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Social Citizenship in Latin America  
in Times of Pandemic



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# EDITORIAL

## El retorno de la ciudadanía social en América Latina

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En 1994, Kymlicka y Norman dieron a conocer un artículo titulado: “Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory” en el que resaltaban el interés de los teóricos políticos por el concepto de ciudadanía. Esta revolución teórica tenía como uno de sus ejes centrales la crítica a la propuesta de ciudadanía social elaborada por Marshall (1997). El argumento básico se reducía a lo siguiente: la ciudadanía social había generado ciudadanos pasivos dependientes del Estado de Bienestar y, en consecuencia, la tarea urgente era liberarlos de esa pesada loza, había que desconectar, dislocar la ciudadanía social de la ciudadanía política con la finalidad de desmontar el Estado de Bienestar y

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reemplazarlo por el Estado neoliberal. Así, la ciudadanía social fue privatizada y entregada al insaciable apetito del mercado, los derechos sociales fueron desfigurados de su rol original, se naturalizó la desigualdad social entendida desde entonces como una realidad inmutable, y los derechos sociales se convirtieron en paliativos focalizados que simulaban combatir la pobreza estructural de nuestras naciones.

Después de 28 años de la publicación de Kymlicka y Norman podemos afirmar lo siguiente: hoy en día estamos asistiendo al retorno de la ciudadanía social, después de casi cinco décadas de hegemonía neoliberal, la «ciudadanía social» se ha convertido en un lugar recurrente de los teóricos políticos y de nuevas élites políticas, que desde inicios del presente milenio han incidido en la arena pública para desmontar las reformas constitucionales y las constituciones neoliberales impuestas por las dictaduras militares en las décadas de los setentas, ochentas y noventas del siglo pasado.

Desde esta tesitura, el presente dossier tuvo como objetivo central reunir un conjunto de trabajos de investigación que reflexionen sobre el estado de la ciudadanía social en América Latina desde diversas miradas ancladas en las ciencias sociales. En este sentido, se parte de las propuestas *marshallianas* de mediados del siglo XX, su vigencia y las transformaciones generadas en estas que surgieron como respuesta a la agenda neoliberal iniciada en América Latina en la década de los setenta del siglo pasado; la cual se tradujo en una serie de reformas del Estado que transformaron las instituciones políticas y las relaciones entre estas, implicando cambios en la ciudadanía (actores) y los procesos de mediación que han profundizado el déficit de ciudadanía, a la vez que se abren espacios para una mayor participación.

En esta dinámica, la agenda pública visibiliza nuevas realidades donde se mezclan viejas y nuevas demandas en un Estado con diferentes grados de protagonismo y con ciudadanos descubriéndose como tales o redescubriéndose en nuevos roles. Esto es, en parte, demostraciones de lo que podría llamarse una ciudadanía líquida, dentro de lo que Bauman (2003) describe como Modernidad líquida: una realidad cambiante y volátil, con tal rapidez que se distingue de la Modernidad sólida, que es más duradera y estable. En esta línea destaca la articulación entre las políticas de vida individuales y las acciones políticas colectivas, las cuales se ajustan a este tránsito de lo certero, lo consolidado a lo cambiante y novedoso que termina generando instituciones y derechos líquidos.

Desde esta clave interpretativa, O'Donnell (2010) menciona la existencia y reproducción de seudociudadanos en la región de América Latina, donde persiste un poder social marcado por el racismo, el clasismo y la pobreza que limita una ciudadanía efectiva; cuyo telón de fondo es la tensión entre igualdad política y desigualdad social. Estas expresiones, marcadas en esta región y visibilizadas

en distintos grados, dan cuenta de que la ciudadanía no solo es una proclama de reconocimiento legal, sino que también conlleva aspiraciones de igualdad y de una democracia pensada de otra manera: incluyente, plural y bajo el escrutinio del pueblo; que está disminuido frente al poder de las corporaciones y de una clase política que identifica la democracia con el mercado y, en particular, con los postulados neoliberales.

La tesis básica que guio la articulación de este dossier partió de la idea de proponer una mirada integral de la ciudadanía, en donde sus distintas dimensiones: civil, política, social y cultural se complementan para potenciarse mutuamente. Se asume que en la esfera pública los sujetos titulares de la ciudadanía deben contar con determinados recursos (económicos, sociales y culturales) que disminuyan la tensión existente entre la igualdad política y la desigualdad social derivada del accionar capitalista (Marshall, 1997). La distribución de estos recursos, históricamente hablando, se realizó durante el período del consenso keynesiano (1930-1973) desde las políticas sociales construidas y diseñadas en el Estado bajo un enfoque universalista, y abarcaron el trabajo, la educación, la salud, la vivienda y otros derechos ligados con la idea del bienestar social. Ese modelo de producción de la ciudadanía social fue reemplazado en América Latina por un modelo neoliberal en un contexto político autoritario y represivo; en el cual atomizaron, despolitizaron y privatizaron al Estado creando esferas públicas manipuladas y controladas al servicio del mercado. Pese a ello, desde la sociedad civil sobrevivieron espacios de resistencia articulada en la forma de movimientos sociales que propondrán formas de ciudadanía social en torno a cuatro ejes: el derecho a la salud, a la vivienda, a la educación y al trabajo; lo que nos lleva a la obra de Thomas Humphrey Marshall.

En el centro de su propuesta Marshall encuentra la contradicción entre la igualdad política y la desigualdad social y económica, arraigado en el carácter del mercado capitalista, el cual genera profundos conflictos sociales y políticos. Para solucionarla desarrolló el dispositivo de la ciudadanía social como la principal herramienta para resolver o contener las tensiones entre igualdad política y desigualdad social. Siguiendo esta ruta, el presente dossier está integrado por seis artículos que están distribuidos de la siguiente manera:

El primer artículo, de Álvaro Acevedo y Melissa Quiroz, sostiene que el marxismo con sus resignificaciones y descentramientos continúa siendo una herramienta fundamental para explicar la crisis estructural contemporánea del capitalismo neoliberal. Crisis que generó un conjunto de movimientos sociales por demandas de equidad, justicia y condiciones materiales de vida digna en un período signado por la irrupción de la COVID-19, colocando nuevamente sobre la mesa la cuestión social.

El siguiente trabajo, desarrollado por Jorge Arzate, nos presenta una sugerente sociología del bienestar; la cual edifica desde dos herramientas analíticas: la identificación de las formas de la precariedad social existentes en México y la puesta en escena del continuo desigualdad(es) violencia(s) como espacio de estructuración de la precariedad social. En tanto, Oscar Cerquera, Alexandra Almario y Leidy Bautista nos introducen en el mundo del empleo y el desempleo en la ciudad colombiana de Neiva, la cual tuvo la tasa de desempleo más alta en dicho país durante el período 2019-2021, generada por la pandemia mundial ocasionada por la COVID-19 y teniendo impactos negativos en la economía.

Martín Fierro nos entrega el resultado de una investigación realizada en la zona rural de Acapulco, en donde busca relacionar tres variables: pandemia, ciudadanía social y la construcción de redes horizontales para el bienestar social, generando un singular análisis de la producción de la ciudadanía social desde un ethos comunitarista y desde un contexto pandémico. Por su parte, Alma Guadarrama y Kenya Hernández, desarrollan una propuesta jurídica para reforzar institucionalmente, desde el ámbito jurídico, los derechos sociales de la Población Adulta Mayor (PAM) en México, disueltos por la Modernidad líquida. Finalmente, tenemos la interesante propuesta de Juan Acosta, quien describe las interacciones entre el Derecho Internacional Humanitario (DIH) y la COVID-19 en el conflicto armado colombiano, desarrollando las tensiones en la producción de la ciudadanía que se dan entre las distintas complejidades e imbricaciones entre el posconflicto, el posacuerdo y la pospandemia.

Por último, y no menos importante, se presentan tres artículos que contribuyen al diálogo de la ciudadanía; mismos que, si bien no componen el dossier, evocan problemas de orden social desde diferentes instituciones para el restablecimiento de los derechos que terminan por ser coartados por las fuerzas armadas; así como en torno al reconocimiento del territorio, sus disputas y su identidad cultural.

En síntesis, el presente dossier entrega un acervo múltiple y diverso para entender el retorno de la ciudadanía social en América desde distintos ángulos y perspectivas, en donde se cruzan procesos globales (la pandemia del COVID-19 y el neoliberalismo) con procesos internos como el posconflicto en Colombia y la crisis del Estado neoliberal en México.



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# Re search chs

Investigaciones · Investigaçã

(SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP IN LATIN  
AMERICA IN TIMES  
OF PANDEMIC)

# Karl Marx in the Key of Actuality Resignifications, Decentering and Resistances from the Global South\*

[English Version]

Karl Marx en clave de actualidad  
Resignificaciones, descentramientos y resistencias desde el Sur Global

Karl Marx na chave atual  
Resignificações, descentralização e resistência do Sul Global

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## Abstract

**Objective:** this article aims to respond to resignifications, decentering and resistances experienced in the Global South, and their interrelation with anti-systemic movements as expressions of a growing social nonconformism.

**Methodology:** the writings of theorists such as

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Marx, Wallerstein, and Hobsbawm have been analyzed with the purpose of discovering new explanations regarding current latent political and socioeconomic problems that have been aggravated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. **Results:** the existence of expressions of rebellion, in general, constitute anti-systemic movements with the purpose of overthrowing everything that exists and promoting a new historical system different from everything that has been lived. Within the new anti-systemic movements, with a starting timeline that could be set from 2011 in Latin America and the world, there is evidence of a change both in the way of conceiving protest and in the relationship established with other subjects, and with cybernetic technology, or increasingly sophisticated electronic and mechanical communication systems. **Conclusions:** each social science theorist responds to his time and to the problems of the society of which he is a part. The current era is no exception and aspects of other past actualities are taken up again to understand this increasingly convulsive present with unresolved, long-standing problems, among them, the enormous differences and inequalities between the so-called First World countries and the Global South.

**Keywords:** Latin America; communism; marxism; social movement; resistance.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** en este artículo se pretende dar respuesta a resignificaciones, descentramientos y resistencias vividas en el Sur Global, y su interrelación con los movimientos antisistémicos como expresiones de un creciente inconformismo social. **Metodología:** teóricos como Marx, Wallerstein y Hobsbawm han sido analizados desde sus escritos con el propósito de descubrir nuevas explicaciones con respecto a problemas políticos y socioeconómicos latentes en el momento actual, los cuales se han visto agravados con la actual pandemia de la COVID-19. **Resultados:** la existencia de expresiones de rebeldía, en general, se constituyen en movimientos antisistémicos con propósitos de derrumbar todo lo existente y promover un nuevo sistema histórico diferente de todo lo vivido. Dentro de los nuevos movimientos antisistémicos, con una línea temporal de comienzo que se podría fijar desde el año 2011 en América Latina y el mundo, se evidencia un cambio tanto en la forma de concebir la protesta como en la relación que se instaura con los demás sujetos, y con la tecnología cibernética o de sistemas de comunicación electrónicos y mecánicos cada vez más sofisticados. **Conclusiones:** cada teórico de las ciencias sociales responde a su época y a los problemas propios de la sociedad de la que es parte. La época actual no es la excepción y se retoman aspectos de otras actualidades pasadas para comprender

este presente cada vez más convulso y con problemas no resueltos de vieja data, entre ellos, las enormes diferencias y desigualdades entre los denominados países del Primer Mundo y el Sur Global.

**Palabras clave:** América Latina; comunismo; marxismo; movimiento social; resistencia.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** este artigo visa responder às resignações, descentralização e resistências experimentadas no Sul Global, e suas inter-relações com movimentos anti-sistêmicos como expressões de um crescente não-conformismo social.

**Metodologia:** teóricos como Marx, Wallerstein e Hobsbawm foram analisados a partir de seus escritos com o objetivo de descobrir novas explicações sobre os atuais problemas políticos e sócio-econômicos latentes, que foram agravados pela atual pandemia da COVID-19. **Resultados:** a existência de expressões de rebelião, em geral, constituem movimentos anti-sistêmicos com o propósito de derrubar tudo o que existe e promover um novo sistema histórico que seja diferente de tudo o que foi vivenciado. Dentro dos novos movimentos anti-sistêmicos, com uma cronologia que poderia ser definida a partir de 2011 na América Latina e no mundo, há evidências de uma mudança tanto na forma de conceber o protesto quanto na relação que se estabelece com outros sujeitos, e com a tecnologia cibernética ou sistemas de comunicação eletrônica e mecânica cada vez mais sofisticados. **Conclusões:** cada teórico das ciências sociais responde a sua própria época e aos problemas da sociedade da qual ele faz parte. A era atual não é exceção, e aspectos de outras realidades do passado são retomados a fim de compreender este presente cada vez mais convulso com seus problemas há muito pendentes, incluindo as enormes diferenças e desigualdades entre os chamados países do Primeiro Mundo e o Sul Global.

**Palavras-chave:** América Latina; comunismo; marxismo; movimento social; resistência.

## Introduction

The transition to the first year of the 2020s was dramatic for a planetary society that was unprepared to deal with a pandemic on a global scale at all levels of prevention. For Harari, an inevitable change in nation states and economic systems is looming in the coming years, particularly due to the worsening of poverty and the increase of ideological controls in the scenarios of private life (2020). The populations of Latin America and the Caribbean have been living in fear since the first outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic became known. In the middle of the year 2021, the fear continued with collapsed health systems and millions of people living in fear of the dilemma of going out to work and becoming infected or staying at home with no chance of survival.

Today Marxism, with its resignifications and decentering, continues to be fundamental to respond to the great challenges of explaining society, not only at this juncture but also in the face of extremely serious processes of conflict that were already evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, in what has been called the crisis of the great paradigms driving society and the structural crisis of capitalism in its oligopolistic and neoliberal phase. Thus, resorting to Marxism, in its conceptual and methodological resignifications and decentering, can contribute to finding new explanations and solutions to the world's current problems (Fontana, 1992, p. 9).

The line of argument proposed by Žižek (2014) contends that an event can recode the social world and even promote greater uncertainty for the future, to the point that there will be a before and after in all social dynamics. This was the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially due to the increase in virtuality and the use of emergency remote education (Acevedo *et al.*, 2021). But perhaps the greatest impact has been felt in the economic sphere, because not since World War II has there been such an accelerated decline in per capita GDP, with devastating effects for vulnerable countries and social sectors. These effects showed the deep economic inequalities in the world and the inability of the neoliberal capitalist system to respond to the crisis. This does not discount the expansive waves of disinformation and fake news through the Internet and *apps* to the point of becoming "ideological viruses" (Žižek, 2020).

The analysis of the effects of COVID-19 have also been added to by Han (2020, p. 22), arguing that, under the principle of globalization, whose ultimate goal is to maximize profits, protective masks and medicines were produced exponentially all over the world, in such a way that they were no longer produced for people but for a capitalistic purpose. As Marx once put it, this reduces man to his sexual organ for the sole purpose of giving birth to children. Today society

exploit itself under the assumption of an inalienable individual freedom, but it does so under a neoliberal regime that makes one believe that one is self-exploiting on one's own account and desire, even though in reality one has become a servant of the excessive importance of capital.

In a very short and widely distributed text by Wallerstein, entitled "Uncertainty and Creativity," it is warned that the first half of the 21st century will be difficult and disturbing. This premise is confirmed when studying the past and recognizing that historical systems have finite lives. So, all historical systems have a beginning, long periods of development and death when they move away from the fragile equilibrium that sustains them. A second premise, Wallerstein also warns, is given by *inputs* and *outputs*, which are related. According to Wallerstein, small *inputs* provoke large *outputs* and vice versa; their outcome is indeterminate (2021).

A third premise is that the modern world-system, as a historical system, has entered a terminal crisis – as have all historical systems – and most likely will not exist as such in fifty years or more. It is obvious that it is also impossible to determine whether the resulting system will be better or worse than the current one, but like all transitions, Wallerstein points out that it will be a confusing stage with uncertain results (Wallerstein, 2021).

This phenomenon, in a way, began to be experienced after 1989, when the so-called communist countries collapsed and the world, in general, entered a stage of neoliberal policies, as opposed to State social policies. This neoliberal phase, however, also carries the weight of its crisis, because even liberalism in its early stages promised reforms to improve the inequalities of the world-system and reduce polarization; however, its purpose would not only be a failed illusion but also a disillusionment, as change did not come and even a widening gap between wealth and poverty, and a continuously growing polarization increased. Under these circumstances, as Wallerstein points out, there will surely be "considerable turmoil, of the same kind as that which occurred during the 1990s, spreading from the Bosnias and Rwandas of this world to the richer (and considered more stable) regions of the planet, such as the United States" (2021).

Wallerstein also considers the cultural revolution of 1968 and the planetary economic crisis of 1972-1973 as the point of no return of American hegemony in the twentieth century (Acevedo, 2017, p. 23). Precisely, and just to point out a few examples, the anti-systemic outbursts experienced since 2011 with the Indignados movement in Spain, or with the social outburst in Chile, or in 2019 in Colombia – with a clear accent from April 28, 2021, the date of protest after a probable tax reform in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic – showed a nonconformism at local and global level, especially in the Global South, as a

result of political polarization and an innumerable list of social nonconformisms suffered.

The current outbursts are the effects of a crisis of capitalism as the prevailing world-system, with anti-systemic movements that have been expressed since 1968 and with small *inputs* that would become large *inputs*, understood as inputs or resources in processes with a certain impulse and that are transformed into raw material for new mobilizations and new social outbursts. In this sense, Immanuel Wallerstein reiterates conclusions exposed by Marx in his time, who in his works presents an acute analysis of the social development of his contemporaneity. If Marx was concerned about anything, it was the latent problems of his time. This is how Marx and Engels explored historical unfolding in openness to a new world. Precisely, *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 2014), in the item called "History," argues that this march takes place in conditions completely different from previous circumstances through new activities that cannot be ordered in a purpose or teleology but in the very productive forms that arise as a result of new forms of social domination; in such a way that in the prevailing social formation, in order to carry forward the ends it pursues, the ruling class is obliged to present its own interest as the common interest, call it, in this case, a capitalist social formation.

In the *General Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (2006), Marx recognizes that in the economy the population is the basis of production of a social formation. But this population is not considered in an abstract and empty way that leaves out work, the division of labor and all the components of a social economic formation. Production, the means of production, the production relations, traffic and property relations, forms of state and political systems converge into the social economic formation. These are Interactions in which civil society can emerge and in which even war can develop before peace and be conditioned by armies or armed forces. Under these considerations, Marx warns that in a social State, the time will come when the productive material forces of society will collide with the existing means of production, especially with legal relationships concerning property. Thus, for Arendt (2013), revolutions have always been present in history and not necessarily as the abrupt change from one social state to another, but also as the emergence of new forces in history.

Even the texts of the so-called young Marx respond to specific problems of his society and constitute a stinging critique of a capitalist mode of production that demands political commitments and struggle from the subjugated social classes, especially from the working class, to fight it. If Marx is concerned about something, it is with uncovering the annoyance and even the pathos with which the institutions have brought the new economic system to its knees, putting freedoms in check and leading the contradictions to an immoral relativism that



protects private property from theft, but ignores that private property is the first of the great robberies (Marx, 1983). Of course, it was impossible for Marx to even glimpse all the subsequent dynamics of the phases of capitalism, but even today it can be considered that part of his approaches to the relationship between labor and capital have an influence on the notions of human capital (suitability-machine) of Michel Foucault and of immaterial labor of Mauricio Lazzarato and Antonio Negri (Del Valle, 2015).

Some time later and with greater maturity, Marx will find himself committed to a far-reaching political process explaining the course of capitalism; the fight for freedoms has only brought Marx problems from the *establishment*, from the workers' parties and even from the anarchists. To establish peace once and for all, Marx writes the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, a work that is inscribed as a negative history with a political purpose, an applied historical materialism to the goal of a class struggle. In this way, for Marx, the recognition of communism is proof of the construction of a negative history, that is, from the recognition of antagonistic parties that produce debate and conflict at the same time that they lead to changes; in other words, history is negative and converges in the class struggle. The third stop in the historical explanatory construction of Marx is evidenced in the *18 Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte*, a much more descriptive text of social processes with the recognition of the events that condition history and the writing of the same, and, of course, also show the class struggle and the impulse that they give to history.

In this way, Marx searches both in long-term processes and in historical events for lights that elucidate the explanation of change. In his dialectical analysis, it is possible that the change is there and that the only thing missing is the social explosion, the revolution against the socio-economic formations adopted by capitalism. Becoming, under this perspective, is no longer something completely predictable but is explainable in its general tendencies; nor does it imply the interrelation of antagonistic forces that transform historical reality in a unique way in each context. Similarly, the State is also constituted in a correlation of antagonistic forces that define the contradictions between the struggle of classes in a particular way. Therefore, Marx proposes to find a sense of history, even of the event, of eventuality as a causal measure of change with its contradictions.

This is how this article questions the resignifications, decenterings and resistances experienced in the Global South at the present time, based on the historical approach proposed by Marx to explain the course of history. A purpose that has new routes of explanation in the stature of Marxist intellectuals such as Wallerstein and Hobsbawm, for pointing them out as some of the best analysts and critics of Marxism, with an explanatory view of historical processes. In this

sense, Hobsbawm warns, the strength of the approaches of Marx and Engels can be seen in *The Communist Manifesto*, a text that, of course, was made for very particular conditions of the first phases of capitalism, but that in its lines it already indicates that this mode of production is not triumphant or stable, but that it is a temporary phase of the history of humanity, at the same time that the historical trends of its development will be long-term (Hobsbawm, 1998a, p. 8).

## The Methodological Approach: Marxism and Historians

The methodology used for the development of this article is qualitative and is part of the interpretive paradigm. From this perspective, the subject is an individual who shares meanings and builds action by interpreting and evaluating the social world from analysis and description (Cohen, 1990). In addition, it understands that reflection is done in and from praxis, conforming the interpretation of reality from the meanings and representations that the subject himself elaborates in the interaction with others within the particular globality of a given context. From this perspective, an attempt is also made to understand reality considering that knowledge is neither neutral nor unique. It is also understood that the interpretations of the social world are not static, but can vary due to political, social, and cultural aspects (Bolio, 2014).

For the development of this article, the concepts of resignification, decentering and resistance have been used. Based on the approaches of Hobsbawm (1998b), it also recognizes that the sense of the past and the explanation of the present is understood as a permanent dimension of human consciousness, an indissoluble component of the institutions, values and other constitutive elements of human society. In this task, the main objective of the researcher is to give a new perspective to social explanation from the concern for the existing relationships between the past, the present and the future; that is, throughout time. Hobsbawm emphasizes that belonging to any human community means adopting a sense of one's own from the past, which manifests itself in the present and projects into the future. However, the social use of the past, according to the author, has its specific problems, which are the past as genealogy and the past as chronology. As for genealogy, the deep attraction exerted by the past as continuity and tradition is understood. In other words, the foundational character of a society is what marks the relationship with its time, since every society considers it appropriate to record the passage of time and the succession of experienced events. Meaning that if history accounts for a succession of

processes and directional changes of these processes, the chronology helps to order even the events that may be scattered.

