seminar was also an opportunity for internal debate on what makes up OS, the approaches, and the current tensions between Europeans and North Americans. The calls and the debates that took place were illuminating and stimulating.

At the end of the seminar, we considered the idea of organizing a panel discussion using a methodological design adopted by the group based on the World Café. The idea was to achieve systematized and collective production by recording some of the discussions that emerged from the seminar. The guiding questions for the activity were: “What are Organizational Studies and what is their status in Chile?” and “What would be development opportunities for them from the academic field?” Approximately 20 academics from different disciplines and institutional affiliations participated in the event.

The material collected at the seminar and the discussion—as well as the reflection and debate that had been taking place within the group—stimulated the publication of a special issue on OS in a specialized journal in the country. We wanted to create a space not only to disseminate the work of Minga, but also to give rise to the conceptual and methodological diversity of the varied contributions to this field of study that have been developed in Latin America in recent years. In this way, the journal *Psicoperspectivas* agreed to publish a thematic section and a call for papers was written from a broad and pluralistic view, coherent with the diversity of organizational forms in the Latin American Global South. The section was finally published in Volume 17, Number 3, 2018, and it included 13 articles by authors from four countries in the region. Minga participated in the authorship

of the article with the piece, “Organizational studies in Chile? Between fragmentation, ambiguity, and rationalities in dispute.”

## PILARES Congress 2018

While Minga continued to work on their projects and actions according to the agreements reached as a group, Gregorio was invited to organize the fifth congress of the Graduate Network of Latin Research in Management and Organizational Studies (PILARES). The PILARES network is the primary OS meeting point in Latin America, so in this regard hosting its congress was a major challenge in terms of organization and resource mobilization. Gregorio accepted the proposal under some conditions, of which the most important one was to incorporate Nicolás into the organizing team, specifically taking on the role of general coordinator for the assemblage.

The organization was launched, but the low level of progress created evident problems in task distribution, communication, and group management style. Because of this, the organizers extended the invitation to join in the organizational tasks to the whole Minga group. Marcela joined the main organizing team, while Álvaro and Juan Pablo took on functions in the scientific committee. The local organization of the PILARES congress then adopted a management and leadership style similar to that of LAEMOS—influenced by the Minga group—taking advantage of previous learning. Among the most significant changes were the collective and consensual decision-making (never by a simple majority), and ad hoc as well as rotating leadership according to the circumstances. This was in addition to a style of direct and horizontal communication focused on the task; the recording of agreements on record ordered systematically, and a consensual, transparent, and orderly financial control with austere and responsible resource allocation. Accordingly, the fifth PILARES event was overwhelming

Additionally, during the development of the PILARES congress, at a workshop, Minga managed to bring together representatives of the national networks of OS with the longest trajectory and consolidation of Latin America. This was a key milestone for the subsequent formal creation of REOL on July 16, 2019 in Colombia.

## Minga Today

Minga is currently in the process of expanding, and it is clear that in the end it will only be able to consolidate itself if it transcends

the work of those who make it up today. For this reason, in April 2019 we performed the first open meeting to join the group; to date we have carried out two assemblies with more than 20 participants each. The first round of objectives proposed for this new stage are to create a roster of academics and specialists to share academic events, publications, and a variety of invitations; and give way to more ambitious objectives such as holding its own academic event, publishing books, joint research mechanisms, and the creations of a means of publication exclusively focusing on OS.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

A first step in this analysis is to reflect on the name chosen for our organization. Why call an OS group Minga? The term Minga was spontaneously suggested during a creative moment at the organizing committee for the LAEMOS 2016 conference. Once the conference was over, this name was selected by consensus as the one that would represent the group during its next activities. The reasons for this choice were diverse with the first being that it represented the collective work of academics from different universities in favor of a common cause, making a parallel with the objective of the Minga of Chiloé. Second, it was chosen because Minga was close to the values of cooperation, solidarity, and the common good that were present in this group as opposed to the imperative of individuality and the acute competition that dominates the current Chilean organizational environment. Third, the choice is because the term *minga* carries in itself a local, critical, and decolonial view of our work. This is definitely the case if we consider that this term is associated with one of the native peoples that inhabited Chiloé before the arrival of the settlers and that today this tradition persists in the deep roots of the inhabitants of that island. This is all in spite of the accelerated processes of modernization to which they have been subjected in recent years (Dughters, 2016).