With regard to what the researcher can contribute to the explanation of contemporary society in terms of Marxist explanation, it must be said that the researcher, from this approach, does not accurately predict future events based on an analysis of the past. The researcher's task is to reveal that change and transformations, first, are not totally universal and, second, to recognize that it is not in their hands to predict the future as some societies assign it to them, but rather to identify and demonstrate the mechanisms of the historical change of human societies. This equates to giving new meaning, trying to highlight the changes that can be evidenced in societies and their possible future trends, making it clear that the changes and transformations that societies go through have not always been the same. This task, to a large extent, must recognize, likewise, that the changes in society are the effect of material transformations, and that these changes imply, then, recognizing the social formations, their contradictions and struggles, and, of course, the conditions of their material production.

Now, in these social formations of production in permanent struggle and tension, it is also possible to explain what happened from history seen from below or from the history of ordinary people, since the social mass also has an impact on the course of society. For Hobsbawm, for example, in the Old Regime, the confrontations of the masses against their leaders were almost always immediate; that is, the revolts were not against the establishment itself, but against its direct leaders. So, the history from below expresses itself with some evidence, with the history of the mass movements of the 18th century and continues to present itself today. The first big wave of such studies occurred in France before the Second World War, and in the rest of Europe and the world it appeared during the post war period, with the appearance of Marxist views, with which there was an increase in studies on the mass, especially of the workers covered by the strengthening of the labor movement. Today the social outbreaks, in some way, are mass expressions, this implies studying them from the Marxist perspective of history from below, and from the concept of resistance, that is, as the hidden discourse that "is made public or, put another way, when you go from resistance to rebellion, to open defiance of power" (Rajchenberg, 2015, p. 51). This last concept will be developed in the third section of this article.

## **Marxism to Understand Anti-system Movements: A Return to the sixties**

Marxism, socialism, and communism were a thematic triad of the same nature that was shared and consumed by young people around the world in the 1960s and 1970s. The texts of this thematic triad express a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo of a society stagnated by consumption in the post-war period. In the social mobilization and consumption of 1968, aspirations can also be identified that incite a cultural revolution in line with political approaches that break with the democratic option and are closer to the socialist current. It should be remembered that almost a decade earlier, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution stands out, which will imply the positioning of a current socialist government in Cuba – close enough in territory to the influence of the United States and, at least, with some ideological link with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – which will have an impact in the context of the Cold War.

In 1968, social unrest is not only visible in the West. The students, mainly, rebelled against all forms of power in the United States, Latin America, and Europe, reaching Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Bonilla, 2015).

Thus, what could have been a local or perhaps a national movement ended up linking with a movement on a planetary scale. To such an extent that the rejection and objective of the movement has not only been based on criticizing the unfulfilled promises of liberalism in the world-system, but has also been directed by a new left against the old left and its anti-system movements. Wallerstein (1989, p. 233) argues that this is precisely because the disappointed of 1968 is led by young people who, growing up in a world in which such anti-system movements have achieved state power, find it possible to judge old lefts both for what they promise and for the practices carried out when they came to power. What defines, in essence, an anti-system movement is its aspiration to achieve a more democratic and egalitarian world, and in the same way to oppose both the hegemony of North American imperialism and the Soviet Union itself cohabiting with this imperialism (Wallerstein, 2003).

In this way, Wallerstein (1989, pp. 233-234) adds that the judgment made by the generation of 1968 that supported the anti-system utopia against the old movements was also due to the fact that they found them deficient, both in their effectiveness in confronting the capitalist world-system of that time, embodied by the United States, as well as for the quality of life created in the intermediate state structures that the old social movements presumed to control. The importance of the generational aspect carried enough weight at the time, and this not only applied in the terms of a certain aphorism from 1968 – “Never trust

someone over 30 years old” – but also implied a new reading of the left that did not align with the monolithic construction of Soviet Stalinism.

Against that same monolithic alignment, according to Wallerstein (1989, pp. 223-232), a generational rejection was presented for its acquiescence with the North American hegemony since it followed the Yalta Agreement and that led to the configuration of the Cold War; which drew a line dividing the world between East-West and cooled the realization of a direct conflict of the powers (above all in Europe), thus raising the leadership of each block in the USSR and the United States, respectively. The latter, precisely, was what that acquiescence that the 1968 movement rejected, since it seemed that the USSR consented to the presence of that North American hegemony as long as no changes occurred in that line that preserved its zone of political domination; so that the interventions carried out from the USSR were indirect and, therefore, possibly for this reason their action seemed deficient in the opinion of the generation of '68 that supported the anti-systemic utopia.

This not only places the Cold War in the key of an ideological conflict in which two powers were awarded the representation of what was supposed to be the only two possible models, and it not only implied the choice of a side and the consequent alignment, but also involved adopting the model of one or another representative. Choosing a side was not only understood as a political alignment and participation in the conflict, it also implied the reproduction of the model that each of the two powers represented. Taking into account what was mentioned by Immanuel Wallerstein, a stagnant world-system had been established in which there was an American hegemonic system and an alternative Soviet system that constrained the world to only two possible aspects and, in turn, were deficient in the face of expectations in around the quality of life and fulfillment of expectations that they could provide.

It is important to note that the generation of '68, which supported the anti-systemic utopia, does not only question the American model. The Prague Spring protests have as a prelude the acts of young people from the Technical University of Prague in resistance to this low quality of life, in particular the lack of electricity service at the end of 1967. Even when the Soviet invasion took place in the middle of 1968, it was the young people who carried out the resistance in the streets of Prague and other cities. In other words, rejection and protest against the vices or deficiencies of the socialist system were being forged in the school system and at its highest level: the university. In the case of the Global South, it is found that the challenge to the possibility of change is important. It not only implies a critical assimilation of knowledge from other latitudes, but also leads this criticized and assimilated knowledge to action.

Although the generation of '68, which supported the anti-systemic utopia, mainly protested against US hegemony, it cannot be ignored that they judged the passivity of the USSR's communist model to be defective, limited to coexisting and not directly confronting the capitalist system in order to preserve the line that reserved for it a small but important fraction of the world-system agreed upon between the Americans and the Soviets. In this sense, Marcuse (1973) considered giving the youth of 1968 the character of a revolutionary vanguard and a decisive force for a social conscience, especially the students of the so-called Third World, taking into account that young people from all over the world, by the thousands, were victims of terror. But Marcuse also raises his voice against the so-called left that, in the manner of an intellectual and elitist attitude, weakens the principles of the revolution by distorting and falsifying Marxist theory through the "ritualization" of concepts to analyze the moment of '68 through concepts of 19th century and early 20th century capitalism, ignoring, as Marx always warned, that concepts are historical, have historical references and analyze historical structures. Marcuse, in the same way, draws attention to Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in which the concept of humanist socialism can be justified, in opposition to the bureaucratic-authoritarian Soviet model, preamble to the fight against Stalinism and the post-Stalinism.

### **Validity of Karl Marx: Resignifications in the Historical Explanation to Understand the Global South**

The influence of Marxism on historians and on the historical discipline has played an important role in modernizing historiography and the social sciences in general. Some historians influenced by Marxist approaches have been identified with ideas and precepts that have been associated with the thought proposed by Marx, however, this influence has represented a somewhat simplistic interpretation of the mature thought of Marx, to which Hobsbawm and other social science researchers have called it "vulgar Marxism" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 158). Lately, a conception that distorts the thought of Marx by attributing ideas that do not fully respond to his socioeconomic theory, such as claiming that the economic factor is the determinant on which the other variables of the historical and social process depend. This kind of work, moreover, focuses its attention on economic and social factors, but without any connection of intellectual weight with the thought of Marx.

It is enough to remember that, in the contribution made by Marx to the explanation of historical processes, society is conceived as composed of different

levels or social stratifications, whether economic, political, religious, or cultural, that interact with each other. These interactions, for the most part, lead to class tensions, since for Marx the ruling class, in this stratification, shows its power in the domination of the subordinate social classes; thus the superstructure is instrumentalized (by means of laws, customs, norms, values, economic system, etc.) to maintain the *Status quo* of a class. Within these social tensions or "class struggles" the researcher, from the whole Marxist sense, must pay attention, since the accumulation of these struggles expresses itself in society through expressions of non-conformism, anti-systemic movements, etc. Traverso (2018) distrusts "closed" theories such as Marxism. Without discounting his vision of the past as ineluctable and voluntarist, the author proposes to make fruitful use of some concepts of Marxist tradition: class, class struggle, hegemony, mode of production, capitalism, imperialism, among them. Of course, Traverso draws attention, apart from any teleological and deterministic vision of Marxism.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Marxist influence determines the political history declination and took rise to economic and sociological history. In general, and even by some Marxists, Marxism has been described as economic determinism, a concept denied by Marx himself at the time, as well as he denied that he was not the first to remark the importance of economic basis in social explanation or to introduce the concept of class struggle into history. Marxism is presented to us as a structural-functionalist theory. Although today it is not the only one, it was the first. Since Marxism can induce an explanatory hierarchy of social phenomena, the truth is that the idea of considering social tensions as an explanatory foundation of becoming is still as valid as before.

Marx, in his theory, argues that the basis of social life, from the production of material life, is given from the consolidation of relations between human beings through the creation of production links. These relationships of production can be understood as the cluster of forces that constitute the basis of different modes of production on which each society is based. For Hobsbawm, Marx's contributions remain the essential basis of any proper study of history, because only he has tried to state a methodological approach to history as a whole, as well as to consider and explain the whole process of social evolution of humanity from its economic postulates, since every explanatory process must begin with the analysis of its mode of production from:

- a) the technical-economic form of "metabolism between man and nature" (Marx), the way in which man adapts to nature and transforms it through work; and (b) the social measures by which work is mobilized, deployed, and assigned. (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 167)

It should be noted that Marx's influence on social researchers has to do, mainly, with the idea of explaining "social changes" and "social structure" from the development of the economy (Betancourt, 2007, pp. 176-180). In this sense, the recognition of each and every society or peoples has the capacity of having a past and therefore a history (Wolf, 1982). All societies have developed in a particular mode of production. It makes tracing the events of societies based on their model of production possible. From this capacity of peoples to transform nature, it is possible to weave a relationship of exchange in a world market that involves all human societies in the same history: the history of world capitalism. Although not all peoples are in the same phase of European evolution, that is, with the same level of technification of productive process, they all have a changing way that drives them forward through joint work. In this way, and despite the fact that these peoples have a different production model, it does not mean that they are peoples without history. This is the situation for many countries that have become consumers of the industrialized production of Europeans. It creates the image of being primitive communities that do not advance in search for productivity and that have stagnated in an archaic phase of humanity, as even so the Global South has been designated.

### **The Concept of Resistance, a Legacy of Marxism**

It is undeniable that Marxism has left a not inconsiderable legacy for research and social understanding. It constitutes an inexhaustible source of inspiration for different socio-economic and political issues. For its critical sense and, especially, for the materialist conception of history: "history is committed to a coherent intellectual project and has made progress in understanding how the world has become what it is today" (Hobsbawm, 1998a, p. 10).

One of Marx's greatest contributions to social explanation has been to study the process of social production as a general analytical basis from particular situations, since Marx "knew that economic models, if they are to be valuable for historical analysis, cannot be apart from social and institutional realities" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 91). Those social realities that will have analysis from 1950, with social history, with special attention to revolutionary processes and struggles for emancipation; many which are still in force in the Global South and which refer to long-term problems in the future of their societies. For social researchers, the need to know and understand the social structure and its transformations implies studying the history of societies (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 87). In the history of society, structures, mechanisms of persistence and transformations are taken into account: "the history of society is a collaboration between



general models of structures and social changes and specific phenomena that really happened" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 92). Consequently, social history has boomed since the last decades of the twentieth century, from topics such as: the history of society, urban history, the history of classes and social groups, the history of mentalities and transformations of societies, social movements or phenomena of social protest. It cannot be ignored that the explanation of cultural processes and productions – whether they are called ways of consciousness, social imaginaries, expressions of human sensibility in general – must go through the material conditions in which such processes and productions take place (Hobsbawm, 1998b).

Marx's proposal revolves around the relationship of production and contradictions that came up between forces of production, which act as the engine of history and which in general determine social, political and intellectual process of life (Corcuera, 1997, p. 63) with their ways of domination and violence. According to Marx, the existing order had to be explained not by appealing to ideals, but to history, since historical processes had to be explained economically and not guided, necessarily and essentially, by ideals, this means for Marx that values cannot be studied isolated from facts with objective material conditions (Berlin, 2018).

This approach to social historical processes has been widely addressed by British authors, greatly influenced by Marx's thought: Thompson (2014), Maurice Dobb, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill and Eric J. Hobsbawm who represent a theoretical tradition, and they are also widely recognized by historiography by assuming in their works that the questions and hypotheses stated by Marx referred to the history and coming of modern world remain very convincing and even essential. Thus, British Marxist historians have made historical contributions to analyses of class struggle, to developments in the perspective of history from below and, in general, to social theory in its purpose of overcoming economic determinism and formulating explanatory theses on transition to capitalism and its subsequent developments (Kaye, 2019).

It is remarkable that these approaches, mainly that of history from below, have had subsequent developments for the explanations of resistance and rebellion of subaltern or subordinate groups, including those of a Global South, which create their own culture with its own version of domination (Scott, 2000). Thus, the greater the inequality of powers between dominant and dominated, with all the arbitrariness of the latter, the more emergencies of resistance and rebellion are uncovered by stereotypes and rituals of power (Jorquera, 2007).

The transition from resistance to rebellion can be recognized in any subaltern group of society that resists domination and appeals to a subversive discourse to reverse dominant relationships (Montilla and Scott, 2002). In

contrast, resistance is understood as the result of aggregation of countless individual acts of transgression of the norm issued by the powerful agent, which can subsequently have collective effects (Rajchenberg, 2015, p. 52). This means that these collective effects have had an impact or as Useche Aldana states, "resistance is power" and the affectation in others is in "the measure of creating a more powerful social body capable of transforming passive passions – sadness, anger, resentment – into joyful actions such as love or solidarity" (2014, p.107). Therefore, the ultimate goal of resistance is linked to the concept of transformation or change, from a state of sadness or passive affectation to a joyful option, of joy and with a clear life affirmation.

Resistance develops from "an event that is unleashed as a novelty, as an ethical and political breaking point that subsumes passive affections to the extent that the active forces of life are deployed" (Useche, 2014, p. 107). Social movements as expressions of resistance burst with the enthusiasm and the social group synergy that changes tiredness to joy, selfishness to solidarity and revolution to celebration. Some examples are the social movements in 1968, 2011 and 2021 (under the atypical pandemic conditions). Songs, carnivals and playful expressions are also new ways for youth mobilization. Resistance appeals to dignity and autonomy along with its establishment as an emergence of solidarity and legitimacy against discourses and practices of domination (Scott, 2000).

Even the post-68 effects, youth resistance are expressed in recreational activities, carnivals and meetings such as the Woodstock Festival in the United States or in the Ancon Festival, the Colombian version (Acevedo and Correa, 2021). Between 1968 and 1971, social protests changed, a noticeable situation in almost all Latin American countries.

A similar situation has already been experienced in the 21st century with Spain's Indignados movement that will be soon known throughout Latin America. Indignation, as a feeling, is expressed in a social movement that began in 2011 and will end up being replicated in much of the world thanks to the intervention of social networks, telecommunications, and a new type of resistance that is no longer physical but technological in nature.

Memes, kiss-a-thons and hug-a-thons evidence that yesterday's problems are different from today's problems, but they do find some explanatory traceability. As Aguirre (2014) points out, the forceful mobilizations in Latin America have managed to strengthen and consolidate powerful anti-capitalist and anti-systemic movements that have been considered a model at different latitudes of the world. From 1968 to the present, despite the ups and downs of the last two decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the Latin American continent has been imbued with creative social manifestations that

have challenged governments until overthrowing them or making them tremble at their foundations due to unfair measures. In Colombia, in 2011, for example, the Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil (MANE) became a large student movement with the purpose of improvements in higher education and the withdrawal of the reform of Law 30 of 1992 on Higher Education which favored a profit education (Acevedo *et al.*, 2022).

These type of movements and others that create novel mobilizations throughout Latin America have allowed for the resurgence of the moral economy of Latin American crowds. These are not something different from the conceptual reference by Thompson, the British Marxist historian, who roughly understands such concept as the set of regulation and self-regulation forces for a well-defined boundary between right and wrong and fair and unfair, to thus claim for inclusion strategies and mechanisms, participation and, in general, social balances that can range from demands for justice and dignity to better material living conditions (Aguirre, 2014).

These demands for equity, justice, and material conditions for a dignified life, although evident since 1968 and have undergone different cycles, had their greatest impact in 2021, a notably strange year marked by the emergence of COVID-19 and its effect on people's isolation. This year gave rise to civil disorders and new social movements throughout the Global South – even in first world countries – whose governments had had to deal with a series of strikes and protests that showed a stronger need for social, political and economic change than a fear of a virus spreading at an ever-increasing rate.

## Conclusions

According to Karl Marx, now, it is recognized that the economic basis of historical development is linked to concepts such as class and class struggle. Nowadays, it is also recognized that economic and social factors, beyond the simple Marxism explanation, are paramount to explain the societies evolution and cultural manifestations in general (Aguirre, 2010, p. 83). Marx's ideas have had an impact on history and social sciences through his structural-functional theory with the base/superstructure model. This specific model allows for class conflict interpretations, succession of socioeconomic formations and transition mechanisms, issues that other structuralist theoretical models find difficult to articulate in historical perspectives and simplify the mechanisms of historical change, even denying the historicity of societies or limiting

themselves to social statics by omitting change and leaving it to history. Any theoretical and methodological reference may fall short in explaining the whirlwind of the new social movements, however, the British Marxists, especially Hobsbawm, have warned how the categories of ethnicity or identity, among others, may fall even shorter to finding general explanations to processes of today's globalized world that require categories without attacking the explanatory universality of historical processes and, of course, dialoguing with particularisms or specificities (Matari, 2013).

Similarly, to account for the changes in societies over time and based on Marxist functional and structural theory, it is possible to resort to the explanatory model of levels whose basis is the social relations of production and the internal contradictions of the systems, including class conflicts. A conflict that can also be explained as a warning of danger or safety valve, also as forms of resistance and rebellion that advocate for making themselves present in the public space. Likewise, conflicts that cannot be analyzed simply as conspiracies of subaltern or power groups, but as the cause of contradictions in society (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 160).

In this way, Marxism puts the magnifying glass on change. According to Casanova, Marx "locates antagonism in the very structure of society (between the productive forces and the relations of production) and in the conviction that from this structural conflict will result a class conflict that is the driving force for social change" (1991, p. 59).

These structural conflicts have been vehemently exposed since the 1960s, 1968 being an example. However, throughout the last third of the twentieth century and especially in third world countries, there was also a large number of rallies, strikes, marches, demonstrations, and protests aiming at solving problems such as hunger, unemployment and lack of opportunities for the underdeveloped region populations that are still sunk in slave-owning and xenophobic strategies (Hopenhayn and Bello, 2001). Despite the different expressions of resistance of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the greatest evidence of the need for social change has been in the year 2021.

After a long year of living under the anxiety of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the world showed its two faces: a "fresh" side corresponding to those who could easily resort to long quarantines without economic worries, and the tragic side of those who had to struggle on the streets for making a living for their families. However, this pandemic has evidenced that, at the end of the day, we are all the same by nature. The coronavirus causing the COVID-19 does not distinguish between rich and poor, healthy and sick, men and women, and young and old. This disease attacks everyone equally and has revealed the great gap between the so-called first world or developed countries

and those living in extreme poverty. This is not to mention that there will be more and more poor people, even in countries with a certain economic stability (World Bank, 2020).

Countries such as Canada, France, the United States, and Spain have shown their dark side through increasingly well-known xenophobia. Likewise, since 2013, resistance movements have become more and more obvious, among them the so-called Black Lives Matter, perhaps the successor of an earlier movement called Los Indignados, which also revealed the social differences between rich and poor countries.

In 2021, the second year of living with the shadow of COVID-19, added all the social movements, that is to say, the first six months of that year allowed us to see indignation, anti-slavery movements, protests for the improvement of educational services, rallies in search of better health services, blockades to avoid more taxes, protests to clarify the violations of Human Rights, labor-management confrontations and countless conflictive expressions which had not been experienced in countries like Colombia and Latin America. Similar situations were experienced in countries such as Chile, Peru and Ecuador. The pandemic also disclosed corruption, democratic limitations and economic and social difficulties of the Latin American continent.

At a global level, it was proven that, in the face of a pandemic, neoliberalism was mainly insufficient to manage a disease that, in addition to a long siege of deaths, showed the political incapacity of rulers to overcome the economic impacts.

Today, the theories expounded by Marx in the 19th century are more valid than ever to explain the evolution of 21st century societies. As Hobsbawm emphasizes, Karl Marx's ideas "allow us to explain the history of mankind in its entirety, and form the most fruitful starting point for modern analysis" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 161). His theoretical and political productions refer to historical phenomena within a long-term framework in an attempt to understand the human totality (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 164) and to respond to the great polarizations and socioeconomic inequalities that still remain.

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# Tools for the Sociological Understanding of Well-being: Analyzing the Forms of Social Precariousness and Making the Continuum of Inequality and Violence Visible\*

[English Version]

Herramientas para la comprensión sociológica del bienestar: analítica de las formas de precariedad social y visibilización del continuo desigualdad(es) violencia(s)

Ferramentas para a compreensão sociológica do bem-estar: analisar as formas de precariedade social e tornar visível o contínuo da(s) desigualdade(s) e da(s) violência(s)

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## Abstract

**Objective:** the aim of this paper is to test a sociology of welfare; that is, two analytical tools are argued to gain an understanding of the sociological content of welfare: 1) the identification of the forms of social precariousness existing in Mexico; 2) the idea of the continuum of inequality of violence and its visibility. **Methodology:** in defending their theory, the authors use analytical and qualitative sociology as a methodological perspective, where classical concepts of sociology function as reflexive tools to promote the elaboration of a qualitative, critical and normative thinking around the forms of precariousness and

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their opposite, welfare. **Results:** presented in two sections: 1) The emergence of violence as a structure for the precariousness of life, a section that reflects on the increase in the forms of violence and their importance when addressing the issue of well-being; 2) Analysis of the forms of social precariousness, which proposes a matrix of the main forms of precariousness that actually exist in Mexico, where the elements of the continuum of inequality of violence are identified. **Conclusions:** it is proposed that a qualitative sociological knowledge of social precariousness and violence, of the forms and dynamics of social action is necessary to understand the substantive meaning of welfare; useful knowledge to guide public actions in favor of welfare in democratic societies, especially to test innovation in the design of social policies.

**Keywords:** social precariousness; social inequalities; economic inequalities; exclusion; violence; peace; disaffiliation; social cohesion; poverty; marginalization; social policies; welfare; qualitative sociology; social action.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** el objetivo de este trabajo es ensayar una sociología del bienestar; es decir, se argumentan dos herramientas analíticas para conocer el contenido sociológico del bienestar: 1) la identificación de las formas de la precariedad social existentes en México. 2) la idea del continuo desigualdad(es) violencia(s) y su visibilización. **Metodología:** en nuestra argumentación se utiliza una sociología analítica y cualitativa como perspectiva metodológica, en donde conceptos clásicos de la sociología funcionan como herramientas reflexivas para impulsar la elaboración de un pensamiento cualitativo, crítico y normativo en torno las formas de precariedad y su anverso el bienestar. **Resultados:** se presentan en dos apartados: 1) La emergencia de la violencia como estructura de precarización de la vida, apartado que reflexiona sobre el aumento de las formas de violencia(s) y su importancia al momento de abordar el asunto del bienestar; 2) Analítica de las formas de precariedad social, en donde se propone una matriz de las principales formas de precariedad realmente existentes en México, allí se identifican los elementos del continuo desigualdad(es) violencia(s). **Conclusiones:** se plantea que un conocimiento sociológico cualitativo de la precariedad social y la violencia, de sus formas y dinámicas de acción social es necesario para comprender el significado sustantivo del bienestar; conocimiento útil para orientar las acciones públicas a favor del bienestar en sociedades democráticas, sobre todo para ensayar innovación en el diseño de políticas sociales.

**Palabras-clave:** precariedad social; desigualdades sociales; desigualdades económicas; exclusión; violencia; paz; desafiación; cohesión social; pobreza; marginación; políticas sociales; bienestar; sociología cualitativa; acción social.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o objetivo deste trabalho é testar uma sociologia do bem-estar; ou seja, são discutidas duas ferramentas analíticas para compreender o conteúdo sociológico do bem-estar: 1) a identificação das formas de precariedade social existentes no México. 2) a idéia do continuum de desigualdade(s) e violência(s) e sua visibilização.

**Metodologia:** nossa argumentação utiliza uma sociologia analítica e qualitativa como perspectiva metodológica, onde os conceitos clássicos da sociologia funcionam como ferramentas reflexivas para promover a elaboração de um pensamento qualitativo, crítico e normativo em torno das formas de precariedade e seu obverso, o bem-estar. **Resultados:** apresentados em duas seções: 1) O surgimento da violência como estrutura para a precariedade da vida, uma seção que reflete sobre o aumento das formas de violência(s) e sua importância ao abordar a questão do bem-estar; 2) Análise das formas de precariedade social, que propõe uma matriz das principais formas de precariedade que realmente existem no México, onde são identificados os elementos da(s) desigualdade(s) contínua(s) da(s) violência(s). **Conclusões:** argumenta-se que um conhecimento sociológico qualitativo da precariedade social e da violência, de suas formas e dinâmicas de ação social é necessário para compreender o significado substantivo de bem-estar; conhecimento útil para orientar as ações públicas em favor do bem-estar nas sociedades democráticas, especialmente para testar a inovação no desenho de políticas sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** precariedade social; desigualdades sociais; desigualdades econômicas; exclusão; violência; paz; desafiliação; coesão social; pobreza; marginalização; políticas sociais; bem-estar; sociologia qualitativa; ação social.

## Introduction

A sociology of welfare needs to develop ways of thinking around the problematic duality: precarization *vs.* welfare; for this reason, this paper argues for two analytical tools to understand the sociological content of welfare: 1) identification of the forms of social precariousness existing in Mexico, using this country as a typical ideal case of countries with medium development; 2) the idea of continuous inequality(ies) and violence(s) and its visibility.

As a working hypothesis, the authors propose the idea of a qualitative sociological knowledge of social precariousness and of its forms and dynamics of social action. This is necessary to understand the meaning of welfare and the orientation that public actions should have to build and guarantee it in democratic societies. Subsequently, a theoretical foundation of two sections is presented: a) sociological concepts and b) the sociological understanding of welfare – the black box of poverty data. The results are divided into two sections: 1) The emergence of violence as a structure for the precariousness of life, a section that reflects the increase in the forms of violence(s) and their importance when addressing the issue of well-being; and 2) Analysis of the forms of social precariousness, which proposes a matrix of the main forms of precariousness that actually exist in Mexico, where the elements of the continuum of inequality(ies) of violence(s) are identified. The matrix is composed of the following problem sets: a) forms of poverty, b) forms of historical and spatial exclusion based on racial, ethnic, and class origin, c) forms of labor disaffiliation, d) forms of violence.

## Methodology

In the argumentation the authors use an analytical sociology as a methodological perspective, where classic concepts of sociology function as reflexive tools to promote the elaboration of a qualitative, critical, and normative thinking around the forms of precariousness and its obverse, welfare.

The concept of social action acquires a methodological importance in the argumentation, since thanks to this, thinking in terms of social processes is possible. In this sense, this work is inserted within a qualitative methodological perspective, that is, one concerned with knowledge from the interpretation of the experience of the social subjects of inequality(ies) and forms of violence(s).

## Theoretical Basis

### Sociological Concepts

The concept of social exclusion in this work is understood as any process of discrimination regarding opportunities (Fernández-Enguita, 1998). Economic exploitation "consists of unbalancing the terms of exchange or the appropriation of the product of cooperation to one's own advantage" (Fernández-Enguita, 1998, p. 89). All forms of economic exploitation consist of an unfair asymmetry in the endowment of the economic product within the processes of exchange. The forms of exploitation appear in: the social division of labor, in the exchanges that take place in the market and in the domestic spheres of labor.

Disaffiliation is that area of society where individuals find themselves in a position of social exclusion, especially in relation to the formal labor market (Castel, 1997). Social cohesion is understood as those processes of individual and collective social action, as well as their organizational forms that allow for the unity of institutions. The sociological principle that makes social cohesion possible is organic solidarity; that is, social action based on a conscience or reflexivity in favor of the common good (Vázquez, 2008).

The sociological knowledge necessary to understand the meaning of well-being in our modern societies of medium development presupposes the identification of two sets of problems: a) social and economic inequalities, b) forms of violence. Both sets of problems are situations of a *social-historical* nature that function as powerful structures that shape individuals and their institutions, and that as structuring forces operate at different sociological levels: macro, meso and micro.

Qualitative sociological approaches to forms of social precarization require opening the black box of the processes and diverse articulations of inequality(ies) and violence(s); that is, it is necessary to unveil the system of social relations that explain the production and reproduction of inequalities.

Social precariousness implies a fissure, deterioration or disruption of social cohesion processes. The various situations of social precariousness impact the realization of each individual in terms of his or her full human condition, as well as his or her autonomy or individuation. In this sense, the social precariousness of life implies the impossibility of the historical and social unity and continuity of a society. Welfare as a situation assumes the security of broad integration of individuals into institutions. Well-being and its forms imply the possibility of a secure existence, not only in the continuity of life and society itself, but also in the possibility of democratic coexistence free of violence(s).

The precariousness of life implies two intertwined dimensions: the existence of fragile and unsustainable economies in relation to the environment, as well as societies with weak systems of social relations that fail to produce powerful systems of social cohesion, or, in other words, where the institutions of society are inefficient in preventing processes of violence(s) and zones of social anomie (due to ignorance or omission of norms). The precariousness of life implies a double spiral of economic disaffiliation and social disaffiliation in social contexts where forms of violence appear systematically, for example, in the ideal type of Mexico.

To understand such processes, it is necessary to try a qualitative sociological look; that is, to ask oneself about social action in its various directionalities: rational and normative as posed by Max Weber and creative (this directionality of social action shapes the other two, thus, for example, every morality of cooperation assumes a creative social action) (Joas, 2013). The working hypothesis is that without knowledge of the constellations of social action, knowing and understanding the structuring processes that trigger the various systems of inequality(ies) of violence(s) in the daily life of social subjects, collectives and institutions is impossible: how is adversity faced?

Social action, as constellations of action, has several readings: macro, meso and micro. On each reading floor what is produced are narratives of a social historical nature of processes; each is important in understanding precarity. Thus, in order to understand the forms of precarization of ethnic/racial groups, one must turn to long-range historical narratives. This is the case of the processes of exclusion of indigenous groups in Mexico, which have been left out of development for centuries (Stavenhagen, 1998). It is a social-historical narrative of injustice, which bases classism and racism as imaginary cultural structures.

The meso and micro-sociological narratives refer to the phenomenological experience of the workspaces; that is to say, the *socio-cultural* zones of recreation of life. At this time, clarifying that the labor zones are not the same as the economic zones is important, since their time is different; it is continuous. Following León (2017), the time of life has its best understanding in the act of breathing. The creative social action that takes place in the work areas intrinsically supposes a nebula of feelings, for which reason subjectivities are a matter of sociological knowledge that is difficult to bring to statistical order; that is, subjectivities move in the imperative need of life, which is that continuous time that has its best understanding in breathing. Within this time of life, there is a powerful need to remain; to survive: “thirst for existence ... In need of life, to nurture, protect and expand ourselves; not to succumb, get sick; not to suffer and remove what hurts us” (Leon, 2017, p. 29).

At a micro-sociological level, perhaps, the most complex life experience to understand as a process of social structuring is violence, due to its arbitrariness and its effect as damage(s). In this case, the statistical order is not enough as an act of knowledge, so its qualitative expressiveness is necessary, not only as a restoration process, but as a process of moral awareness of society.

Considering the above, a qualitative sociology of welfare – from the point of view of the experience of the subjects, as substantive knowledge of the effect of the various forces of inequality(ies) violence(s) – focuses its epistemology on the concepts and notions of: unity of the social, substantive time of work, social cohesion, organic solidarity, creative social action for the sustainability of life, agency, and autonomy in the political sphere, sustainable economy and symmetrical distribution of resources and wealth, resolution of conflicts as a mechanism against violence(s), citizen praxis, and production of peace zones.

The forms of well-being are a series of social, economic, legal, and cultural products; which are not possible or understandable without their system of relationships (social action and organization) that have made them possible. In this way, well-being is concretized in substantive facts for people; sometimes they appear as little everyday things like going to school, having dinner every day with the family, being able to read a book, covering an eight-hour workday for a fair salary, not being harassed in public spaces (in the case of women), and being able to access the internet for one hour a day (for young secondary school students). Well-being is presented in everyday history as a constellation of significant social events for individuals and basic social groups (families and communities).

Well-being, as a phenomenological experience, has its main receptacle in the person's body; that's why its main experiential flow, in modern societies, appears in the health-food-education continuum (or biography of well-being). This syntax of well-being appears as a writing of the social that is inscribed in the body and mind of social subjects; its recurrence appears as individual and collective memory that functions as the basis of satisfaction around life itself; as a successful and sustainable sequence, it becomes the cement of the foundational institutions of society: the safety of life constitutes the pillar of the continuity of the institutions and their enabling rules.

The satisfaction of this flow of substantive and continuous acts as a time of and for life constitutes an achievement for every society; for every family and community; for every nation and democratic State. Therefore, well-being and its concrete products must be: systematic throughout life, economically and ecologically sustainable, culturally situated, sufficient, morally acceptable and



expressible as the content of sociality (as part of a horizontal and subjective democratic communication). The radical opposite to the time of life is the time of war.

### **The Sociological Understanding of Well-being: the black Box of Poverty Data**

The condition of poverty is related to a precarious human condition, the man and the family in a condition of poverty is precarious *per se*. It is true that poverty as an imaginary cultural meaning has a negative moral content around the poor; something that Simmel had already noted in his essay on “*The Poor*” (Simmel, 2014) but that modern States have tried to turn around through a systemic refunctionalization treatment of the poor, to avoid social anomie. However, poverty in the contemporary world has a demeaning moral significance around the "poor." In this way, poverty functions as a stigma and even democratic governments give their public policies, aimed at alleviating poverty, a tutelary logic (Castel, 1997) where the poor are treated as *not subject* (Corrêa, 2015).

In this sense, in Mexico and Latin America the poor person is the peasant, who is even seen in some economic thought as a pre-modern economic agent, as an obstacle to the liberalization of the productive forces and the means of production. In urban areas, the poor man is the young violent gang member. Poverty as a social imaginary of stigma, is reduced to dirt and garbage as aesthetics; as a moral, it is reduced to the condition of non-subject, which immediately supposes the denial of citizenship to the extent that the non-subject is the one that has no conscience and, therefore, cannot exercise actions of economic or political autonomy. The non-subject is also the underdog (Corrêa, 2015), the one who has to receive charity from the State or society; he/she acquires the category of social deviance.

The issue of the stigma of the condition of poverty and the conception of the poor as a non-subject, in addition to its political implications, ends up generating social imaginaries that make invisible the powerful historical-social processes that construct them as precarious; just as it makes invisible the relationship systems that bring it closer, mesh and engage with forms of violence. This is so to the extent that poverty as a statistical data is nothing more than a result of a series of arrival variables (income, access to health, access to social security, access to education, access to decent housing, among others). For a qualitative sociological perspective, what is relevant is to recognize the

situations of access to each of these satisfiers, which means thinking about their real impact on the daily life of the subjects, as well as understanding the way in which these satisfiers are inserted in relational systems that make life possible in the world of work in precarious conditions.

The magnitudes of access and their stratification and spatial distribution of certain goods say little about their pragmatic and creative use to maintain life, or what is the same, they do not express their place and role within a substantive rationality in favor of the continuity of life under defined cultural principles and historically socially constructed territorial spaces. How do we build life and its significance in the time of life in situations of deprivation(s) in a given time and place? What is the logic of spending in situations of extreme scarcity?

The heuristic capacity of disaggregated poverty data in relation to exclusion processes is, however, limited; due to its statistical nature, it does not refer to other forms of exclusion, in particular to forms of exclusion due to discrimination, which is based on the relationship of stigma between subjects. Another dimension of exclusion due to discrimination that it cannot account for is the issue of racism, which is exercised at the level of social relations between classes. As is possible to see, the forms of exclusion do not end with the processes of access to certain properties and services, but rather expand according to the forms of discrimination and stigma existing in a given society, and have a second expansion of meaning when they conform to ideologies that sustain forms of violence.

The deeper understanding of the processes of exclusion, especially in countries and regions with a colonial past, has to do with the broad historical processes of construction of social structures that went through the forging of the colony and its complex processes of social distinction according to the race and social classes. Sometimes one must not ignore the existence of colonial agricultural structures that are the structural foundation of broad processes of economic exploitation in the countryside.

This set of aspects that concern the processes of exclusion of racial ethnic groups and specific social groups (the LGTBIQ+ community, for example) show that the forms of social exclusion are only understandable to the extent that they are understood as process and historic social stories.

In the case of income measurement in poverty methodologies, which are resolved around the construction of food baskets whose value depends on a line of moderate and extreme poverty, they are very far from expressing the forms of exploitation by exchange unequal in the market or by unequal allocations by the State (Fernández-Enguita, 1998). Exploitation as economic inequality supposes a political economy as conflict between classes, which gives meaning

to asymmetries in the endowment of resources and wealth. In Latin America, the distribution of income and wealth has to be studied as a result of long-term historical and social processes, where certain privileged groups not only control the bulk of the wealth of the countries, but also control the political dynamics of the States. An ideal typical case in this sense is the contemporary history in Chile.

Income measurements, their instrumentalization as poverty lines and their expression as positions in the social structure can say nothing about the real processes of disaffiliation (Castel, 1997), about their implications in terms of processes of social inclusion and exclusion, of affiliation and disaffiliation in relation to the labor market and the social institutions of the State. In this regard, Castel's wage society model (1977) for developing countries is somewhat distant, especially when, following the Mexican example, a majority of the population of working age is in the informal economy and those who are in the formal sector – the low-skilled working and service class – are in low-paying jobs.

In Mexico a complex and deeply precarious labor market exists. To generalize, in 2017 the percentage of those who earned less than a minimum wage was 24%; almost six out of 10 people worked in the informal economy (so they are excluded from any social security system); and the working population in the street represented just over 17% in the country and in Mexico City almost 22% (Alba and Rodríguez, 2021). "In the last three decades, work in Mexico has become precarious, and fewer and fewer jobs meet the minimum characteristics of decent work under the ILO definition" (Alba and Rodríguez, 2021, p. 169). Disaffiliation from the labor market implies a fragility of social relations, bringing individuals closer to areas of social anomie, producing processes of erosion of the individual's institutional supports.

Returning to the issue of social cohesion and the condition of poverty, remembering the vision of Castel (1997) is necessary. He reconsiders the concept of social exclusion as a situation of disaffiliation, where the subjects in a situation of exclusion are those who have weakened the ties that unite them with institutions such as the family, the community or companies, and in general with society. Social exclusion for Castel is not only a process of social closure, but a process of disaffiliation from society, of breaking social ties. For this author, formal work, guaranteed by the State or salaried society, is the main condition for the integration of a social subject into society. Therefore, access to a legally supported job, through a contract, is essential to avoid falling into disaffiliation. From this perspective, the condition of poverty is situated as a process of vulnerability and disaffiliation, to the extent that there is economic income below the needs for social reproduction, as well as the

existence of a weak link with the labor market (possibly one is in a situation of job discouragement, job insecurity, underemployment or open unemployment). At the same time, there is a weakening of family and community ties, which places people in a situation of risk and, perhaps, with the possibility of suffering various forms of violence. Extreme poverty approaches the condition of social anomie.

## Results

### **The Emergence of Violence as a Structure of the Precariousness of Life**

The forms of violence and their importance addressing the issue of well-being is something that should be considered by the qualitative sociology of welfare. Mexico is a clear example in which in recent decades violence appears systematically. It is a violence of at least three types: citizen insecurity, that exerted toward the female gender, and the violence exerted by organized crime. The effects of these types of violence have left enormous consequences in vast areas and regions of the country: poverty, forced displacement, regions outside the rule of law, and femicides.

To get an idea of the magnitude of the problem in the case of Mexico, according to the National Urban Public Security Survey (ENSU) carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (2022), by March 2022, 66.2% of the population aged 18 and over considered that it was unsafe to live in their city, and 71.7% of women had a perception of insecurity. In some of the most populated municipalities in the country, the perception of insecurity of its citizens exceeds 80% (Toluca, Ecatepec, Naucalpan, Tlalnepantla, among others). Organized crime, for its part, generated 30,000 victims by 2021 – the equivalent of three wars (Marcial, 2022).

Following the example of Mexico, the existential condition of poverty, both in the countryside and in the city, matches with an expansion of violence; that is, poverty as daily life is crossed by complex processes of violence. In this regard, the authors propose the notion of violence inequality as a continuous problem (Arzate, 2018); that is to say, today understanding the result of social and economic inequalities at the level of social action without knowledge of the structures of violence that are concomitant to them is not possible. With this the authors propose the hypothesis that the structures of inequality work in a

structured way with the structures of violence, making the daily life of women, children, families, urban and rural communities, problematic groups to deeply understand.

The sociological issue is that the ways in which social and economic inequalities are structured with the forms of violence can become a social regime; that is, in a system of social rules where the forms of social action assume a destructive social morality. This raises the total or partial absence of a rule of law; as well as an impossibility of a full citizen condition. Normalized violence at the level of forms of social action harms the citizen condition and its best expression, which is citizen praxis or action of subjects in the public space.

### **Analytical Way of Social Precarity**

From a qualitative sociological perspective, precariousness is investigated from the point of view of the subjects; that is, as experiential and phenomenological experience of the forms of inequality violence that surround their lives, without leaving the long-term social-historical analysis that explains the construction of forms of exclusion in the territory of certain social groups. The authors think that these two dimensions of the analysis of precariousness, as knowledge of a critical nature, are fundamental to building actions that elaborate on welfare from the perspectives of civil society, public scientific systems of social sciences and the democratic State through their public policies.

This knowledge of precariousness focused on the individual as an actor located in the institutions, territory, and history implies recognizing the voice of social groups in the face of inequality(ies) and violence(s), so the proposal of knowledge of the duality of precariousness/welfare seeks to make visible the voice of the most unprotected and vulnerable people; it represents an act of knowledge as well as social justice, of recognition of otherness, non-centrality, recognition of the creative capacity and political agency of these social subjects.

The main advantage of this methodological perspective is that qualitative knowledge of the environments in which the inequality(ies) and violence(s) take place allows knowing the state of social cohesion at the family, community and regional level; as well as detecting the processes of disintegration of society around the lives or biographical courses of women, children, young people, and older adults, the most vulnerable people in societies such as Mexico.

About the previous discussion, and to approach the knowledge of social precariousness from a historical/relational point of view with a perspective of social justice, a matrix of the main forms of precariousness is proposed, it explains the processes of weakening of the social fabric or social cohesion in countries similar to Mexico as a whole (see Table 1).

The matrix is composed by four problematic systems, all of them have been treated by the social sciences in some way: 1) Forms of poverty; 2) Forms of spatial-historical exclusion by racial, ethnic and class origin; 3) Forms of labor disaffiliation, and; 4) Forms of violence.

**Table 1.** *Matrix of the main forms of precariousness that explain the fragility of social relations or social cohesion in Mexico*

<b>1. Forms of poverty.</b>	<b>2. Forms of spatial-historical exclusion by racial, ethnic and class origin.</b>	<b>3. Forms of labor disaffiliation.</b>	<b>4. Forms of violence.</b>
1.1 Income below a poverty line	2.1 Urban segregation	3.1. Forms of exploitation in the social division of labor	4.1. Violence(s) against women and LGBT groups
1.1.1. Moderate poverty	2.2 Rural marginalization	3.2. Precariousness of work	4.2. Domestic violence.
1.1.2. Extreme poverty		3.3. Job discouragement	4.3. Racism as cultural violence
1.2. Poverty of time		3.4. Open work	4.4. Social security
1.3. No access to essential services			4.4.1. Citizen insecurity due to common crime
1.3.1. Exclusion and educational backwardness			4.4.2. Citizen insecurity due to organized crime
1.3.2. Lack of access to health services			4.5. State violence by state of emergency
1.3.3. Lack of access to social security			4.6. Violence for low-intensity war

1. Forms of poverty.	2. Forms of spatial-historical exclusion by racial, ethnic and class origin.	3. Forms of labor disaffiliation.	4. Forms of violence.
1.3.4. Lack of quality and space in the house			
1.3.5. Lack of access to basic services in the house			
1.3.6. Lack of access to nutritious and quality food			

Poverty, as a system of deprivation, has been measured in Mexico by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Policy (CONEVAL),<sup>1</sup> it has taken as a basis for its development the dimensions set out in the Ley General de Desarrollo Social (2004): exclusion and educational backwardness (1.3.1), lack of access to health services (1.3.2.), lack of access to social security (1.3.3.), lack of quality and spaces in the house (1.3.4.), lack of access to basic services in the house (1.3.5), lack of access to nutritious and quality food (1.3.6.). The poverty line has been calculated through the development of a food basket for the countryside and the city; from there the moderate and extreme poverty lines are derived. The poverty of time is added to the indicators of this dimension or system of relations (1.2.). It is relevant as it is considered as a complement to the notion of exploitation to measure time as a variable of production of forms of welfare.