Thus, *minga* as both a word and a popular and ancestral practice in the territory we now call Chile emerges as an authentic and representative figure of what we have been doing and what we wanted to be, as opposed to the managerialist current that tends to use Anglo terms that are unanchored from our context. For this reason, what this term condenses for us is more of a practice than an identity, where the experience of emerging, articulating, and conforming our collective comes to implement a way of doing and organizing. This can be demonstrated with the three key points that we have developed and will now present in the next section; they are decolonial view, shared and collective leadership, and knowledge networks.

## The Decolonial View

As stated by Ibarra-Colado (2006), the approach to OS in Latin America began and developed from uncritical subordination to Anglo-Saxon influence. Aware of this phenomenon, in the early 2000s, he was one of the promoters of the LAEMOS conference, articulating along with representatives of EGOS, an academic meeting that brought together and provided opportunities for dialog on Latin American and European developments regarding these issues. However, when we were received at the sixth conference in Chile, we were faced with a unilateral setting, where the role of the organizing team in Latin America (our role) was simply to execute with no requirement to propose. The experiences of having to wait for external authorization to finish assembling our Chilean group to begin to work did not reflect well on LAEMOS. Additionally, having to submit for approval themes for the conference, its venue, logistics, guest lists; and especially having to receive (at the cost of the conference) an unforeseen inspection visit represented a “way of organizing” that was not productive. We were not attending a “meeting,” but rather executing a standardized plan designed in other latitudes that required only to be locally materialized. It was evident then that not only was it relevant to “speak” about OS from here or there, but to deploy the *way in which we were organizing ourselves to organize the conference* had already triggered certain critical reflections.

In this way, although our organization was born in a collaborative partnership with EGOS, this relationship soon became tense and then was transformed due to its asymmetric nature regarding decision-making. This forced Minga to become an organizational counterweight in Latin America and this is why our history is a story that begins with a certain awareness. The awareness of a subordinate role condemned to reproduction, and that even in the position of local organizer of the academic meeting, its guidelines did not belong to us. From this point of view, our efforts can be seen as a deployment that is close to the “pragmatics of the decolonial turn.” Following Quijano (2000) we try to articulate *detachment*—that is, aiming to change the terms of the conversation, not only its content. We did not conform to proceed as instructed. Our original aspiration was to open the door to OS in our country and that could not be achieved by presenting a discipline that was expressed in another language and was deployed by a completely foreign community. It was necessary to show the dialog, to increase Latin American participation, and to prove that there was local work. In this way, our strategic goal was:

- a. Articulate ourselves from a diverse collective, instead of from merely individual liaisons. Previous meetings only had a local organizer. There were even certain gatherings—Buenos Aires 2010 and La Habana 2014—without an organizing counterpart in the country where they were held. Latin America had to contribute with more than just the geographic location of the meeting. Organizing from a collective enabled us to represent the local voice of a community and to speak from one group with another group, even though we were a small unit.
- b. Emphasize the importance of a multilingual conference. The imposition of a single language for the conference (English) not only is a pragmatic and functional option, but an imposition of a way of knowing and communicating (Alcadipani, Rafi-Khan, Gantman, & Nkomo, 2012). We managed to have the official communication of the conferences in the three languages along with simultaneous interpretation.
- c. Endeavor to present three keynote speakers—one international, a woman, and two local representatives. Finding our Chilean keynote speakers was a challenge because we do not have an academic tradition of OS. Hoping for interdisciplinarity, we invited academics in related areas to share meaningful local contributions.
- d. Advance the figure of Ibarra-Colado by continuing with the award in his name that had been presented during the previous gathering. It seemed that acknowledging the main promoter of this academic effort symbolized one of our fundamental objectives.
- e. Elevate the importance of a permanent Latin American representation (voice) behind the conference because organizing an event open to dialog cannot be accomplished from only one perspective. We wanted to have an impact on the constitution of a permanent team behind LAEMOS that included local representatives.

## Collective and Shared Leadership

Minga was born as a collective effort, so it has never had an imposed leadership. Since Marcela brought the group together, she has often taken on a leadership role—especially in relationships. However, looking at the events over the five years



of Minga's existence shows a much more complex distribution of leadership. Analyzing the development of Minga's activities, we can see that the leadership is mostly collective as we often share this role. Moreover, decisions are usually collective; we reach a consensus for all of them. This consensus, which has naturally emerged naturally in the development process of Minga, is not trivial as there are certain conditions that could have made collective leadership difficult. For example, several members did not previously know each other. The group was organized by one person; they have different backgrounds (psychology, engineering, sociology); they work in schools with different orientations (schools of psychology, business schools, and faculties of economics and administration); and they have different academic requirements in their institutions and live in different cities. Despite this, we utilized the context of the meetings—whether face-to-face or online—as the foundation of our decision-making.