The various measures of poverty are important as they provide a stratificational and territorial view of deprivation; due to that it is possible to know processes of asymmetric endowment of resources. It can generate conjectures around processes of social conflict derived from lack, and has also worked as an indicator of access to social rights. Today, multifunctional poverty methodologies have proven effective in producing stratified systems of deprivation that show different poverty lines (1.1.1 and 1.1.2).

Forms of spatial-historical exclusion by racial, ethnic and class origin consist of long-term historical discourses that explain at least two phenomena: urban segmentation (2.1.) and rural marginalization. Talking about

1. CONEVAL's poverty measurement can be found at: [https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/MP/Paginas/Pobreza\\_2020.aspx](https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/MP/Paginas/Pobreza_2020.aspx)

segmentation in urban spaces is better as the reality of large Mexican cities (Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Ciudad Juárez, and Tijuana) is characterized by isolated spaces, ghettified within the urban continuum; spaces that show less development in urban planning and public services, as well as severe conditions of economic poverty that coexist with multiple forms of violence and destruction of the social fabric. These are spaces where social anomie is the norm, and even where organized crime and common crime groups have taken control of life within themselves. Within families there are severe problems of addictions and gender violence; such is the level of conflict and violence in these segregated spaces of the city that, many times, are configured in true states of exception with the consent or silence of the State.

In rural areas, the authors prefer the classic term of marginalization. It refers to the theories of modernization in Latin America as spaces decoupled from the processes of modernization that exist. In general, the concept works as it is about spaces, regions and/or communities where there is a disconnection with the development processes of the country. In Mexico between the north and the south, many of these spaces also respond to what is known as new ruralities or spaces where agricultural activities are being displaced by service or industrial economies. Also it produces important processes of precariousness of work. In this case there is a marked bias of racial and ethnic origin that responds to a history of colonization. It also refers to struggles demanding natural resources, as it is the case of endowment of land, waters, and forests of the peoples of Mesoamerican origin. These territorial marginalization processes incubate cultural processes of strong roots such as the patriarchal culture that places women in disadvantage and violence. Along this line, exclusion and its forms are linked to the territory, so its characteristics, especially the situation of distribution of productive goods, are relevant to understanding the processes of precariousness of life in all its magnitude.

Work is a source of identity, affiliation and realization of the human kind. As the Marxist utopia of generic man thought, in the capitalist world it is a factor that explains poverty, since it is linked, to a large extent, to the wage product of labor. In Table 1 there are four forms of labor disaffiliation (3.1., 3.2., 3.3. and 3.4.). The exploitation, a concept developed by Marxism in its different versions ranging from the classic work of Karl Marx to analytical Marxism that discovers and recognizes the forms of exploitation in the market, as well as, in certain contexts, the exploitation exercised by the State against its citizens, without forgetting the exploitation on a domestic scale or in non-monetary economies. The cultural dimension of exploitation initiated by Marx and continued by the so-called Frankfurt School cannot be forgiven. Accordingly, man is alienated and turned into an object in the context of



capitalism as a civilization. Recognizing this category of analysis to understand precariousness is essential, since in countries similar to Mexico there are extremely low wages, as well as a working class, day laborer, and service workers who suffer an asymmetric endowment for their work in formal and informal markets, not to mention other barbaric forms of exploitation such as sexual (trafficking) and slave labor. The female unpaid care work falls into the concept of exploitation.

Precarious work is a worldwide reality, but especially in Latin America. After several decades of neoliberal policies, it is still a relevant issue as is job discouragement; a situation affecting young university students. Open unemployment is already an area of disaffiliation and of anomie. Studying these forms of precarious life is important to establishing a link between the data on poverty and violence with the labor world. It is also important to know more about the way in which work, and types of exploitation and precariousness explain the destruction of the social fabric. They cause the fragilization of institutions that should function as supports, as well as the existing forms of violence within the labor world, particularly harassment and sexual violence toward the female gender and diversities.

Forms of violence is a particularly sensitive issue because violence not only disrupts the human condition, but destroys and kills individuals; destroys communities and nations; produces mass exoduses, hunger, underdevelopment, and planetary predation; diverts economic resources that could be destined for development; and leads to the financing of war. This study comprises five recurrent forms of violence with tremendous consequences and complex articulations with poverty, forms of exclusion, and labor disaffiliation.

Violence against women is a matter of concern, because of the high number of femicides, as well as because this type of violence is a systemic phenomenon: women suffer from different forms of violence at home, at governmental institutions, at schools, at productive workplaces, as well as in childhood, adulthood, and seniority. Violence appears in dating and conjugal relationships. Violence against women is direct or physical, emotional or psychological, and economical. Women suffer different types of stigmata (Frías, 2014). In this sense, its visibility is paramount, especially giving voice to women who have been violated as an act of first justice. The discourse of patriarchal culture explains the complexity of gender violence. Researching the relationships between forms of inequality and gender violence; examining the ways in which inequalities are based on principles of authority, domination, and social control; and understanding the processes of social construction of trends in the struggle for women's autonomy, equity, and freedoms may also be important.

Domestic violence (4.2.) mainly appears in areas of urban segregation and marginalization. The urban areas are related to addictions and organized crime. Additionally, gender-based violence is constant aggressions with consequences on girls and young women, because they are often perpetuated by family members. Racism (4.3) is a form of symbolic violence of colonial origin and to some extent invisible in our societies.

Citizen insecurity in the form of common crime (4.4.1) and organized crime (4.4.2) have become a constant all over the country, of course, is linked to poverty, marginalization and spatial segregation. Blunt violence contributes to the weakening of the social fabric. Organized crime, particularly the case of drug cartels, is present in almost every city in the country, taking control of neighborhoods with extreme poverty and spatial segregation. Their activities (sale of narcotics, extortion, kidnapping, trafficking, control of local markets) have huge consequences on the social fabric and local economies; their activity exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities. In this case, young people who are disaffiliated from the labor market are the ones mainly affected. For Williams (2010), the presence of organized crime in cities such as Ciudad Juarez has meant a disintegration of society, therefore, its actions produce anomie (as a degeneration of rules and norms).

State violence due to a state of exception (4.5) is a real possibility and has been experienced as a result of State action against guerrilla groups and even against certain social movements. Low-intensity conflict (4.6) is different from the previous, because it occurs in territories where organized crime groups take control of large territories or regions, whereby the State ceases to have a presence (this happens in Mexico in regions of the states of Michoacán, Tamaulipas, Durango, State of Mexico, and Sinaloa, among others) with terrible effects on the population involving forced mobility, as well as a total defenselessness of the population against organized crime. This type of violence has led to the emergence of paramilitary groups and community self-defense groups that engage in low-intensity conflicts with the cartels.

The forms of precariousness in the matrix function work in the *social-historical reality* and are related to each other in a complex way: *coimplicating, reinventing* themselves, producing problematic spirals, generating specific dialectics that determine and structure each other. This deals with problematic continuums that produce processes of double social structuring, that is, where the great structures of inequality structure individuals and these in turn reproduce these structures of inequality, sometimes making them more powerful. This functions in such a way that in the social-historical reality inequality(ies) and the forms of violence(s) associated with them must be understood as processes of social action or problematic syntaxes (Arzate *et al.*, 2010).

To account for these problematic syntaxes, sociology must strategically draw on qualitative sociology, social-historical reconstruction strategies – focused on the notion of region and/or territories of identity and belonging – as well as advanced quantitative measurement techniques – as in the case of those used for the measurement of poverty and marginalization – among others. For the case of the voice of the subjects, the work of qualitative sociology of reflexive intervention at the level of families and communities is irreplaceable.

## Conclusions

The authors have argued about two useful tools for the sociological qualitative understanding of welfare: an analytical form of social precariousness and a notion of visible inequality(ies) and violence(s). Based on this argument, a qualitative sociology of welfare is relevant when, in a country like Mexico, the different structures of social precariousness converge in the production of a social regime of violent inequality.

In this sense, approaches to the different forms of precarity from a qualitative sociology are necessary to: (a) rearticulate the macro or social historical explanatory discourses with the processes of social action within local, community and workplaces; (b) understand the complex and novel articulations between inequality(ies) and violence(s); (c) give voice to the most precarious social individuals of society as a first social justice act; (d) understand the logic of social production of the different articulations of inequality(ies) and violence(s); (e) understand the subjective and normative contents generated in vulnerable societies; (f) make visible the continuum of inequality(ies) and violence(s) as a process of double social structuring; (g) understand violence as a social-historical whole, in particular to understand its moral contextual content and meaning, and from this to act in favor of processes of social action for conflict resolution; (h) understand the implicit rational, normative and creative contents in the systems of relationships that produce forms of solidarity and social cohesion; (i) understand how recreating life in anthropo-cultural terms in the midst of intense zones of inequality(ies) and violence(s) is possible; (j) understand poverty as a precarious expense and

as a creative social struggle for the maintenance of life and the unity of the social as fundamental objectives, and; k) understand the reflexive content of citizen praxis, that is, the meaning of a morality of the common good in vulnerable contexts.

In conclusion, this possible qualitative knowledge of inequality(ies) and violence(s) is relevant to understanding the substantivity of precarious forms and their dynamics of social action; as well as well-being understanding and the guidance of public actions to building and guaranteeing it in democratic societies. First level knowledge for the design of robust social intervention strategies that can transcend the design of social policies based on mere economic transfers.

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# Determinants of the Probability of Gaining a Job in a Colombian City with the Highest Unemployment \*

[English Version]

Determinantes de la probabilidad para acceder a un empleo en una de las ciudades con mayor desempleo de Colombia

Determinantes da probabilidade de acesso a um emprego em uma das cidades com maior nível de desemprego da Colômbia

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## Abstract

**Objective:** this article studies the main job search channels in Neiva, a city characterized by the highest unemployment rate in Colombia. The main purpose is to analyze the factors related to the use of formal and informal job search channels in Neiva. **Methodology:** to achieve this, an econometric model with a limited Probit dependent variable was estimated, considering demographic, labor, and socioeconomic characteristics that may affect the choice of job search methodologies. **Results:** among the main results, the higher the educational level, the higher the probability of finding a job through a formal job search channel; likewise, the higher the socioeconomic strata, the lower the probability of finding a job through formal channels. **Conclusion:** individuals with more favorable socioeconomic conditions are generally part of wider contact networks, which allow them to access the labor market more easily through informal job search channels.

**Keywords:** search; demand; unemployment; occupation; probability.

## Resumen

**Objetivos:** en este artículo se estudian los principales canales de búsqueda de empleo en Neiva, ciudad caracterizada por tener la mayor tasa de desempleo de Colombia. El propósito fundamental es analizar los factores que se relacionan con el uso de canales formales e informales de búsqueda de empleo en Neiva. **Metodología:** para lograrlo, se estimó un modelo econométrico de variable dependiente limitada Probit, teniendo en cuenta características demográficas, laborales y socioeconómicas que puedan incidir en la elección del medio de búsqueda de empleo. **Resultados:** dentro de los principales resultados se destaca que, a mayores niveles educativos, mayor es la probabilidad de acceder a un empleo a través de un canal de búsqueda formal, así mismo, a mayores estratos socioeconómicos, menor es la probabilidad de encontrar empleo a través de canales formales. **Conclusión:** los individuos con condiciones socioeconómicas más favorables, generalmente hacen parte de redes de contactos más amplias, que les permiten acceder al mercado laboral de manera más fácil, a través de los canales informales de búsqueda de empleo.

**Palabras-clave:** búsqueda; demanda; desempleo; ocupación; probabilidad.



## Resumo

**Objetivo:** este artigo estuda os principais canais de busca de emprego em Neiva, uma cidade caracterizada pela maior taxa de desemprego da Colômbia. O principal objetivo é analisar os fatores relacionados com o uso de canais formais e informais de busca de emprego em Neiva. **Metodologia:** para conseguir isto, foi estimado um modelo econométrico de variável dependente limitada Probit, levando em conta características demográficas, trabalhistas e socioeconômicas que podem influenciar a escolha do meio de busca de emprego. **Resultados:** entre os principais resultados, destaca-se que quanto maior o nível educacional, maior a probabilidade de acesso a um emprego através de um canal de busca formal; da mesma forma, quanto maior o estrato socioeconômico, menor a probabilidade de encontrar um emprego através de canais formais. **Conclusão:** os indivíduos com condições socioeconômicas mais favoráveis geralmente fazem parte de redes mais amplas de contatos, o que lhes permite acessar mais facilmente o mercado de trabalho através de canais informais de busca de emprego.

**Palavras-chave:** busca; demanda; desemprego; ocupação; probabilidade; desemprego.

## Introduction

The unemployment rate is one of the many indicators that exist to evaluate the economic situation of a country or region. Unemployment is one of the main problems of the economy and generates enormous concern in society, as it is directly related to the welfare and buying power of people (Bildirici, *et al.*, 2012). According to figures from Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), in 2020 the national unemployment rate was 15.9%, 5.4% above the figure recorded in 2019. In the thirteen main cities this figure reached 18.2%. The cities with the highest unemployment rates, according to the report, were: Neiva (26.1%), Ibagué (25.6%) and Cúcuta (23.7%); while the cities with the lowest unemployment rates were: Barranquilla (12.3%), Cartagena (14.6%) and Pasto (16.7%). It is important to mention that this increase in the unemployment rate is particularly explained by the global pandemic generated by the Covid-19 disease that started in 2019 and considerably affected the economy; however, it should be mentioned that even before 2019, in 2018 for example, Neiva's unemployment rate (11.6%) was above the national average (9.7%).

However, in the pre-pandemic period, Neiva did not register the highest unemployment rates in the country, the effect of the quarantines in the city caused the unemployment problem to worsen, and thus Neiva was categorized as the city with the highest unemployment. This is a structural problem generated by the city's weak industrial and entrepreneurial capacity. According to the Regional Labor Market Observatory of Huila, ORMET Huila, Neiva's business potential is concentrated in three main economic activities: wholesale and retail trade with 42.60%, accommodation and food services with 10.70% and manufacturing industries with 9.20%. These activities account for a large part of the city's employment generation; they are activities that were largely affected by repeated social isolation.

Generally, in economies with high unemployment rates, informality tends to be higher, and this affects the right to decent work or work with dignity, that is, work where one enjoys productive and decent employment, in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity, where rights are respected and where there is commensurate remuneration and social protection (International Labour Office [ILO], 1998). According to Zepeda-Martínez (2016), periods of economic stagnation characterized by high unemployment rates accentuate workers' problems of not being able to find decent employment, which has led to migration and the informal labor economy.

Job search channels are mechanisms that enable such a search in the labor market, but, even so, it is a subject rarely studied in developing countries and

regions. The search process is usually complicated, since the efficiency of the search channel used must be verified and the determinants that may affect the type of occupation must be evaluated. If these channels are formal, the way they link people is regulated by institutions and the process is much more efficient compared to the management of informal channels.

According to José Uribe *et al.*, (2007), the central problem in the use of job search channels is the imperfect information that may exist in the market, and the possible restrictions involved in the search process (time available, biased information, search costs, etc.). That is, individuals differ in their characteristics, skills, preferences and resources, which causes the use of such channels to be differentiated among individuals. For example, people who have acceptable job characteristics but do not have access to good search channels are likely to accept jobs that do not suit them or that are not in line with their characteristics, experience and expectations, in contrast to people who have access to official and more efficient search channels (Weller, 2003).

"He who has the information, has the power." This famous popular adage acquires relevance in this context, as this situation of high unemployment rates can be attributed not only to the socio-economic situation of the country and the region, but also to the citizens' unawareness of the different existing job search channels (Bod'a, M. and Považanová, 2021).

The effectiveness of job search channels is closely related to the magnitude of frictional unemployment, and this can have a significant impact on the duration of unemployment (Viáfara and Uribe, 2009). For this reason, the purpose of this article is to analyze (through probabilities<sup>1</sup>) the factors that are related to the use of job search channels in Neiva.

In this work, two types of channels were defined: i) formal search channels, which refer to all channels that are public and freely accessible, i.e., visiting, taking, or sending resumes to companies or employers and/or employment exchanges or intermediaries, publishing or consulting classified ads, searching through public or private announcements, or through the SENA information system; and ii) informal search channels, which refer to the social capital of each individual. Informal channels include help from family, friends and colleagues, neighbors, and contacts with strong or weak ties.

From the methodological point of view, a Probit probability econometric model was estimated, based on a set of demographic, labor and socioeconomic characteristics. Information is available from DANE's integrated household survey (GEIH) for the year 2020.

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1. The probabilities will be estimated through Probit econometric probability models, which allow finding the statistical probability of the occurrence of a given event.

Usually, these types of studies are developed at an aggregate level of countries, or in the most important or outstanding regions. However, in a country like Colombia, characterized by presenting the highest Gini<sup>2</sup> coefficient in South America, after Brazil, internal socioeconomic inequalities are usually greater, thus, the studies that are developed for a certain region cannot necessarily be applied to other regions. Hence, this article is relevant, as it analyzes the problem of job search in a city like Neiva, with an economic and social reality that is different from the rest of the country.

## Theoretical Foundations

Unemployment, also known as out of work, is the situation in which people find themselves who do not have or cannot acquire a job, regardless of age, ability or desire to work, (Mankiw, 2014). In Colombia, a person is unemployed when they meet four conditions: i) they are of working age, ii) they do not have a job, iii) they are looking for job, and iv) they are available to work. The unemployment rate is the indicator that measures the relationship between the number of unemployed and the total active population. This rate measures the percentage of unemployment within the active population and its calculation, as deduced from the definition, is made by dividing the unemployed population by the active population (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 2020).

According to Mankiw (2014), unemployment tends to have greater consequences in developing countries, because the labor market is imperfect, being the macroeconomic problem that affects people more directly and more seriously. Unemployment can be analyzed from two aspects: structural unemployment and frictional unemployment. Structural unemployment consists of unemployment caused by the differences between the qualification or location of the job offer, and the qualification or location required by the employers of the same; that is, the differences between labor supply and demand. On the other hand, frictional unemployment shows how workers, given their different preferences and abilities, stop working because these do not match the current labor supply. Many times, frictional unemployment is also generated by an information problem. This is why the job search channels analyzed in this article are mainly related to the second type of unemployment.

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2. An economic indicator that measures income inequality in a territory.

An important aspect in the entire employment issue is the job search channels, which are the specific mechanisms that people use to look for and acquire a job.

According to Lin (1999), contact networks can provide additional information to potential workers or employers about the characteristics of companies, which allows individuals to have certain advantages. Granovetter (1974) goes a little further, and argues that the network of contacts can explain to a greater extent the achievement of a job, even more than the same traditionalist theories that make references to human capital; that is, those that have to do with the accumulation of productive capacities such as years of education. Authors such as Rees (1966), Mcentarfer (2002) and Montgomery (1991) argue that employers often use personal networks in employee selection processes, especially those that derive from recommendations from their own employees, particularly the most productive; as they infer that the recommended people, due to the fact of belonging to the social circle of a productive worker, will also have high levels of productivity.

For their part, Coleman (1998), Richards and Roberts (1998) refer to the importance of social and physical capital in the search for a job. Those who have a larger social capital and better socioeconomic conditions are more likely to find a job. Usually, greater physical capital is associated with higher productive characteristics, and this, added to an extended social network, increases the chances of being employed. When physical capital is lower, there are fewer productive characteristics, less education, and likewise, the achievement of a job with better conditions is limited.

Few studies in Colombia have investigated the subject of job search channels. Viáfara and Uribe (2009) used data from the Quality of Life Survey (QLS) to study the duration of unemployment and search channels in Colombia by applying a duration model and an efficiency indicator. The authors found that job search channels are essential during the duration of unemployment. According to them, informal job search channels are more used; however, the duration of unemployment for those who use these channels tends to be longer, indicating less efficiency than in formal channels. Along this same line, Del Río *et al.*, (2012) reached differentiated results in Cartagena. The authors found that the most used means of job search are mainly classified ads generated by companies, however, the most efficient channels for finding a job are the informal ones.

For their part, Morales *et al.*, (2019) measured the effect of the Public Employment Service (PES) as a formal search channel on the probability of finding a job in Barranquilla. Using propensity score matching techniques, the authors found that those who use this type of service are more likely to find

a job. Other research focuses especially on the duration of unemployment in cities such as Cali (García and Rivera, 2017), directed at specific populations such as the "ninis" (Mora, Caicedo *et al.*, 2017), with a gender approach (Arango and Rivers, 2015; Lora, 2020), for professional unemployed (Mora, Cendales *et al.*, 2017), or analyzing unemployment from a structural approach (Arango and Flórez, 2020). However, few recent studies at the national level analyze the factors related to the use of formal and informal job search channels.

At the international level, the empirical evidence is broader. Through probability models, Brinbaum (2020) studies the main channels of access to employment by descendants of immigrants in France, where networks (family and friends) and intermediaries (public and private) play a preponderant role in finding a job. In the same sense, Goel and Lang (2019) found in Canada that networks also play an important role in immigrants acquiring a job. The greater the network of contacts, the smaller the difference in wages with compared to other workers who do not use these networks. In addition, Leschke and Weiss (2020), using limited dependent variable models, found that social networks made up of family members, friends, or acquaintances can facilitate access to the labor market and thus improve integration in the labor market in the European Union. However, some markets are segmented toward activities carried out specifically by immigrants.

Other authors such as Nicole Gürtzgen *et al.*, (2021) in Germany, and Roshchin *et al.*, (2017) in Russia, analyzed how the internet era and digital information have impacted job search channels. Both studies conclude that the Internet has become an efficient and increasingly used tool, not only by the unemployed looking for work, but also by companies looking for workers with better productive characteristics. In France, people with higher levels of education and who have already worked, prefer to search a job through a website (Mussida and Zanin, 2020). Pradeep and Muraleedharan (2018) found that in the software industry in Bangalore, the most common methods of finding employment are informal. In the same way, Oesch and Von Ow (2017) find in Switzerland that those who seek employment through social networks are more likely to find better qualified jobs with higher pay. Similarly, Ailun Xiong *et al.*, (2017) used a Probit model and obtained similar results in China; additionally, they conclude that people with more experience and education tend to conduct a formal job search.

## Methodology

According to the objective, the population of employed people living in Neiva city aged between 18 and 65 years was taken into account. This type of research is classified as non-experimental research. It is also known as *ex post facto* research. The term comes from Latin and means after the events occurred. This method is used for determining the variables that significantly influence job search channels in the city of Neiva.

The data used was taken from DANE's Large Integrated Household Survey (GEIH) for the year 2020. To determine which are the factors that affect the probability that a person will get a job through formal and informal search channel, a Probit econometric model with errors of robust standards was estimated. It allows for controlling possible problems of heteroscedasticity. This model is part of the family of models of limited dependent variables. It indicates the probability of occurrence of an event, in this case, the probability that an individual acquires a job through a formal search channel. The Probit model presents an explained variable ( $Y$ ) which has only two possible outcomes: 0 and 1. In this case, 0 equals an individual who got a job through a non-formal search channel; while 1 corresponds to an individual who got a job through a formal search channel. The model also has a vector of explanatory variables ( $X_n$ ), as the variables defined in Table 1. According to these specifications, the model is expressed as follows:

$$P(Y = 1|x) = F(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_n x_n) = F(\beta_0 + \beta x) \quad (1)$$

Where  $F$  is a standard normal cumulative distribution function that assumes values that are strictly between zero and one,  $0 < F(z) < 1$ , for all real numbers  $z$ .

Table 1. List of Explanatory Variables

General Characteristics	Variable type	Sector in which employed	Variable type
Head of household	Binary, (1) is head of household	Industry (Base category)	Binary, (1) if one works in the industrial sector

General Characteristics	Variable type	Sector in which employed	Variable type
Own housing	Binary, (1) has own home	Agricultural	Binary, (1) if one works in the agricultural sector
Gender	Binary, (1) is female, (0) is male	Mines and quarries	Binary, (1) if one works in the mining and quarrying sector
Married	Binary, (1) is married	Health and Community Services	Binary, (1) if one works in the health and community services sector
Social security	Binary, (1) pays social security	Electricity, gas and water supply	Binary, (1) if one works in the supply sector
Stable job	Binary, (1) job is stable	Construction	Binary, (1) if one works in the construction sector
Current journey satisfaction	Binary, (1) is satisfied with the current journey	Education	Binary, (1) if one works in the education sector
Online job	Binary, (1) found online job	Commerce	Binary, (1) if one works in the trading sector
Family allowance	Binary, (1) receives some state family allowance	Hotels and transport	Binary, (1) if one works in the hotel and transportation sector
Job satisfaction	Binary, (1) is satisfied with the current job	Real estate	Binary, (1) if one works in the trading sector
Experience	Continuous, in years	Public Administration	Binary, (1) if one works in the public administration sector
Age	Continuous, in years	<b>Type of occupation</b>	<b>Variable type</b>



<b>General Characteristics</b>	<b>Variable type</b>	<b>Sector in which employed</b>	<b>Variable type</b>
Log <sup>3</sup> (income)	Continuous, measure in log.	House work	Binary, (1) if one is a house worker
Primary Education (Base category)	Binary, (1) has primary education	Freelance worker	Binary, (1) if one works independently
High school graduate	Binary, (1) has High School degree	Private employee	Binary, (1) if one is a private employee
Technician	Binary, (1) has technical education	Job without remuneration	Binary, (1) if one is a house worker without remuneration
University graduate	Binary, (1) with university education	Laborer	Binary, (1) if one is a laborer
Postgraduate	Binary, (1) if you are postgraduate	Government employee	Binary, (1) if one is a government employee
Low stratum (basic category)	Binary, (1) strata 1 and 2	Other occupations	Binary, (1) if one has other occupations
Medium stratum	Binary, (1) strata 3 and 4	<b>Company size (N° employees)</b>	<b>Variable type</b>
High stratum	Binary, (1) strata 5 and 6		
From 6 to 10 employees	Binary, (1) works in a company with 6 to 10 employees	Only one person (Base category)	Binary, (1) only one employee in the company.
More than 11 employees	Binary, (1) works in a company with more than 11 employees	From 2 to 5 employees	Binary, (1) works in a company of 2 to 5 employees

3 . Log means natural logarithm, in this case, the variable Income was expressed in natural logarithm in order to linearize the variable.

Generally, Probit models are preferred to as Logit models, basically because of the normal cumulative distribution, which gives priority to the assumption of normality; in other models, such as Logit that are distributed with a logistic function, the treatment of different specification problems turns out to be more complex. The use of econometric models of limited dependent variable, as showed in the previous section, has been generalized in research related to the labor market, especially when the purpose compares two situations; for example, employed or unemployed, formal or informal employment, or as in this case: job search through formal or informal channels.

Table 1 shows the list of independent or explanatory variables that were taken into account for the estimation of the proposed econometric model. However, it is important to notice that although a significant number of variables were considered, as it can be seen in Table 1, not all appear in the subsequent tables of the results, as some of them turned out to be statistically non-significant, and according to the adjustment of the model, omitting them from the estimates was more appropriate.

## Results and Discussion

When estimating the Probit model (see Table 2), it is remarkable that age has a negative relationship with the dependent variable; that is, the older the age, the lower the probability of accessing a job through a formal search channel. Individuals who receive a family allowance are less likely to access a job through a formal search channel. If the person is satisfied with the benefits and allowances they receive it reflects a higher probability of having obtained their employment through an informal search channel. The higher the income, the greater the likelihood of getting a job through formal search channels. Gender and socioeconomic strata did not present statistical significance, so it cannot be confirmed that these variables have any relationship with formal job search channels.

Table 2. Probit Model Estimation Results

Variables	Coefficients	Variables	Coefficients
<b>General Characteristics</b>		<b>Working Sector<sup>∞</sup></b>	
Gender	-0.0229 (-0.35)	Agriculture	-0.732* (-1.89)
Age	-0.00626** (-2.21)	Mines and quarries	0.228 (1.08)
Family allowance	-0.185*** (-3.07)	Electricity, water and gas supply	0.196 (0.87)
Job satisfaction	-0.197** (-2.45)	Construction	-0.186 (-1.33)
Log(income)	0.278*** (4.15)	Commerce	0.0234 (0.22)
Medium stratum	-0.0780 (-0.88)	Hotels and transport	-0.178 (-1.47)
High stratum	-0.606 (-1.52)	Real estate	0.157 (1.12)
Online job	-1.112*** (-6.82)	Public administration	0.646*** (3.82)
Current journey satisfaction	0.210** (2.12)	Education	0.442*** (2.95)
High School graduate+	0.367*** (4.07)	Health and Community Services	0.195* (1.52)
Technician	0.565*** (5.62)	<b>Type of Occupation</b>	
University graduate	0.547*** (4.64)	Private employee	0.596*** (3.05)
Postgraduate	0.450*** (2.97)	Government employee	0.950*** (3.82)
Constant	-2.564** (-10.12)	N	2327
		Pseudo R2	0.1973
		Correctly predicted percentage	72.8%

Note. \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. Between () the z statistic of wald test. + the base category for the educational level is "no education". ∞ the base category for the sector where the individual works is the "industrial sector."

Concerning education, technicians, high school graduates, university students and people with postgraduate degrees have greater possibilities of gaining a job through formal job search channels than those without education. Private and government employees are more likely to gain employment through formal job search channels. With respect to the working sector, those in public administration, education, health and community services sectors have higher probabilities of gaining employment through formal search channels than those in the industrial sector. Agricultural workers are more likely to gain employment through informal job search channels. There is no statistical significance in the other economic sectors.

The goodness-of-fit of the pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> model of measures shows that the variation of the independent variables explains 19.73% of the variation of the probability of gaining employment through formal search channels. The percentage of correct prediction is 72.8% of the time, which indicates the accuracy of the estimated model of correct prediction for both the probability of gaining employment through formal and informal channels.

Table 3. Marginal Effects of Explanatory Variables

Variables	COEF.	Variables	COEFF.
General Characteristics		Sector where one works <sup>∞</sup>	
Gender	-0.0085997 (-0.02452)	Agriculture	-0.224275** (-0.087)
Age	-0.0023472** (-0.00106)	Mines and quarries	0.0882373 (0.08317)
Family allowance	-0.0694325*** (-0.02263)	Electricity, gas and water supply	0.0755528 (0.08847)
Job satisfaction	-0.0740123** (-0.03017)	Construction	-0.067427 (-0.049)
Log (income)	0.1043426*** (0.02513)	Commerce	0.008802 (0.0394)
Medium stratum	-0.0289661 (-0.03251)	Hotels and transport	-0.064894 (-0.04284)
High stratum	-0.1939013 (-0.10159)	Real estate	0.0602433 (0.05462)

Variables	COEF.	Variables	COEFF.
Online job	-0.4172493*** (-0.06183)	Public Administration	0.2513487*** (0.0654)
Current journey satisfaction	0.0789017** (0.03718)	Education	0.1727*** (0.05932)
High school graduate	0.1399012*** (0.03453)	Health and Community Services	0.0747382* (0.04596)
Technician	0.21285895*** (0.03894)	<b>Type of Occupation</b>	
University graduate	0.2129003*** (0.04607)	Government employee	0.3650056*** (0.09076)
Postgraduate	0.1755781*** (0.05981)	Private employee	0.2066404*** (0.06058)

Note. \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01. Between () the standard error. + the base category for educational level is "no education." ∞ the base category for the working sector is "industrial sector."

Marginal effects were estimated for the analysis of the magnitude of the parameters, which indicate how marginal changes of one unit affect the change in the predicted probability. These estimates are illustrated in Table 3. As noted, an increase in age decreases the probability of gaining employment through formal search channels by 0.23%. With respect to education, results show that people with high school degrees are 13% more likely to gain employment through formal search channels than those without education, while people with university or technical degrees are 21% more likely to gain employment through formal search channels than people without education. Likewise, those with postgraduate education are 17% more likely to gain employment through formal search channels. In general, higher levels of education are associated with a higher probability of gaining employment through formal search channels.

However, people who receive a family allowance are 6.9% less likely to gain employment through formal search channels than those without family allowance. For 1% income increase, the probability of gaining employment through formal search channels increases by 0.1%. Higher socioeconomic conditions are related to a higher probability of gaining employment through informal search channels.

In terms of occupational position in current employment, government employees have 36.5% higher probability of gaining employment through

formal search channels than other employees, while for private sector employees, this probability accounts for 20.6%. Likewise, people who are satisfied with the benefits provided in their current jobs are 7.8% less likely to gain employment through formal search channels than people who are not satisfied, networks or social capital allow them to find jobs with better conditions. With respect to the branch of activity, workers from the agricultural sector are 22% less likely to gain employment through formal search channels than those working in industry; on the other hand, for those working in the educational sector, the probability of gaining a job through formal search channels is 17.2% higher than in the industrial sector. A similar situation occurs with employees in the public administration, health and community services sectors.

Table 4 shows the marginal effects estimates for the binary variables. The statistical significance for each variable, with their respective categories, did not change with those presented in Tables 2 and 3; therefore, these were not incorporated into Table 4.

Results indicate that high school graduates have 46.2% of probability of gaining employment through formal search channels, while technicians have 52.4% of probability, and those with graduate degrees have 51.7% of probability. As educational levels increase, the greater the probability of gaining employment through formal search channels, because education provides individuals with greater productive characteristics to enter the labor market with a higher level of qualification.

These results coincide with those obtained by Uribe et al., (2007) who state that people with technical, high school, and university education levels present a higher probability of gaining employment through formal search channels compared to people without education. According to Oviedo (2007), if the level of education increases, the probability of choosing and gaining a job through formal search channels methods increases. In contrast, Quiñones (2010) found no relationship between years of education and job search through formal channels, he concluded that investment in human capital is not significant for gaining a job in a formal environment, a situation that goes against intuition.

**Table 4.** Probabilities of Gaining a Job through Formal Search Channels According to the Categories of the Explanatory Variables

Variables	Cat.	P.	Variables	Cat.	P.
<b>Education (cat. Base: Without Education)</b>			<b>Working Sector (cat. Base: industry)</b>		
High school student	0	0.352	Mines and quarries	0	0.385
	1	0.462		1	0.458
Technician	0	0.346	Sum. electricity, gas and water supply	0	0.385
	1	0.524		1	0.446
University graduate	0	0.360	Construction	0	0.391
	1	0.533		1	0.335
Postgraduate	0	0.372	Commerce	0	0.385
	1	0.517		1	0.392
<b>Stratum (cat. Base: low strata)</b>			Hotels and transport	0	0.393
High stratum	0	0.388		1	0.339
	Medium stratum	0	0.391	Real estate	0
1		0.367	1		0.432
<b>General Characteristics</b>			Public Administration	0	0.352
Family allowance	YES	0.422		1	0.567
	Job satisfaction	NO	0.367	Education	0
YES		0.398	1		0.517
Online job	YES	0.398	Health and Community Services	0	0.379
	NO	0.338		1	0.439
Current journey satisfaction	YES	0.719	Agriculture	0	0.388
	NO	0.368		1	0.195
Gender	YES	0.380	Private employee	0	0.261
	NO	0.445		1	0.417
Gender	Male	0.390	Government employee	0	0.329
	Female	0.383		1	0.649

The economic sector of education and public administration show 51.7% and 56.7% of probability, respectively, to gain employment through formal search channels. These sectors are characterized by more formal hiring activities with pre-established hiring processes. Sectors as agriculture show 19.5%

of probability. These types of economic activities are less formal and are characterized by poorly defined and more traditionalist processes. In this sense, private employees (41.72%) are less likely than government employees (64.90%) to access employment through a formal search channel.

**Table 5.** *Estimation of Probability According to Age*

Age	Probability	Age	Probability
18 years old	0.4147698***	43 years old	0.355041***
23 years old	0.4026155***	48 years old	0.3434606***
28 years old	0.3905547***	53 years old	0.3320253***
33 years old	0.3785982***	58 years old	0.3207443***
38 years old	0.3667569***	63 years old	0.3096265***

Note. \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

An important contribution of Probit models is that the probability can be estimated over the entire distribution of a continuous variable. This is one of the main differences with respect to linear probability models, where the effect of a continuous variable such as age can be estimated, which does not necessarily have to be linear. In this case, the age variable presents a probability distribution that is estimated in five-year intervals from 18 to 63 years of age. Estimates show that individuals aged 18 are 41.47% more likely to find a job through a formal search channel, while for individuals aged 63, this probability decreases to 30.96%. This shows an inverse relationship between age and the probability of finding employment through a formal job search method, as people increase their years of life, expand their social circle and acquire more work experience, making it less likely that they will find employment through formal channels; as, taking advantage of their social capital, they seek to access a job in which they achieve a higher level of job satisfaction (see Table 5). According to Fernández (1991), this may be caused by the diminishing returns of approaching older ages and the obsolescence of human capital; older age implies access to informal channels, contacts and friends to find a job. Along the same lines, Varela-Llamas and Nava (2015) also found that, at older ages, individuals are less likely to seek employment to improve income, which is reasonable due to a decline in the marginal productivity of labor over time.



## Conclusions

Unemployment is one of the main economic problems that countries such as Colombia face on a daily basis, as it affects especially the most vulnerable population with less productive characteristics. The interaction between supply and demand for employment is not always effective, and these mismatches, which have become a challenge for modern economies, can lead to unemployment problems; hence the importance of implementing job search channels that respond to the needs of the market. But the channels that should be especially encouraged are the formal ones, since this would indicate that the labor market is more institutionalized, and finding supply and demand is more agile. If the presence of informal channels is higher, this indicates that there is a labor market that adjusts much slower, thus the matching between vacancies and unemployed is inefficient.

The results of the estimated Probit model show that the higher the age, the lower the probability of getting a job through a formal search channel. In certain activities, people's productivity tends to decrease over time, hence the need to turn to family and friends, that is, to their own social capital, which should be greater as they get older.

Education is an important aspect of an individual's personal and professional development. Higher levels of education are associated with higher probabilities of accessing the labor market through a formal search channel. More education allows the individual to have more tools to compete for a job and to rely less on social capital (informal channels) to obtain employment. This is an important aspect, as it is a signal from the market that education truly increases the probability of accessing the labor market.

Individuals with favorable economic conditions have lower probabilities of accessing employment through a formal search channel; this is a matter of endowment, generally people with higher incomes have higher levels of education, which allows them to access jobs more in line with their abilities. Likewise, people who receive some type of family subsidy, present a greater probability of accessing the labor market, but through informal channels; this result makes sense, since individuals who receive this type of state support are generally people with low income levels and few productive characteristics (little education and experience), so they have few tools to compete in the labor market, and the easiest way to access the labor market is through recommendations from friends and acquaintances.

With respect to the branches of economic activity, individuals in education, public administration, health, and community services sectors have the

highest probability of accessing a job through a formal channel, while those in the agriculture sector have the lowest probability. In both cases, the level of formalism of each sector has a great deal to do with both market participation and the different contracting processes they carry out. In the first group there is a demand for employees with higher levels of qualification, who are more easily found in the labor market, since the unemployed with better qualifications compete there and companies have the option of choosing according to the productive characteristics of the individuals. In other sectors, labor profiles with lower levels of qualification are in demand, to develop more generalized or mechanized activities; therefore, it is easier to resort to informal channels to hire people, since the cost of using the channel is lower.

Alternatively, government employees have a higher probability of getting a job through a formal search channel; this seems a paradoxical result considering that the government sector is characterized by granting jobs according to the affinity with the politician in office, that is, the use of informal channels is more common. However, this result can be explained by the policy of public competitions through the National Civil Service Commission, which during the last 15 years has carried out more than 70 calls to fill public positions in different state institutions at all territorial levels. Private employees are also more likely to access employment through a formal search channel.

Likewise, workers who obtain employment through friends and family contacts are more satisfied with the job, indicating that informal channels apparently offer jobs where individuals are more satisfied, either because of the activities they perform and/or the salary levels. Similarly, the study revealed that one of the most relevant factors in determining which job search channel to select is education. In all the results found, it plays an important role, either directly or indirectly. This result is in line with those found in other regions of the country; however, it is considered pertinent to design training strategies, especially at the high school and technical and technological education levels, focused on the efficient use of formal job search channels.

The role of education is fundamental in job search processes; therefore, it is not only important to invest in education in the early stages of academic life, but also in a constant learning offer. This can help mitigate the age issue, because as people get older, the likelihood of using formal job search channels decreases.

Finally, it is suggested that future research could address the assessment of changes (if any) in the job-seeking behavior of the unemployed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, because the social distancing norms put in place – to prevent the spread of the virus – might have contributed to an increased preference for certain channels.

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# Social Citizenship in Rural Acapulco, Mexico: Resistance, Solidarity, and Social Cleavage in Times of Pandemic 2020-2021\*

[English Version]

Ciudadanía social en Acapulco rural, México: resistencia, solidaridad y clivaje en tiempos de pandemia 2020-2021

Cidadania social na zona rural de Acapulco, México: resistência, solidariedade e clivagem em tempos de pandemia 2020-2021

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## Abstract

**Objective:** this research aims to study the Papagayo River Basin (CRP for its acronym in Spanish) in relation to environmental sustainability, local economy, and social citizenship. **Methodology:** it starts with a participatory diagnosis through three integrating axes: 1. Systematic observation; 2. Stakeholder mapping; 3. Use of a variant of social mapping, which consists of holding meetings with members of all the actors participating in the research (communities, government, and academic institutions) where a process of exchanges of opinions called "egalitarian dialogues" prevails.

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**Results:** 1. Through the strategic alliance among the actors, the social appropriation of knowledge was strengthened; 2. The variant of social mapping, as a participatory methodology, enabled the exchange of knowledge between the communities and academia. **Conclusions:** 1. The communities that make up the PRC are committed to their territory to participate in integral development projects; 2. Promoting the social economy based on principles, values, and good practices is important; 3. Safeguarding the environmental conditions of the Papagayo River and all its tributaries is also a priority; 4. With the strengthening of conditions (2) and (3), access to rights is made possible and, with it, the construction of social citizenship.

**Keywords:** social economy; social citizenship; Papagayo river basin; community actors; common use resources.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** esta investigación tiene como objetivo el estudio de la Cuenca del río Papagayo (CRP) en relación con la sostenibilidad ambiental, economía local y ciudadanía social. **Metodología:** parte de la realización de un diagnóstico participativo a través de tres ejes integradores: 1. Observación sistemática; 2. Mapeo de actores; 3. Uso de una variante de cartografía social, que consiste en la realización de reuniones con integrantes de todos los actores participantes en la investigación (comunidades, gobierno e instituciones académicas) donde prevalezca un proceso de intercambios de opiniones denominados "diálogos igualitarios". **Resultados:** 1. A través de la alianza estratégica entre actores se fortaleció la apropiación social del conocimiento; 2. La variante de cartografía social, como una metodología participativa, posibilitó el intercambio entre conocimiento de las comunidades y la academia. **Conclusiones:** 1. Las comunidades que integran la CRP están comprometidas con su territorio para participar en proyectos de desarrollo integral; 2. Es importante impulsar la economía social que se sustente en principios, valores y buenas prácticas; 3. También es prioridad salvaguardar las condiciones ambientales del río Papagayo y todos sus afluentes; 4. Con el fortalecimiento de las condiciones (2) y (3) se posibilita el acceso a los derechos y, con el ello, la construcción de la ciudadanía social.

**Palabras-clave:** economía social; ciudadanía social; cuenca del río Papagayo; actores comuneros; recursos de uso común.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** esta pesquisa visa estudar a bacia do rio Papagayo (CRP) em relação à sustentabilidade ambiental, economia local e cidadania social. **Metodologia:** baseia-se em um diagnóstico participativo através de três eixos integradores: 1. Observação sistemática; 2. Mapeamento dos atores; 3. Utilização de uma variante de mapeamento social, que consiste em realizar reuniões com membros de todos os atores participantes da pesquisa (comunidades, governo e instituições acadêmicas) onde prevalece um processo de troca de opiniões chamado «diálogos igualitários». **Resultados:** 1. Através da aliança estratégica entre os atores, a apropriação social do conhecimento foi reforçada; 2. A variante do mapeamento social, como metodologia participativa, tornou possível a troca de conhecimento entre as comunidades e a academia. **Conclusões:** 1. As comunidades que compõem o PRC estão comprometidas com seu território para participar de projetos de desenvolvimento integral; 2. É importante promover uma economia social baseada em princípios, valores e boas práticas; 3. Também é prioritário salvaguardar as condições ambientais do rio Papagayo e de todos os seus afluentes; 4. Com o fortalecimento das condições (2) e (3), é possível o acesso aos direitos e, com ele, a construção da cidadania social.