Accordingly, the history of Minga shows that, in the various activities carried out, and even within the same activity, one person assumes the leadership spot for each separate task or relationship. Subsequently, this particular individual then hands it over to another person, who then acts according to the situation the group faces. This reflects shared leadership (Conger & Pearce, 2003). In Minga's initial stage, Marcela and Álvaro continually exchanged the leadership position in relationship management with EGOS, using their contacts to become the headquarters of LAEMOS. Nicolás then took on a clear leadership role in tasks, drafting documents and setting deadlines for the review. Since the conference took place at Álvaro's university, he took on an active leadership role with the university, handing over the leadership in the relationship with EGOS to Marcela, who held the vast majority of the informal conversations because the formal ones were drafted by the Minga team. In parallel to LAEMOS, Marcela and Paula took the lead in organizing the first meeting of REOL. In this first stage, Gregorio and Juan Pablo often conceded the leadership, although they were fundamental in consensual decision-making—therefore, in what we have called collective leadership. Notably, the dynamics of influence were modified after LAEMOS.

Although Nicolás continued to coordinate the main tasks and Marcela continued to lead most of the external relations, Paula withdrew and Gregorio and Juan Pablo assumed leadership on multiple occasions with Álvaro being a follower at such times. This are several reasons for this such as both the national seminar and the discussion panel were hosted at Juan Pablo's university, which made it easier for him to assume the leadership position in coordinating these events. Nevertheless,

it was not only in the coordination, because his leadership role was key. For example, he settled the discussion between Marcela and Álvaro about similarities and differences in OS and Administration, which was one of the relevant aspects in the seminar and in the call for the thematic selection for *Psicoperspectivas*. Thus, different members of Minga highlighted Juan Pablo's opinions and his ability to reconcile different points of view. A new form of influence appears here, beyond the tasks and relationships: the ability to influence the generation of consensus, which is a key input of collective leadership. Gregorio's leadership was clearly noticeable in the organization of the PILARES network congress, where he incorporated Minga and enabled the organization to function in a way the group had done in previous years. There is a comparison between the organization of the PILARES network congress and that of LAEMOS. This is because it shows that collective leadership processes do not always occur naturally and that sometimes actions need to be taken, such as incorporating certain people with experience in collective organization in order to facilitate the process.

## Knowledge Networks

A third angle used to analyze the development of Minga is that of knowledge networks—and, more specifically—inter-organizational academic networks. During the last few decades, networks have been the object of intense analysis in the OS literature, as they play a fundamental role in the exchange of knowledge and the development of innovations, thereby facilitating the adaptation of the latter to technological development and to change (Jones, 2000; Lam, 2007). In this context, many have argued that the traditional hierarchical bureaucratic organization has lost its capacity to respond to changes in the environment and that inter-organizational networks have taken their place, gaining importance to the extent of even being considered as the prevailing form of organization in the knowledge economy (Baker & Faulker, 2017; Dahlin, 2019; Hedlund, 1986).

From this perspective, Minga can be understood as a network of knowledge workers whose purpose is to collectively innovate through the use of supplementary resources such as knowledge, institutional funds, administrative support, and infrastructure. This would show the trend, pointed out in the literature, toward the formation of knowledge networks in areas that, due to their dynamics and complexity, require collaborative structures beyond organizational boundaries. Belonging to networks would facilitate individual and collective learning, creating a wealth of knowledge in topics specific to academia—

for example, in the development of conferences and publications. When analyzing the results of the Minga organization, it is clear that the formation of this network has been more beneficial to the institutions involved than if they had opted for the exclusive use of internal resources. Many of the completed activities could have been accomplished in isolation. In other words, while the formation of Minga seems to be an intuitive response of highly motivated researchers, it can be seen as a rational response to the urgent need to create and develop innovation and knowledge in a highly complex and changing environment.