**Palavras-chave:** economia social; cidadania social; bacia do rio Papagayo; agentes comunitários; recursos de uso comum.

## Introduction

The state of Guerrero, Mexico, is characterized as a federal entity with a high degree of marginalization in its communities. It shares this *status* with states such as Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, in which 40% of communities with high and very high degrees of marginalization are concentrated (National Population Council [CONAPO], 2015). In rural areas, this situation increases and worsens with so-called vulnerable groups, such as women and indigenous people. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI, 2020), nationally there are 185,243 rural and 4,189 urban localities. In Guerrero there are 6,627 rural and 142 urban localities; Guerrero is ranked 13th nationally for its number of inhabitants (3,540,685). Twelve out of every 100 persons aged 15 years and older cannot read or write, 51 have completed basic education, 22 have completed high school and 16 have completed higher education. Only slightly more than 45% of the inhabited private homes have a bedroom, 49.4% have internal plumbing, 98.0% have electricity, 53.2 % have sewerage connected to the public network. According to the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social de Guerrero (2021) the average income of the employed population presents up to two minimum wages.<sup>1</sup> The indigenous people represent an important group whose situation follows the pattern of the national trend, where they are historically excluded. The structural roots of their marginalization are determined by cultural, economic, social, and political factors. In Guerrero there are four indigenous groups: Mixtecos, Nahuas, Tlapanecos and Amuzgos; all of them share a low development of social citizenship and consequently high rates of social exclusion (Fleury, 2007).

Derived from the Covid-19 disease of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, many economic activities in Mexico were affected, among other reasons, due to limitations in social interactions. The first case was detected in the country on February 27, 2020 (BBC News World, 2020). From then on, the actions of the state, municipal and federal governments focused on social distancing, which resulted in an almost total stoppage of different economic activities. The rural sector in the municipality of Acapulco, mainly anchored to the dynamics of the city, suffered the effects of the stoppage of tourism and economic activities. On the one hand, because production destined for the domestic market did not find an outlet in local demand, and on the other hand, because a large part of the employed population was partially or totally employed in the tourism

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1. Two minimum wages are equivalent to \$345.74 in Mexico and \$16.8752 U.S. dollars: 29/04/22)

sector. Consequently, the pandemic affected the right to work of an important sector of the rural population of this municipality. According to the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), during the month of June 2020, the State of Guerrero (of which the aforementioned municipality is part) suffered a 7.2% decrease in formal employment (Télez, 2020).

The Municipality of Acapulco de Juárez is classified with a *low degree of marginalization*, as opposed to the classification attributed by the localities, which ranges from a *very high degree of marginalization* to *very low*. The municipality was also classified with a very low degree of social backwardness. However, each community (or locality) presents different ranges of *degree of social backwardness*, predominantly low social backwardness (Fierro-Leyva, 2021).

In this context, carrying out a community diagnosis of the new needs of the producers affected by the pandemic and the insecurity in the region was necessary. The proposal focused on understanding the territorial needs that could arise from the new normality, the potential for organization, production, and commercialization, as well as detecting the opportunities and strengths that could be used to provide solutions to the needs identified by the actors of the territory, from a social citizenship perspective.

In this vein of reflection, it can be said that social economies, represented by the Family Production Units (FPU) throughout rural Acapulco, constitute a transformative gamble (Foro Global de la Economía Social [GSEF], 2018) because it empowers people, while strengthening community ties. For some scholars such as Vuotto and Fardelli (2012) and Diez *et al.*, (2020) supporting the social economy is an exercise of governance and a cultivation of social citizenship, as they generate mechanisms of social inclusion, which is defined as: "the capacity of society to build an active citizenship, eliminate discriminatory barriers in the market, and disseminate a culture of solidarity" (Fleury, 2007, p. 99).

Alternatively, at the public policy level, it should be taken into account that the evaluation of the results of the social economy involves learning, the internalization of values, community priorities and consideration of human dignity (Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible [ODS], 2020). The satisfaction of these premises opens the way for the expansion of social citizenship in this rural area of Acapulco.

## Theoretical Possibilities: Social Citizenship and a Solidarity Economy

The social and solidarity economy constitute the reference to strengthen the key category of this work: construction of social citizenship. In this sense, there is a theoretical debate about these possibilities where exclusion and discrimination, as undesirable situations, constitute the societal objectives to be challenged. Thomas Humphrey Marshall (2007), who revitalized the concept of social citizenship, argues that citizenship understood as a *status* integrates access to basic resources for the exercise of rights and duties. In this regard, Añón (2002) comments that "non-discrimination in access to these resources constitutes the necessary and sufficient condition of citizenship" (p.1) and emphasizes that "inequalities and situations of dissatisfaction of basic needs, clearly interfere with the capacity for deliberation or the affirmation of solidarity as a social bond of cohesion" (Añón, 2002, p. 1). Social rights for Añón are inextricably linked to those of social justice and the protection of the most vulnerable people; in the case of the study that concerns us, the community members of the rural area of Acapulco.

In turn, Freijeiro-Varela (2008) maintains that well-being translates into autonomy, dignity and integrity, and that social citizenship must go beyond the border of only the provision of material goods. Quoting Amartya Sen, the author argues that it is necessary to move from a "social citizenship focused on minimal material equalization in the face of inequalities generated by the market, to a social citizenship oriented toward the creation of social opportunities" (Freijeiro, 2008).

In the same sense, Cortina points out that civil and political rights must be recognized and protected, as well as "economic, social and cultural rights." Citizens require – in addition to free expression – association, awareness and participation, food security, clothing, housing, work, and healthcare. The author affirms that, without creative imagination, without initiative, collaboration, and cooperation, meeting the needs of the community, especially those who are most vulnerable is not possible (1998).

The idea of a transformative social economy still constitutes a category with few empirical references, but it is still a guiding base to improve an undesirable state of affairs. For example, the Global Forum of the Social Economy maintains that it:

[...] aspires to build a socioeconomic system that places people, their communities, and their environment at the center of all its processes. A system whose objective is to guarantee the sustainability of life in all its aspects and to promote equitable, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable well-being for all people

— women and men — and peoples anywhere in the world. (Foro Global de la Economía Social, 2018)

The main objective, according to Hernández (2020) is to bring together social movements and initiatives that share the desire to put people and the environment at the center of the economy and put an end to the economy based on extraction, growth, competitiveness, and the market, and that fight to advance toward resilient and collaborative societies (p.1).

Crespo-Arnold and Fernando Sabín-Galán (2014) place the social market as the main pivot of an economic proposal, when they state that:

... not only must it improve the procedures and tools with which it is equipped to become a viable and massive alternative, a way in which it would really acquire meaning, but it must continue to question and invent itself, in a continuous dialogue with the movements and the critical citizenship, to definitively and fundamentally break with capitalist economic logic in favor of another that put people and life at the center. (p.116)

Whereas, Coraggio proposes:

the creation of a space where the interests of the majority can be asserted, of a collective space. That it is not a space that begins already dominated and that those who are summoned to participate are to accept or legitimize a decision that has already been made; populist or not. Nor can it be a space where the voice of the majority is imposed by the weight of the numbers. (2002, pp. 8-9)

The reflection that Coraggio shares on this topic is essential to understanding the collective tasks (thought and action) that involve committing to the transformation of a state of affairs. It begins by establishing the conditions for the construction of spaces for change where there is dialogue and conflict and where the participants can learn and search together; because the exact path to follow is not yet known. It also suggested that the space should be one of convergence, which enables alliances and legitimacy; in such a way that the priority is to recover the strategic unity between economy, politics, and society (Coraggio, 2002).

Reality is the “synthesis of multiple determinations,” which does not mean the sum nor the coexistence, neither the juxtaposition; too much is known but not enough, one always has to learn and be open, not go to the “precise” nor look for replicable formulas. On the contrary, an exchange of knowledge and

overcoming of that knowledge that exists today must be strengthened to accept that there is hope. It is concluded:

It is still possible that we have to sacrifice more, but it makes no sense to accept greater sacrifices if it is not with the certainty that something else is going to come, and without seeing that everyone is sacrificing, that there are no elites that not only do not lose, but That win with impunity with the crisis. They cannot ask us for more sacrifices if there will be no possibility of overcoming this. (Coraggio, 2002, p.10)

Correspondingly, Razeto (2007, p.17) reflects on the mistaken idea of development. This is an idea that does not produce human happiness; it is not comprehensive; it is a concentration of wealth rather than the effective development of human and social potentialities. It is a development that is being questioned because to accumulate that wealth, natural resources that are not renewable are being irrationally exploited, ecological balances are being destroyed, and the environment is deteriorating. It is a development that has a poverty content, which is not favorable to human life. He adds that it is necessary to think about another development, in another type of economy, of solidarity and cooperation oriented toward sustainability for good living, and that strengthens a lasting peace between communities. Regarding the work of this author "Topics of Comprehensive Economy," Gómez-Núñez (2017) makes an excellent critical review on the subject, highlighting the complexity of the theoretical approach of alternative economies in Latin American countries — especially in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador. This is how we talk about social economy, solidarity, popularism, and good living. All point to regional development and integration. The idea that Luis Rezeto offers (the previous quote) on development constitutes a good beginning for possible current debates.

Afterwards, some questions asked by Marañón-Pimentel *et al.*, (2012) are shared: Is thinking of an alternative economy without a different policy and subjectivity possible? Is the solidarity economy part of a proposal for social transformation? What are the theoretical implications of thinking about these solitary economic experiences as part of this project of social transformation? (Marañón-Pimentel *et al.*, 2012, p. 14). The previous reflections remain as a permanent task for the search for community and societal transformation through strengthening the social economy to weave citizenship with social rights.

## Participatory Methodology: Equal Dialogues and Social Cartography

The heuristic of this research is the result of the integration of three methodological axes: 1. Systematic observation; 2. Mapping of actors; and 3. Use of a variant of social cartography. During the recognition tours of the communities in the rural area of Acapulco, systematic observation was used<sup>2</sup> and interviews were conducted with key informants made up of authorities and community leaders. The first set of questions was about principles, values, and good practices implemented in their daily and productive activities. In the second component, reagents were integrated to carry out the mapping of actors, attending to the following axes: 1. Prosocial attitudes (cooperation, reciprocity, trust, and respect for rules and arrangements); 2. Levels of interest in the intervention (for, undecided, and against) and 3. Levels of power or influence over other actors.

In the second phase of the research, a variant of the participatory methodology, known as social cartography, was implemented. Social Mapping (SC) is a participatory methodology that generates local geographic information on the needs and interests of the population sectors. The SC for its exercise is divided into collaborative mapping and community mapping. These methodological alternatives "allow a community to recognize, rebuild and re-signify its territory in order to choose and decide on new ways of living and managing it. They imply processes of construction, validation, and recognition of local knowledge, in order to articulate a counter-narrative of external visions of the communities' territory" (Hernández *et al.*, 2020, p.11). For the implementation of this technique and the environmental conditions given (pandemic and insecurity), the action of direct communication was privileged through thematic meetings called "egalitarian dialogues (ED)." The assistants identified their activities through the elaboration of collaborative maps and located the different areas of opportunities in their environment; however, the use of the participants' voice was decisive for the proposals' systematization (Table 1).

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2. Systematic observation consisted of recording facts that were previously categorized; for example, observe the significant elements of the social economy, ways to face the pandemic, values, and good practices, among others.



**Table 1.** Meetings "Egalitarian Dialogues (ED)"

Name	Strategic axis
1	Digital maps and social cartography
2	Local development and social economy
3	The Social Economy (SE) as an alternative for social change
4	Food self-sufficiency
5	Production, marketing, and consumption circuit
6	Decolonize the currency
7	Social financial system
8	Solidarity market

Note. These dialogues were held on the two main routes of the Papagayo River (East and West). (Fierro-Leyva, 2021)

It should be mentioned that in rural communities there is a feeling of being used by researchers from different academic institutions, because the results are not disseminated and there is a lack of a commission (an alliance of actors made up of the government, academics, and communities) monitoring research activities. This situation was not easy to overcome, but it was achieved because well-known people in the communities had already joined the network and took the message to other places in the rural areas of Acapulco. Finally, they also had excellent allies from the same region.

## The Papagayo River Basin: Resistance, Solidarity and Social Cleavage

The CRP constitutes a territory with sufficient potential in Common-pool Resources (CPRs), but until now the inexistence of policies to reverse the situation of poverty and marginalization of this territorial space has been the reality. The participatory diagnosis shows the territorial needs that arise from the new normality (pandemic context), the potentialities of organization, production, and marketing; as well as the opportunities and strengths that can be exploited to provide a solution to the needs already identified<sup>3</sup>. The challenge of this research was outlined with a long-term vision addressing the stated question: How to restore social rights in the CRP and, therefore, strengthen the construction of social citizenship in the territory? The theoretical assumption<sup>4</sup> is the following: by strengthening environmental justice (care of ecosystems) and promoting the social economy in the region, is approaching social citizenship possible.

In Acapulco, there are two large hydrological basins: the Sabana River Basin (CLS) and the Papagayo River Basin (CRP). This work considers the analysis of this last subregion (CRP), due to the following specific considerations: 1. It is one of the basins of Mexico that is in good environmental and ecological condition in a territory where the land is communal property<sup>5</sup>; 2. The component communities of the CRP do not dump industrial waste (there are no industries in this zone); 3. There is a high potential for fishing because it is very close to the sea; 4. It is a navigable river and can connect with the sea and a lagoon called "Tres Palos"; 5. It is the main source of water for Acapulco; and 6. The topography of the river, consumption and flow allow sufficient generation of electricity to supply other territories, according to studies by the Federal Electricity Commission-Mexico (Sabás-Vargas, 2012).<sup>6</sup> This potential of the CRP has not translated into the well-being for the riverside population; on the contrary, the communities present high rates of poverty, marginalization, and social backwardness (Table 2).

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3. A general diagnosis of the rural area of Acapulco was carried out in the aforementioned investigation (Project 314483).

4. Instead of hypothesis, the theoretical assumption concept is used.

5. In Mexico there are three types of land tenure: private property, ejidal, and communal property. A definition of Communal property, in the context of Mexican law, is as follows: set of lands, forests, and waters, patrimony of the population centers, which in fact or by right keep the communal state, be they the resources of common use (RCU).

6. Misael Sabás Vargas describes the conflict of international scope that aroused the construction project of a hydroelectric dam in the CRP called "La parota" in the rural area of Acapulco.

**Table 2.** Degree of Marginalization of the Localities of the Papagayo River Basin (CRP)

<b>Route/Location</b>	<b>Degree of Marginalization CONAPO 2016</b>	<b>Social backwardness</b>
<b>Route 1 Río Papagayo-WEST</b>		
El Salto	High	Low
San Isidro Gallinero	High	Medium
La Concepción	Very high	High
Parotillas	High	Medium
Los Iltamos	High	Medium
Las Parotas	Very high	High
San José de Cacahuatpec	High	Medium
<b>Route 1 Río Papagayo-EAST</b>		
Apalani	Very high	High
El Rincón	High	Medium
EL Carrizo	High	Medium
Cacahuatpec	High	Medium
El Cantón	High	High
Huamuchitos	Very high	High
Barrio Nuevo de los Muertos	Very high	High

Note. Prepared by (Fierro-Leyva, 2021)

The CRP with the rural area of Acapulco constitute the opposite extreme from the prodigious international port, because in poverty and marginalization they are not different from other regions of Guerrero; therefore, it could be said that there are two Acapulcos: the rural – the excluded, poor, and marginalized; and the urban – where public policies take hold and private initiative has taken its place in its diverse investments. The economy of the territory is mainly family-based, the producers have rustic production systems with a low level of production performance (Fierro-Leyva, 2021).

The limited access to capital, the scarce technology used, restricted marketing channels, scarce training, and technical assistance do not make having higher control of its production possible. The presence of intermediaries that

monopolize agricultural and handicraft production is encouraged. Agriculture oriented toward corn, pumpkin, rosehips, lemon, chili, bean crops, and other vegetables is scarcely technical. Most of the cultural and harvesting work is done manually. There is little fertilization and the productive system is completely temporary. The costs to produce corn, as well as other crops, are higher than the income they obtain from sale. They are not ready to reach the profitable economic scale necessary; nor is there enough to devote to the products' commercialization.

The problem of the territory was aggravated by the economic cessation generated by social distancing, decreed by the Federal Government. In this context, carrying out a community diagnosis of new needs of producers affected by the pandemic was necessary. They have seen their economic activity and quality of life reduced. The challenge was (and still is) to strengthen the social sector of the economy of rural communities of Acapulco, for the improvement of living conditions, with gender equity and respect for human rights in the framework of peace processes and care for the environment. The commitment (although it sounds repetitive) is to build a lasting strategic alliance, to establish the conditions for the design and strengthening of a transformative social economy proposal for social welfare (Fierro-Leyva, 2021).

For the construction of a prosperous territory, with better quality of life indices, a strategic alliance between the inhabitants, governments, and academic institutions is inescapably required, so that together they design a route for progress based on decent work and cooperative effort with social commitment. It is a huge task to conceive and design an orderly and sustainable model for a rural territory, where prospective planning constitutes the guiding compass based on principles, values and good practices and, the essence of action, whatever these may be.

Any social economy project must consider the integration of marginalized communities if its goal is a society in which social welfare prevails. In this sense, the social economy goes beyond the mere consideration of producer-consumer economic cycle, and also contemplates aspects involved in citizenship, human rights, gender equality, the environment, resilience, democracy, and an essential vision of human dignity.

The line along which the social economy develops confronts the capitalist economy, which in turn reduces the economy to merely an exchange of commodities in a market. This premise is based on the assumption of rational humankind and free markets; that there is a free exchange of commodities by individuals, based on a geometry of profit and loss, generating strategies for a better position of profits is assumed. Capitalist dynamics, which are based on these assumptions, tend to be exclusionary because the economic expression of

its processes is only possible if there are social relations of inequality of power, and if it creates and maintains a political system that reinforces this unequal relationship. This is exacerbated in societies with pre-modern characteristics; they have failed to separate the economic and political element from the public, which also contains persistent acts of corruption and impunity; the law does not necessarily reflect a rule of law (Fierro-Leyva, 2021).

In this part of reflection, the social economy is a transformative gamble, because it empowers people and strengthens community ties. For some governments to support the social economy is an exercise in governance and a fostering of citizenship; however, to promote an institutional initiative for territorial development (incorporating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) implies the construction of a strategic alliance of the different sectors involved, and mainly of the community actors of this region.

The relevance of promoting the environmental conservation and economic reactivation of the CRP lies in the imminent danger of not investing (neither via government nor private initiatives) in this region, even though it is the main supplier of water and other natural resources in the municipality of Acapulco and surrounding territories. This situation has signaled an alert in this region of Guerrero and generated proposals for imminent social cleavages<sup>7</sup>, namely: 1. The Centro Turístico Acapulco Sur is being built with large State and business investments (Hernández, 2021)<sup>8</sup>; 2. The Private Initiative (PI) is proposing to form the "New Acapulco" to address insecurity in the municipality (Tejado-Dondé, 2021)<sup>9</sup> and 3. Another very tense situation that may arise in CRP is the idea of re-municipalization by the community actors

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7. The idea of social cleavage implies a fragmentation or division of a social group for ethnic, religious, economic, political, cultural, and agrarian reasons, among others.

8. *Forbes Mexico* published that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) foresees that the new tourist development Acapulco Sur, in Guerrero municipality of San Marcos, as well as the construction of a highway from Acapulco International Airport, will curb migration and displacement of the population from Costa Chica to Guerrero. The Acapulco Sur Tourist Center is considered one of the priority projects of the Integrated Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and the south-southeast of Mexico, with the purpose of making migration safe, organized, and regulated; it also aims at attacking its causes and makes human mobility a chosen option, according to the body headed by Alicia Bárcena.

9. The decomposition of Acapulco (violence, messages to pressure authorities and protection racketeering) began in this century. Such is the decomposition that, because the port seems impossible to recover, the Private Initiative (PI) has formally proposed to divide the coastal region into two parts: 1. The traditional coastal zone called "Miguel Alemán"; and 2. The "open sea" beach area called Punta Diamante (to the west). Many investors are trying to save their properties, developments, and sources of employment, as they see the port collapsed by insecurity, and with an unusable potable water and sewage network. It is important to highlight that national and foreign businessmen consider Acapulco to be the only coastal area and completely have forgotten about the rural zone that corresponds to two thirds of the municipal territory. (Correction accepted).

of this region, to separate from Acapulco and to form a new municipality because they are not being attended to by the different levels of government (Gómez, 2020).<sup>10</sup>

### Identification of Opportunity Areas in the CRP–Acapulco Rural Area

Through a social cartography approach (participatory methodology variant), areas of opportunities (AOP) were identified in the rural region of Acapulco. The proposals emerged from meetings called "egalitarian dialogues" on the East and West routes of the Papagayo River, as they are considered the micro-regions with the greatest number of communities that share common problems. However each of these two main routes has specific interests and needs. The problems are arranged according to the following categories: 1. Citizen participation and infrastructure; 2. Keys to the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE); 3. Food self-sufficiency and production circuits; and 4. Solidarity financial systems (Table 3).

Table 3. Parameterization of Categories, Strategic Axes, and Proposals

CATEGORY	STRATEGIC AXES	PROPOSALS
I. Citizen Participation and Infrastructure	Participatory diagnosis	Building a specialty health care system in the CRP
		Strengthening security mechanisms
		The construction of a communication bridge between the eastern and western part of the Papagayo River basin is required.
		Ecological rescue of the Tres Palos lagoon through the strategic alliance of the actors that make up the Horizontal Knowledge Network.

10. The president of Bienes Comunes de Cacahuatpec, municipality of Acapulco, asserts that this sub-region should become a municipality because it meets the requirements; moreover, the assembly of 46 communities agrees to separate from Acapulco. This is because their demands are not being met, such as the construction of a hospital, the improvement of roads, and support for projects to promote the region.

CATEGORY	STRATEGIC AXES	PROPOSALS
2. Keys to the Social and Solidarity Economy	Principles, values, and best practices	Promote ecotourism by developing identified potential visitor sites (hot springs, Papagayo River tours, among other attractions).
		Training in service sector activities should be integrated into the SE laboratory proposal.
3. Food Self-sufficiency and Production Circuits	Food self-sufficiency	Establish a social economy laboratory for training and specialized technical assistance.
		Initially, two agro-industrial cooperatives need to be promoted: one for processing lemons and the other for rosehips.
4. Solidarity Financial System	Solidarity financial system	Design and propose a solidarity-based financial system for the rural area
		Promotion of solidarity bazaar and use of social currency

Note. Prepared by (Fierro-Leyva, 2021)

### Deactivating Conflicts and Tensions in the CRP

A conflict of international scope in the rural area of Acapulco, in the Papagayo river basin, was the announcement of a hydroelectric project called "La Parota." This project over the river was announced by the director of the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), Alfredo Elías Ayub, in 2000. At the beginning of 2003, CFE personnel arrived at the site to carry out the corresponding technical studies. Faced with this situation, a group of community members prevented this governmental body from continuing its activities in the CRP, giving rise to the formation of the Council of Ejidos and Communities Opposed to La Parota (Sabás-Vargas, 2012). For Rodolfo Chávez (2009), this is the first conflict in the state of Guerrero.

Due to an investment megaproject, a business of transnational capital that intends to impose itself onto the indigenous people and peasants, ejidatarios, and communal farmers. The Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), which operates the project, is a promoter of large, mainly foreign capital. The CFE seeks to put the project out to bid, obtain resources from international banks, hire large construction companies, insert it in its program of financed public works and sell the profit to the investors. (Chávez, 2009, p.1).

Chávez Galindo argues that this conflict begins when the CFE tries to impose the project without prior, free, and informed consultation with the communities of the CRP. The voice of the community members was a resounding no to the construction of the hydroelectric dam, initiating a repertoire of protests throughout downtown Acapulco and other parts of Mexico and the world (Chávez, 2009).

There are institutions and companies that, before implementing regional works, aim at involving local stakeholders to avoid conflicts, respecting local customs and norms, as well as supporting the development of these communities; however, not all megaproject initiatives follow this path of supporting local people and their environment. In that sense, Watkins indicates that "this view, however, is not shared by all companies, as evidenced by the wide range of social and environmental conflicts still in progress" (2017).

Another situation of tension and very strong conflict, which can be generated in the rural zone of Acapulco and in the same route of the Papagayo River, is the idea of re-municipalization of Bienes Comunes de Cacahuatpec expressed in the media by Mr. Isaac Valeriano García, communal president of that territorial demarcation. He maintains that Bienes Comunes should become a municipality because it fulfills the requirements; moreover, the assembly of 46 communities agrees with separating from Acapulco. This is because their demands, such as the construction of a hospital, road construction and improvement, are not being met, as well as support for productive projects to promote the region (Gómez, 2020). The communities that make up the CRP provide agricultural products to the port's urban area, and actively participate with good practices to prevent contamination of the Papagayo River and its growing area of influence. However, this generous community action to date has not been considered, by governments, as a retribution in the form of policies for the sustainable development of the basin. Consequently, Adriana López Camacho (2022) points out that "academic institutions must reflect on their role in making these initiatives visible," understanding the worldview as another way of interaction with nature and as an inextricably entwined construction "with social, cultural, and spiritual phenomena" for "the reconstruction of the territory, the consolidation of an



economy based on solidarity, the balance of life. and the strengthening of the education system, among others. (López-Camacho, 2021, p. 110)”.

## Results

1. Social appropriation of knowledge was strengthened through the strategic alliance among actors. The main achievement has been the creation of a network with municipal authorities, community actors and the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero. This first stage of territorial recognition and diagnosis aided in the establishment of conditions for the next stage on the creation of a comprehensive program (specific projects resulting from the DIs) and the search for funding.

The following institutional sectors comprised the working group: The master of Social Economy from Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero (UAGro), the Secretaría de Planeación y Desarrollo Económico del municipio of Acapulco, Gro (SEPLADE-Acapulco), and the members of social groups and cooperative members. This team’s collaboration, coordination and cooperation was a difficult and demanding task because of the Covid 19pandemic conditions (COVITEL Guerrero, 2020) with a high rate of transmission (COVID-19 protection framework), as well as a rapid growth of insecurity perpetrated by organized crime that has been established in this municipality for more than fifteen years (Peña, 2017). This first stage aided at the establishment of conditions for the next stage, on the creation of a comprehensive program (specific projects resulting from the DIs) and the search for funding.

2. Social mapping, as a participatory methodology, enabled the exchange of knowledge between the communities and the academic institutions. During the reconnaissance tours, open interviews were conducted with authorities and community leaders to explore the knowledge and degree of implementation of principles, values, and good practices in their daily and productive activities. Results show that: a) The principles established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are disregarded and b) There are valuable identity anchors such as: cleaning of roads, care of aquifers, care of biodiversity, bartering, shared workdays, and community festivals; and there are also non-valuable or undesirable identity anchors, namely: distrust in forming solidarity savings banks, distrust in establishing marketing cooperatives to deliver their products, incorporation of women into the labor market with no voice in their organization,

and incorporation of children into farming activities to the detriment of their educational training.

3. The results of the first stage have to do with awareness strategies and programs that the different levels of government have not become involved in yet. However, the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, through the Master of Social Economics, has taken up this course of action. To this end, the law on social and solidarity economy, in its second and third articles, provides the legal framework to foster sustainable programs in different regions of Mexico and, specifically, for the making of policies based on these participatory diagnoses (Ley de la economía social y solidaria [LESS], 2017).

4. As previously indicated, the following thematic areas were addressed during the egalitarian dialogues (ED): 1. Citizenship participation and infrastructure; 2. Key issues on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE); 3. Food self-sufficiency and circuits of production; and 4. Solidarity financial systems. These categories were interpreted in specific proposals depicted in Table 3 (Parameterization of categories, strategic axes, and proposals). The claims arising from these meetings have not been addressed nor incorporated into government planning. The urgent point for the promotion of public policies is the territorial and environmental reordering of the Papagayo River Basin with a focus on a solidarity economy of local transformation instead of transnational capitalist class.

## Discussion

The Pandemic in Acapulco's rural communities caused little damage to the economy because the economy is based 80% on small-scale agricultural and livestock production. Nearly 20% is supplemented to a lesser extent by jobs provided by the port's dynamics. The education sector was most affected by the pandemic due to the lack of connectivity or electronic media (cell phones, tablets, computers, and television) to be able to conduct its activities remotely. The Egalitarian Dialogues strengthened the process of raising awareness among community participants about this serious problem, since the effect on health was not very credible and they were initially disturbed by the measures taken by the health authorities such as the closure of beaches and different businesses in the port which greatly affected employment in the tertiary sector. As a result of the meetings held with the purpose of discussing the pandemic, the conclusion was focused on the need to have health services in the rural areas of Acapulco.

## Conclusions

The communities that make up the CRP are committed to their territory and to participating in integrated developmental projects. Federal government institutions, in coordination with the other government branches, take up these proposals from the communities through participatory methodologies. In this regard, Milana and Villagra (2022) argue that "for these projects to become a reality, it is imperative that the State, and especially the country's science and technology agencies, design encouraging alternatives (p.175)" to strengthen field work conditions and prioritize areas of opportunity. This will turn them into regional projects to be managed by the communities themselves through the principles, values, and good practices of transforming social economy into a good living.

Access to human rights is possible with the promotion of a social economy and an environmental strengthening of the territory and thus, the construction of social citizenship in the Papagayo River Basin. The community actors in the rural area of Acapulco remain in a state of struggle, weaving social citizenship with resistance, solidarity, and social cleavage in the context of the pandemic. The conquest of social rights undoubtedly involves the achievement of social welfare factors for a good living. This process has to do with driving a transforming economy and a strengthening of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The possibility could be found in the construction of a social and solidarity economy and the continuous study of the Papagayo River Basin (CRP) where two major concepts affect and overlap as a sine qua non condition for regional development: social economy and citizenship.

A participatory diagnosis that does not foster the creation of a strategic alliance among social, governmental, and academic institutions is destined for failure. The wish is to build a better society considering the universal agendas of good living as the 2030 agenda and to establish that "for global problems, local solutions," as stated by Ostrom (2000), the political scientist and economics Nobel Prize winner.

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# Working Seniors in Mexico: Proposal for Effective Social Protection in Liquid Times\*

[English Version]

Las Personas Adultas Mayores Trabajadoras en México: Propuesta para una Protección Social Efectiva en Tiempos Líquidos

Adultos idosos trabalhadores no México: Proposta para uma proteção social efetiva em tempos líquidos

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## Abstract

**Objective:** the purpose of this document is to support the need to reform the Federal Labor Law in Mexico to provide the protection required to the Elderly Population (PAM by its acronym in Spanish), based on the theoretical position of Bauman (2004) on the liquidity of relationships, which implies the full exercise of their human and social rights, while achieving harmony between the international and domestic legal framework. **Methodology:** the research is of a theoretical-documentary nature; the proposal is of an analytical-argumentative nature based on the

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deductive and exegetical method. The first step of the procedure that follows is the identification of the subject under study based on the legal approach, which determines for whom the right to work should be recognized and protected. The next step seeks to draw the PAM in Mexico based on their characteristics, through official statistics, in order to establish the vulnerability that this age generates in relation to other age groups. Subsequently, a review of human rights legislation at three levels – universal, regional, and domestic – is carried out to determine which rights are recognized. This opens the door to demonstrate that the right to work is a human and social right enshrined and protected in the three normative spheres; thus, the analysis of the right to work in Mexican legislation is made possible, which produces the inputs to build the arguments of the conclusions. **Results:** among the results obtained are the lack of harmonization of Mexican labor legislation regarding the protection of the PAM as a worker, which produces a systemic transgression of their fundamental rights. **Conclusions:** one of the conclusions reached is that the neoliberal orientation of the rule of law in contemporary Mexico has led to the disarticulation between the right to work of PAMs and public institutions, which has resulted in their invisibility, precariousness, and violation.

**Keywords:** right to work; elderly person; vulnerability; human rights.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** el propósito del presente documento es sustentar la necesidad de reformar la Ley Federal del Trabajo en México para otorgar la protección requerida por la Población Adulta Mayor (PAM), en base a la postura teórica de Bauman (2004) sobre la liquidez de las relaciones, lo que implica el ejercicio pleno de sus derechos humanos y sociales, al tiempo de alcanzar la armonía entre el marco jurídico internacional e interno.

**Metodología:** la investigación es de carácter teórico-documental; en consecuencia, la propuesta es de corte analítico-argumentativo basado en el método deductivo y exegetico. La ruta que se sigue encuentra en el primer peldaño la identificación del sujeto que se estudia a partir del enfoque legal, lo que determina a quién se le debe reconocer y proteger el derecho al trabajo. El siguiente paso busca dibujar a la PAM en México con base en sus características, a través de las estadísticas oficiales, a fin de establecer la vulnerabilidad que su propia edad genera en relación con otros grupos etarios. Posteriormente, se realiza una revisión de la legislación de derechos humanos en tres niveles –universal, regional e interno– para determinar qué derechos les son reconocidos. Ello abre la puerta para demostrar que el derecho al trabajo es un derecho humano y social consagrado y protegido en los tres ámbitos normativos; así, se posibilita el análisis del derecho al trabajo en la legislación mexicana, lo que produce los insumos para edificar los argumentos de las conclusiones. **Resultados:** entre los resultados

obtenidos están la falta de armonización de la legislación mexicana en materia laboral en torno a la protección de la PAM como trabajador, lo que produce la trasgresión sistémica de sus derechos fundamentales. **Conclusiones:** una de las conclusiones a las que se llega estriba en que la orientación neoliberal del Estado de derecho en el México contemporáneo ha producido la desarticulación entre el derecho al trabajo de las PAMs y las instituciones públicas, lo que ha arrojado como resultado su invisibilidad, precarización y vulneración.

**Palabras-clave:** derecho al trabajo; persona adulta mayor; vulnerabilidad; derechos humanos.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o objetivo deste documento é apoiar a necessidade de reforma da Lei Federal do Trabalho no México para conceder a proteção exigida pela População Adulta Idosa (PAM), com base na posição teórica de Bauman (2004) sobre a liquidez das relações, o que implica o pleno exercício de seus direitos humanos e sociais, ao mesmo tempo em que se alcança a harmonia entre a estrutura jurídica internacional e doméstica.

**Metodologia:** a pesquisa é de natureza teórico-documentativa; conseqüentemente, a proposta é de natureza analítico-argumentativa com base no método dedutivo e exegético. O caminho seguido encontra na primeira etapa a identificação do assunto a ser estudado a partir da abordagem legal, que determina para quem o direito ao trabalho deve ser reconhecido e protegido. O próximo passo procura desenhar o PAM no México com base em suas características, através de estatísticas oficiais, a fim de estabelecer a vulnerabilidade que sua própria idade gera em relação a outras faixas etárias. Posteriormente, é realizada uma revisão da legislação de direitos humanos em três níveis - universal, regional e doméstico - para determinar quais direitos são reconhecidos para eles. Isto abre a porta para demonstrar que o direito ao trabalho é um direito humano e social consagrado e protegido nas três esferas normativas; assim, a análise do direito ao trabalho na legislação mexicana se torna possível, o que produz os insumos para construir os argumentos das conclusões. **Resultados:** entre os resultados obtidos está a falta de harmonização da legislação trabalhista mexicana em relação à proteção do PAM como trabalhador, o que produz a transgressão sistémica de seus direitos fundamentais. **Conclusões:** uma das conclusões alcançadas é que a orientação neoliberal do Estado de Direito no México contemporâneo produziu a desarticulação entre o direito ao trabalho dos PAMs e as instituições públicas, o que resultou em sua invisibilidade, precariedade e violação.

**Palavras-chave:** direito ao trabalho; adulto mais velho; vulnerabilidade; direitos humanos.

## Introduction

*"To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'everything solid vanishes into thin air'"*  
(Berman, 1982, p. 1).

One of the contemporary problems related to social rights is linked to the increase of the elderly population (PAM), given the emergence of new risks and social processes related to health, education, housing, work, and social security, which has exponentially increased the mismatch between the social protection system and reality. This has generated an impact on the social inclusion of this population that makes it necessary to address institutionally with appropriate legislation and relevant social policies, which means highlighting the importance of social rights and strengthening them through their natural intertwining with human rights (Campero, 2007, p. 69).

The current demographic transformation, visible thanks to the increase in life expectancy, has caused the inversion of the population pyramid; this change has become evident with a gradual but significant increase in PAM percentages.

In Mexico, the aging phenomenon is seen with the figures of the National Survey of Demographic Dynamics (ENADID) which reported that the number of people aged 60 years or older was 15.4 million, representing 12.3% of the total population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2019). This figure is higher compared to 12.9 million in 2017, or 9.6 million in 2016; that is, 7.8% of the total Mexican population (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social [CONEVAL], 2018). This shows that the gradual increase in the age group in question is also present in the Mexican population.

According to the ENADID, in 2018 PAMs living alone and economically active represented 41.4% of the total population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2019). Regarding the working conditions of PAMs inserted in the labor market, the Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE) indicated that for the second quarter of 2019, "21.7% of seniors who live alone and are employed do not receive benefits, 15.7% receive Christmas bonuses and only 13.4% have paid vacation" (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2019). The main source of income for those living alone is "retirement or pension (36.7%), is followed by some governmental support (36.6%) and/or by their employment (34.4 percent)" (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2019).

Montoya-Arce and Montes de Oca-Vargas (2010) argue that the low retirement or pension amounts and the absence of labor benefits cause the PAMs to remain in the labor market. This is consistent with the information provided by the National Survey on Discrimination (ENADIS), in which PAMs stated that the most frequent problems they face are: insufficient pension (28.5%) and lack of opportunities to work (22.5%) (Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación [CONAPRED] *et al.*, 2017). In this last point, the economic reality of Mexico, as a result of the neoliberal policies promoted in the 80's, has forced the PAMs to be inserted or continue as active elements of the labor market. In 2017, of the economically active population of PAMs who were employed in a subordinate and remunerated manner, 60.8% did not have access to health institutions through their employment; 61.8% worked without having a written contract, and 47.7% did not have legal benefits (CONAPRED *et al.*, 2017).

Given the current trend in the increase of the senior population in the coming years, and in particular those who remain in the labor market, a revision of the legal framework is urgently needed. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to support the need to reform the Federal Labor Law (FLL) in order to grant the necessary protections to those individuals based on their characteristics from the theoretical position on the fluidity of relationships. In this regard:

It would be imprudent to deny or underestimate the profound change that fluid modernity has imposed on the human condition. The fact that the systemic structure has become remote and unattainable, combined with the fluid and unstructured state of the framing of the politics of life, has changed the human condition in a radical way and demands a rethinking of the old concepts that used to frame the narrative discourse. (Bauman, 2004, p. 14)

There are several studies that address old age and aging from different disciplines and approaches, the first investigations are in the area of gerontology and medical sciences, as aging generates a greater demand for health services (Osorio, 2006; Johnson, 2001). Similarly, sociology has dominated the aging scene with theories such as that of Cumming and Henry (1961) on the disengagement of personal relationships of those interacting with PAM. In economics, there are studies that analyze old age linked to variables such as poverty and vulnerability (Zuñiga and Vega, 2004).

Political science has also been present with social policies such as the Vienna Plan of 1982, which marked the turning point for States to integrate strategies focused on the protection of this vulnerable group into their agendas,

particularly employment policies and access to the labor market (Viveros, 2001; Pacheco, 2009). At this point, two studies are of interest due to their territorial scope; the first one by González *et al.*, (2015) who follow up on the public policy aimed at seniors in the context of the National Crusade against Hunger from a human rights approach; and the second one by Raccanello *et al.*, (2014) who explore the social integration policies in Mexico City for PAMs. Alternatively, gender studies linked to old age have gained importance since the 1990s with works such as that of Arber and Ginn (1996) and Montes de Oca (2010), in which the connection between aging and gender shows the unequal distribution of power, privilege, and access to well-being that men and women have.

The variable of education and old age has been studied by researchers such as Ham (2003) or Zuñiga and Vega (2004), as it is a relevant indicator for measuring progress, cause, and consequence of a country's development. In the field of law, one of the most important works is that of Huenchuan and Morlachetti (2007), who analyze the PAMs' rights, both at the universal and regional levels, as well as in the legislation of some Latin American states.

In this vein, Martínez (2015) analyzes the protection of PAMs from a human rights perspective, to conclude that the biggest challenge is the creation of a legal framework that takes into account their circumstances and characteristics. Similarly, Lathrop (2009) examines the legal situation of PAMs in Chile, and the discrimination to which they are subjected, to conclude there exists the need for an organic law aimed at establishing special protection measures. Finally, Araque and Suárez (2017), through a documentary methodology, expose key concepts and the evolution of the legal framework of PAMs with disabilities in Colombia, to conclude that promoting the voluntary and consensual responsibility of all the actors is necessary.

Although the study of seniors has been addressed in various disciplines, there is currently a significant gap regarding the analysis of the right to work of PAMs in Mexico. Hence the appropriateness of this document aimed at satisfying a real need for protection for this population, through a proposal based on the difference in the characteristics of the subject.

## Methodology

This document displays part of the results of a more extensive investigation in which the condition of multidimensional vulnerability of working PAMs is emphasized, aggravated by transgression and discrimination. The research question sought to be answered is: How to achieve legal protection of PAMs inserted in the formal labor market? For this, the following hypothesis is established: PAMs inserted in the formal labor market would have greater protection if and only if the FLL considered their particularities.

The research is theoretical-documentary; consequently, the methodological proposal is analytical-argumentative based on the deductive and exegetical method. The route that follows finds its first step in the identification of the subject that is studied from the legal approach, which will determine who should recognize and protect the right to work. The next step seeks to draw PAMs in Mexico based on their characteristics, through official statistics, to establish the vulnerability that their age generates in relation to other age groups. Subsequently, a review of human rights legislation at three levels –universal, regional, and domestic –is carried out to determine which PAMs rights are recognized. This opens the door for the next item to demonstrate that the right to work is a human right that also corresponds to PAMs. The foregoing enables the analysis of the right to work of the PAMs in Mexican legislation, which will generate the inputs to build the arguments of the conclusions aimed at providing legal mechanisms that protect the working PAMs. Finally, the list of references is presented.

## Results

### Who is a PAM in Mexico?

Throughout history, PAMs have been called in various ways: elderly, old, seniors, elderly person, among others. Elderly is: “Said of a very old person” (Royal Spanish Academy [RAE], 2001a, p. 147), while old is: “Said of the elderly person. It can commonly be understood that someone who turned 70 years old is old” (Royal Spanish Academy, 2001b, p. 2299). From this term derive the expressions: old age, maturing, aging; and wild phrases such as: old hag and old fart, used to refer derogatorily to an elderly individual.

The expression senior arose in the 20th century in France, coined by Doctor J.A. Huét, pioneer of gerontology. Thus, it is stated that: "...older adult has its strong point in the word older, which allows differentiating the young adult from the old one... its use was circumscribed to designate retirees and pensioners over sixty years of age" (Dabove *et al.*, 2017). Finally, elderly person, refers to the last stage of life that is distinguished by the decrease in physical and mental functions, it is said that it implies an: "Advanced period of people's lives in which normally active working life decreases" (Royal Spanish Academy, 2001c, p. 862).

To understand the expression from the legal approach, it is essential to approach the legislation to elucidate the appropriate word to refer to the subject under study, as well as the characteristics that allow their identification; essentially establishing the rights that correspond to them, their *quantum*, and the means for their protection.

The Inter-American Convention on the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons (CIPDHPM), in its second article, says that the older person is: "A person 60 years of age or older, unless domestic law determines a lower or higher base age, provided that this is not greater than 65 years. This concept includes, among others, that of older adult" (Organization of American States [OAS], 2015). This definition brings about two elements to be highlighted: first, the age limit, this is 65 years; although the treaty establishes a minimum (60 years) that can be modified by the States in accordance with their legislation, the maximum cannot be altered as it constitutes a transgression. The second element is the equivalence that the text makes of the older adult and older adult person concepts. It should be noted that the CIPDHPM is not the only instrument in the Americas; there are other conventions such as the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of economic, social and cultural rights that within its *corpus* uses the concept "elderly," which infers the absence of consensus at a regional level regarding the legal denomination.

In Mexico, the Law for the Rights of Older Adults (LROA) establishes, in its third article, the limits of the concept by stating that they are: "Those who are sixty years of age or older and who are domiciled or in transit in the national territory" (2002). Two characteristics emerge from this: age, which must be at least 60, and geographic location; that is, whether the resident is located in Mexico or is in transit. This leads to tacitly conceding the same rights to Mexicans as to foreigners – the latter regardless of whether or not they reside in the national territory – the conditioning factor is the age requirement. These criteria are relevant to determine what rights are recognized in respect to PAMs.

Perhaps at this moment the question is: is the denomination given to the subject important? In short, the concept used is transcendental due to the social



representations that help in the construction of a fragile and devalued social imaginary of a PAM. In the words of Gustavo Gewürzmann, the purpose of achieving a symbolic place has led to a multiplicity of proposals to replace the word “elderly” such as: “aged, senile, ancient, gray, veterans, seniors, great, retired, experienced, of mature age, of the passive class, among others” (as cited in Grosman and Herrera, 2011, p. 6.) However, the concepts referred to are not enough to define this sector exactly, and far from helping to form a more precise one, they encourage conceptual confusion.