Nevertheless, while the knowledge networks are clearly necessary and desirable for organizations, they fall outside the contractual and regulatory frameworks and policies of the universities, which generates an ambiguous territory in terms of their direction and control (Giuliani, 2007; Hedlund, 1986). This poses a dilemma and perhaps even tension between the personal and institutional sphere of each subject, because, although the decision to belong to Minga is individual, it is common understanding that there is a university institution indirectly supporting the participation of each of its members. Hence, the following questions arise: “To what extent are knowledge networks influenced by the organizational guidelines of the universities?” and “To what extent do they develop as autonomous entities of collaboration?” In the case of Minga, it is interesting to observe how the developed collective identity (“Minga member”) prevailed over the universities of the academics, thereby producing a fruitful field of collaboration and understanding. Likewise, implicit coordination and social regulation mechanisms were generated among its members such as a flexible work system based on commitment, distribution of leadership according to the task, open and direct communication, interpersonal trust, and a horizontal decision-making system.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that the fact of belonging to Minga allowed each of its members to gain access to higher levels of political influence in the academic world of OS. This effect is consistent with what is in the literature in relation to the virtuous aspects of inter-organizational networks. On the one hand, each member was able to access a greater number of contacts and acquaintances through other members of Minga. This accessibility was based on the trust inherent to interpersonal relations and, on the other hand, this “group effect” enabled for a greater presence and influence with regard to other groups and organizations. The latter was evident in the counterweight provided by Minga facing EGOS and in the subsequent participation in PILARES and Latin American Association for Labour Studies (ALAST).

## CONCLUSIONS

Telling the story of Minga has shown us that it is a reflexive and critical opportunity. It is reflective because it invites us to look at the experiences of collective works from different points of view and through this view, to reveal and preserve the strategies and tactics that have been successful in the pursuit of the sustainability of the collective. It is also critical in making visible its own proprietary and situated ways of organization.

First, from the story about the origin and development of Minga, we may conclude that it represents a collective effort to convene and organize relevant agents for the development of an academic debate on OS in Chile. Considering the above, this article describes the richness and peculiarities that characterized the formation of this group, not only to leave a testimony of this process but also to contribute to the learning of other groups with similar intentions.

Second, the formation of Minga represents a significant effort to change the historic dependence of OS on the Global North by proposing a local presence of knowledge creation and development regarding the Chilean organizational phenomenon. Traditionally, the orientation and the agenda of OS has been governed by intellectuals and guided with instructions provided by developed countries through the powerful influence of thinkers, universities, and institutions whose outlook tends to focus on the reality and interests of those countries. Yet, they tend to ignore the participation of peripheral regions in that debate. In the best of cases, the reality of organizations in countries like Chile is considered in other developed countries—but from a non-egalitarian view and a clear colonialist hue.

Third, the constitution of Minga represents a collective and collaborative effort in an academic territory that is characterized by free market competition. In this sense, Minga is a clear example, that in midst of a scenario that incites competition (which in Chile includes universities), there are “spaces of exception” generated by the networks. It is in these spaces that inter-organizational collaboration is much more beneficial than individual isolated work within an organization.

Fourth, it is relevant to analyze the internal processes of the group, both in its formation and during its activities. Perhaps the most striking group process is its shared leadership, which is present throughout each stage and activity. Unlike the literature that tends to focus on the figure of a sole leader, Minga tends to work at times through a collective leadership. Its decisions are reached by a consensus of its members; sometimes they are made through a shared process, where different members take the lead depending on the situation. In this context, sometimes certain members assume

a less visible role—but that is key to collective leadership. Thus, a highly flexible working system is established in the context of a wide diversity of tasks and circumstances faced by the group.

Fifth, the analysis of the process by which the actions were developed with definitive results is proof of the importance of inter-organizational networks through which complementary resources are put at the service of common objectives. The formation of networks facilitates individual and collective learning in knowledge-intensive environments where the dynamics of change are greater. It also allows for higher levels of political influence of its members—both individually and collectively.

Finally, the existence of inter-organizational academic networks such as Minga exposes the ambiguity and tension they generate within the traditional university organization. For the members of Minga, their work has not been explicitly defined among their tasks; however, universities valued it when it became visible. This raises questions about the formal recognition of networking, its productive status, and the centrality of traditional university logics. Although Latin American literature is scarce on the subject of inter-organizational networks, the Minga case clearly illustrates the benefits and challenges of this form of collaboration.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This entire work was collectively and horizontally developed by all of the authors listed at the beginning of the paper. Each one of them has contributed in the tasks of conceptualization, theoretical-methodological construction, literature review, production of information, and the analysis and writing of the article. Gregorio Pérez-Arrau is listed as the first author due to his responsibility in the coordination of the work; he is then followed by the remaining authors in alphabetical order.