The controversy unleashed within the World Health Assembly on May 25, 2019, due to the adoption of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) that entered into force on February 11, 2022 is worth remembering. The main novelty was the replacement of the concept “senile” with “old age” (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] and World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). The main concerted criticism by organizations, academics and the Transdisciplinary Network on Aging was that:

Old age is a natural and non-pathological stage of the life course, just like childhood or adulthood. Any other description would correspond to age discrimination or 'Old Age,' in which pathological conditions that are not inherent to it are associated with a certain age group. (León *et al.*, 2021)

Thus, the importance of concepts to avoid derogatory social constructs is ratified. Nevertheless, from a legal point of view, Sergio García Ramírez has maintained the irrelevance of the debate around the use of certain words based on the legalization that has been made of them in international treaties (Inter-American Court of Human Rights [IACHR], 2002), that is, the use of different words to refer to the same subject in international instruments should be unimportant as long as they concur under the same legal consequences. This position moves away from any social approach, with the latent possibility of impregnating the concept with a different character. However, since the work has a legal essence, the argument of the irrelevance of the word is then taken up again due to the equality of effects that are produced for the individual, together with the adherence of the position based on what is understood by “elderly person,” as it is a word that socially identifies the individual and their characteristics.

## Vulnerability of PAMs in Mexico

Vulnerability implies the possibility that a subject is susceptible to receiving some type of physical or moral harm (Royal Spanish Academy, 2001d). The condition of vulnerability is attributed to the existence of internal and external factors that, when combined, reduce or nullify the individual's ability to face an event or situation that causes an injury (National Human Rights Commission [CNDH], 1995, p. 70). In the case of PAMs, understanding their situation of vulnerability is possible if and only if their characteristics are known, for this, it is necessary to go to official statistics that allow an X-ray of PAMs to be made.

According to ENADIS, in 2017 there were 12.9 million PAMs in Mexico, of which 46.4% were men and 53.6% women. Due to nationality, there were 99.6% Mexicans and 1.0% foreigners. Regarding marital status, 54.6% were married, 7.3% lived with their partner and 38.1% were single. Regarding the level of schooling, 50.1% had basic education, 17.4% upper secondary education, 10.6% higher education and 21.5% had no schooling. Slightly more than 37% of the PAMs were part of the Economically Active Population (EAP), whose main source of income was their work or business (37.8%) and the support received from their children (37.0%) (CONAPRED et al., 2017).

The previous figures allow affirming that the natural deterioration of certain body functions and the presence of age-related pathologies become internal contributing factors for the increase in vulnerability; that combined with external components linked to the social context such as the absence of family networks, low income or lack thereof, lack of social security, among others, make up a breeding ground that tends to reduce or nullify the capacity of person to face an event that causes harm, which shows the demand for special attention and protection. Thus, it is stated that the PAMs per se are vulnerable, as they are likely to experience a situation of violation of their rights or discrimination.

Discrimination against PAMs is evidenced in ENADIS itself (2017), which provides interesting data on the perception of Mexicans in relation to respect for the rights of PAMs; the result was that 57% of those surveyed consider that they respect each other a little or not at all, against 43% who consider that they respect each other a lot or somewhat (CONAPRED et al., 2017). However, more interesting are the responses of the PAMs regarding the perception of respect for their rights, in which 44.9% consider that they are respected a little or not at all. The areas in which the PAMs have felt discriminated against are: in the street or on public transport (37.3%); within the family (33.3%); in regards to medical service (27.7%); by government

offices (17.4%); at work (13.1%); and in a business, shopping center or bank (5.8%) (CONAPRED et al., 2017).

### **The PAM as a Subject of Human Rights**

The concept of Human Rights has been approached by different writers. For the purposes of this work, the definition of the Dictionary of Human Rights is taken as a reference: "Fundamental freedoms and guarantees of the human person, which derive from their eminent dignity, which oblige all Member States of the international community, and that mark the border between barbarism and civilization" (Valencia, 2003, p. 137). In a sense, human dignity is the basis of human rights, which are recognized for all human beings by the simple fact of being human. This applies to PAMs in particular.

There is a range of international instruments that, in attention to the characteristic of age, protect PAMs; therefore, those treaties of soft<sup>1</sup> or hard<sup>2</sup> law applicable to Mexico will be considered for dealing with PAMs and they will be divided according to the scope of application in universal, regional, and internal issues.

#### ***Universal***

Hard law instruments are non-existent in this area. In terms of soft law, there exist the Vienna International Action Plan on Aging and the Madrid International Action plan on Aging, which are focused on designing an international policy to change attitudes and practices to take advantage of the potential of PAMs (World Health Organization, 2015, p. 29). Alternatively, the United Nations Principles in favor of PAMs establish five basic principles: independence, participation, care, self-realization and dignity (Huenchuan, 2013, p. 10).

In this area, the first limitation in the effective protection of human rights, including the right to work, of PAMs is evident, as PAMs lack a coercive document obliging the States to adopt legislative, administrative or judicial mechanisms that protect them.

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1. International texts that are not coercive for States.

2. International coercive conventions for the States that sign and ratify them.

## *Regional*

On the American continent, protection for PAMs is much more complete, with the integration of treaties and rulings of the IACHR. In 2015, the CIPDHPM was adopted, a hard law text, whose objective is: "... to promote, protect and ensure the recognition and full enjoyment and exercise ... of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of PAMs, in order to contribute to their full inclusion, integration and participation in society" (Organization of American States, 2015). Its corpus recognizes various guaranteed rights through a series of obligations for member countries, which lie in: adopting legislative, administrative and judicial mechanisms, promoting affirmative actions, promoting labor policies, and certifying knowledge for access to labor market. The strength of the CIPDHPM lies in the follow-up of the periodic reports delivered by the States; however, its weakness lies in its signature and ratification. In the case of Mexico, the IACHR has not been signed or ratified, therefore, its content is not applicable.

In terms of sentences, the IACHR has issued two to date in which the victim is a PAM:

1. The *Poblete Vilches vs. Chile* case is considered emblematic as it is the first in which the IACHR has ruled specifically on the rights of PAMs. In this regard, its importance consists of:
  - a) Putting an end to the debate on the jurisdiction of the IACHR to hear the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights.
  - b) Recognize that PAMs "... have the right to enhanced protection and, therefore, require the adoption of differentiated measures" (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2018, paragraph 127).
2. *Muelle Flores vs. Peru* case of March 6, 2019, in which the Court recognizes the old-age pension for PAMs, who are in a particularly vulnerable situation (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2019, p. 56). In this way, the IACHR ratifies its competence to hear controversial cases in which the violation of economic, social, and cultural rights is removed; while confirming its position regarding the special protection that must be provided to PAMs as a vulnerable group.

## ***Internal***

Since 2011, the Mexican Constitution (1917) recognizes, in its first article, the entitlement of human rights of any person who is in Mexican territory, regardless of characteristics such as age. This provision constitutes the basis of the rights of PAMs, from which the LROA emerges, which guarantees the exercise of PAMs' rights based on principles such as: autonomy and self-realization, participation, equity, co-responsibility, and preferential attention. (Law on the Rights of Older Adults, 2002, fourth article). It collects the rights divided into nine blocks: integrity; dignity and preference; legal certainty; protection of health, food, and family; education; social assistance; participation; popular complaint; and access to services, work and economic capacities (Law on the Rights of Older Adults, 2002, fifth article).

At this level, the jurisprudence emanating from the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation [SCJN] (2020) is of interest. It is a body that has issued, during the period from 2013 to 2018, eleven resolutions on controversial matters related to the violation of the right to a dignified life, equality and non-discrimination, property, security and legal certainty, access to justice, and work, where the complainant has been a PAM.

From the foregoing, it follows that depriving a person of their human rights because of their age is not possible; neither is making them invisible because in the social imaginary there is a belief that they are not a productive being for society. Thus, an imperfect triangle is built based on discrimination by social stereotypes, the denial of rights recognized in the regulations, and the invisibility product of social blindness. The imperfection lies in the convergence of the points of said triangle that in turn prevents the formation of the figure itself translated into the non-materialization of rights, while reinforcing social stigmas towards PAMs.

## **Right to Work**

Work as a right is the result of the class struggle supported by socialist thought that began with the industrial revolution, and later spread throughout Europe. England was the first scenario where collective freedoms were achieved. The cause behind this was multifaceted. Perhaps the main elements were the dehumanization of the bourgeoisies and the abuse of one class over another (bourgeoisie/proletariat), which generated large-scale labor movements that sought to achieve a just social transformation to recover freedom and dignity at work. Thus, the right to work, as a social right, was recognized for the first

time in the Mexican Constitution of 1917, and two years later in the German Constitution of Weimar of 1919 (De la Cueva, 1980, pp. 11-25).

This made possible "the appearance of a catalog of human rights, also known as labor rights, which are inherent by the mere fact of being a person and working" (National Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 3). In this way, the right to work became a fundamental and essential right for the realization of other rights, as it is an essential element to achieve better living conditions.

If human dignity is the core of human rights, where the latter are governed by the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence – because they cannot be understood or enjoyed separately – then it must be preserved against any type of attack by third parties. Work constitutes an inseparable and inherent part of human dignity, because every individual has the right to work in order to live decently. Thus, work is, in the context of the Federal Labor Law (1970), a "dignified or decent activity in all labor relations" (Second Article). Dignified or decent work is understood to mean that "it is one in which the worker's human dignity is fully respected; there is no discrimination...; you have access to social security and you receive a remunerative salary" (Federal Labor Law, 1970, second article).

In this way, the recognition and validity of work as a human right has been printed in various international instruments such as:

### *Universal*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (United Nations, n.d.) in its article 23 recognizes the right to work that includes: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) in the sixth article states the right to work and adds the obligation of States to guarantee its exercise. And also, General Comment No. 6 (The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 1995) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, refers to the work of PAMs. It fosters countries to take actions to avoid discrimination, to employ senior workers based on experience and knowledge, to implement programs to prepare for retirement, and safeguard trade union rights after retirement.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) is the specialized agency in the field of labor and generates various Conventions. Mexico has signed

and reaffirmed the eight fundamental conventions.<sup>3</sup> In Recommendation 162 concerning Older Workers, 1980 (International Labor Organization, 1980), the International Labor Organization encourages the States to promote policies based on equal opportunities and treatment for workers regardless of age, to improve working and environmental conditions, and to take actions aimed at ensuring the progressive transition from professional life to voluntary retirement.

### *Regional*

In this area, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (Organization of American States, 1948) in article 14 recognizes the right of every worker to receive a salary in relation to the capacity that ensures a decent standard of living. The Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights of 1998 (Departamento de Derecho Internacional and Drug Enforcement Administration, n.d.), in its sixth and seventh articles, recognizes, the causes of separation, compensation, reinstatement for dismissal, and security, among others. The IACHR has issued a single resolution on the matter of August 31, 2017, called the Case of Lagos del Campo v. Peru (Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2019). In PERU is condemned for violating the right to job stability and association.

### *Internal*

The Mexican Constitution of 1917 includes the right to work in its fifth article as the freedom that every person within the national territory has to engage an activity if it is legal. This was the main limitation of the right, as a condition of its exercise. Article 123, paragraph "A" regulates personal, subordinate and remunerated activity in general, and list the rights, obligations and benefits that any person in work shall enjoy (Constitution, 1917).

In a second stage the Law on the Rights of Older Adults (2002) is found which in a delayed form established with its reform in 2018, the right to work. This was a major step forward in expressly recognizing the right to work of PAMs as part of their human dignity; however, this fact was not replicated in

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3. The conventions are: C-029 on forced labor; C-087 on freedom of organization and protection of the right to organize; C-098 on the right to organize and negotiate collectively; C-100 on equal remuneration; C-105 on the abolition of forced labor; C-111 on discrimination (employment and occupation); C-138 on minimum age, and C182 on the worst forms of child labor.

the FLL, that means this rule did not undergo a modification that tended to the protection of a PAM as a worker based on its characteristics, as it is done with other vulnerable subjects.

This fact of late recognition and legislative responsibility for the failure to harmonize the rules, especially the labor law, reflects the thinking and vision of the legislator regarding PAMs, as incapable of carrying out a remunerated activity. It seems paradoxical when the content of the legislation does not grant protection based on the individual's own vulnerability. It directly violates the human dignity, the human rights and, consequently, the delayed recognition of the right to work.

The above statement is demonstrated by the text of the LROA, in its added section V, that states:

V. Of work and its economic capacities:

To have same opportunities in access to work or other options that allow the workers to earn their own income and to perform productively for as long as they wish, as well as to receive protection from the provisions of the Federal Labor Law and other labor laws. (Law on the Rights of Older Adults, 2002, article five, section V)

Then, reaffirmed that it has existed since 2018, the LROA contains an express recognition of the right of work access for PAMs, as well as, their protection under law, and that they are subject to public policies by different orders of government. However, the discourse embodied in this rule does not correspond to the content of the FLL, by excluding PAMs from comprehensive protection based on their particular issues and condition.

### **The Right to Work in a Liquid Mexico**

Labor rights in Mexico take as a frame of reference the Constitution (1917) in its article 123, section "A" for workers in general, and "B" for public servants. The first – which is the one of interest – recognizes different rights from which others derive. This happens because among the characteristics of labor laws are progressivity, inalienability, vindication, expansion, and a minimum of social guarantees. It allows for protection of subordinate activity with the incorporation of jobs that were not previously regulated; but that, from the dynamics and constant transformation of society, are emerging as a result of new needs. At the same time, a minimum of rights is established, which serves as a platform



for improvement by labor contracts, without ever being reduced or denied by following the maxim: "on labor standards everything, below them, nothing" (Dávalos, 1994, p.17).

From article 123, section "A" of the Constitution (1917) from FLL, a norm of application throughout the Mexican territory establishes the working conditions, defined by De la Cueva (1980) as "... standards ... state the requirements for the defense of the health and life of workers on sites and workplaces and those which determine the benefits to be received by men for their work" (p. 266). At this point, it is necessary to mention that FLL grants a specific safeguard depending on the subject and the activity being carried out.

In relation to the subject, Title Five and Five Bis of Federal Labor Law (1970), refer to the work performed by women and minors respectively. Thus, the law provides special protection for work carried out by women, because even though there is legal equality between men and women, there is an undeniable physical and psychological difference between them, that necessarily has an impact on the development of work. These differences are what have historically motivated the creation of provisions aimed at protecting the integrity of women, to the extent that Title Five is available today to protect maternity. Accordingly, extraordinary pre- and postpartum breaks are established, unhealthy or dangerous work, industrial night work are allowed as well as work in commercial or service places after ten o'clock at night, and overtime or when the health of the woman or the baby is endangered.

Regarding the work of minors, their entry into activities of industry was initially tolerated as an exception, but progressively worsened until it became a chronic issue (Dávalos, 1994).

From an emergency of the factory owners, it became a vital necessity of proletarian families, who were forced to use labor power of their little members in order to survive (Dávalos, 1994, p. 294).

The convenience of replacing adult labor with minors turned into the exploitation of preschoolers, and that led to minors becoming the main subjects of protection in the first attempts at international labor regulation (Dávalos, 1994). This was reflected in the Mexican Constitution (1917) and in the Federal Labor Law (1970), Title Five Bis, which stipulated the minimum working age, reduced working hours, extended holidays, and the prohibition of performing certain dangerous or unhealthy work or activities, among other elements.

Both women and minors are part of vulnerable groups, who require special protection due to their condition and characteristics, as they can be objects of labor exploitation or can be hurt. This is what the law tries to prevent with both its sections.

The regulation results from the changes society has experienced over the years; it is unthinkable that the social organization and technology are the same as they were decades ago. The changes necessarily affect the law to include, based on their expansive nature, specific labor standards required to regulate the subordinate service differently – from those standards already existing – according to their peculiarities, mostly to benefit the worker. Title Six of the FLL regulates "special jobs," understood as: "activities that, although give rise to relationships with fundamental characteristics of an employment relationship, some of characteristics require adequate norms for their better development" (De la Cueva, 1980, p. 449). The last works incorporated to the FLL were the residents' training work in 1977, and the universities and autonomous institutions of higher education in 1980 (Dávalos, 1994, p. 314).

The specialty of the work does not refer to a mutation of the legal nature of a worker-employer relationship; the employment relationship arises between the individuals, the conditions and characteristics that the FLL itself indicates for the standard work relationships. The concurrence of modalities in the development of work are linked to the workers' and employers' conditions, rights and obligations. Therefore, the incorporation of special jobs obeys the expansion of the law that is intended to regulate the particular circumstances of the service provided.

However, with his theory on liquid modernity, Bauman (2004) explains that society ceased to be solid, as human relationships became fickle and liquid, tied to an ephemeral moment based on utility, the result of consumerism driven by big business. This liquidity has been exacerbated by another permanent and constant characteristic: fear, rendered into the insecurity felt by individuals at the possibility of losing their economic status, job, or relationship to another person, as if that other person were the source of the loss. Today, we are living in liquid times characterized by the fragility of human bonds and of relationships of all kinds, including labor relationships.

Globalization has turned people into human waste, where the individual who is unable to contribute to the economic system is easily excluded. In Bauman's words (2010): "It is exclusion, rather than the exploitation suggested by Marx ..., that currently underlies the most manifest cases of social polarization, of deepening inequality, of growing volumes of human humiliation, suffering and poverty" (p. 92). Beveridge (1946), the creator of the foundations of the "Welfare State," believed that:

The term Social Security ... means to ensure an income adequate ... to overcome poverty while maintaining income. But income security alone is not enough.

Freedom from poverty is just one of the fundamental freedoms of mankind (p. 259)

However, this idea of a "Welfare State" is now in crisis, crumbling thanks to forces of globalization that have shifted the exploitation of labor toward the exploitation of consumers, making human relationships disposable and ephemeral, and thus reifying people.

The basis of the "Welfare State" is the materialization of the postulates of law, which comprise human dignity, in equal conditions to achieve a longed-for social justice. Then, as Hurtado-Maya and Heredia-Ríos (2022) state.

The elderly is in a state of defenselessness because of their physical or cognitive disability and the stigmatization, abandonment, mistreatment, and dependence in the working and family environment. Human dignity as a principle or postulate implies that the person has the capacity for choice and autonomy, to ... choose without intruding upon the freedom of others. The State, therefore, plays a role of support and guarantor of these freedoms (p. 226)

However, when this last premise is not fulfilled, then the existence and content of any legal system is questioned, to the extent of violating and weakening the justification of its own existence.

To this respect, the ease with which people are reified allows them to be encapsulated as an underclass. "The 'underclass' may be 'in' society, but it is clearly not 'of' society: it does not contribute to anything that society needs for its survival and well-being, indeed, society would be better off without it" (Bauman, 2011, p 12). This marginal class is represented by internal migrants, illegal immigrants, women, minors, people with disabilities and, of course, PAMs, who, as vulnerable groups, have their condition intensified by the globalizing forces of the labor market. As a result, these vulnerable groups experience decreasing employment opportunities, generating consumerism under the auspices of an economy and politics oriented toward such direction, and increasing the number of poor people due to the absence of expectations of avoiding or overcoming poverty.

In this line of argument, the existence of jobs, whose conditions may well be assumed as a modern slavery, also represents a violation of employment rights in liquid times. However, it is not only the precarious condition of jobs that produces and reproduces new forms of slavery, but also the invisibility of the individuals and the absence of regulations that comprehensively protect their activity. Thus, this protection manifests their fundamental rights, in addition to giving value to the work performed, strengthening the principle of job stability

and, of course, crystallizing universal human dignity. Therefore, the importance of integrating PAMs as individuals of protection, by means of a Title Five Ter, with provisions focused on meeting their needs because of their singularities, where their labor challenges and difficulties are addressed with a globalizing key from a human rights perspective.

## Conclusions

Work per se is a right that contributes to the dignity of individuals; therefore, its recognition as a fundamental human right by international and domestic legislation of the States, without distinction of any kind. This implies that PAMs hold this right, to the extent of a broader spectrum of human rights addressing the progressive aging and their cognitive decline. However, protection at a universal level is meager, as there is no coercive treaty obliging States to implement specific rights for PAMs, or to adopt safeguarding mechanisms, as at the regional level.

Protection mechanisms for PAMs are being diluted in a liquid modernity that dissolves the social rights of this population, and of others such as women, indigenous people, youth and migrants. The point to consider is to identify why social rights, and the right to work of senior populations, are rights without social rights. This suggests a discussion on the context in which social rights occur today; that is, neoliberalism (understood as an extreme capitalism that destroyed the social welfare state and the values of its social justice) creating a world dominated by exclusion, exploitation, inequality, and discrimination of broad population sectors, such as PAMs.

If it is accepted that the right to work is pre-existent to the emergence of the labor relationship, since it is part of the framework of human rights, and not a contractual bond that gave rise to these rights, then, the worker possesses them only by the fact of being a person, while the contractual bond only adds new rights. In this logic, the PAM "nominally" holds the right to work; therefore, when an employment relationship is created as a result of subordination and remuneration, new derived rights theoretically arise and must also be respected. However, these rights are not "empirically" validated. In neoliberalism, people move from being citizens to consumers, from individuals of rights to objects of supply and demand, where the dominance of instrumental rationality is hegemonic (Piketty, 2015).

From the neoliberal hegemony, an efficient legal protection scheme necessarily requires an amendment to the FLL with the purpose of inserting a Title Five Ter focused on the PAM, in which the provisions take into account their conditions and singularities. The proposal is not to reform the chapter on "special jobs" because it is not a new job that deserves to be regulated, instead an individual who needs to be protected. This does not suggest a probable violation of the principle of equality; on the contrary, the justification of the existence of human rights over and above market-centric logic is reinforced, and therefore the content of the Mexican regulatory system, since there is an international mandate for States to strengthen the protection of PAMs and adopt differentiated measures based on their singularities.

The previous arguments suggest, firstly, the PAM's right to work is unstructured in relation to the political institutions in charge of crystallizing the enforcement of such rights through public policies. This unstructured right is due to the neoliberal position of the rule of law in contemporary Mexico; therefore, the need for redirecting the State toward the values of hard modernity: solidarity, equality, and fraternity/sorority.

Secondly, a conclusion on the general level of social citizenship, (the right to work is a core part of it). What happens to social citizenship in times of liquid modernity? The answer is evident, social rights have been privatized, an example is the public retirement funds, whose responsibility and administration are in the hands of private fund administrators (Administradoras de Fondos para el Retiro (AFORES)), institutions created under the Zedillo government in 1997.

Finally, these transformations take place in the field of the elderly population within a larger civilizing process, that of "liquid modernity," because it allows for linking and updating human and social rights from a relevant perspective, where everything that was previously considered *solid vanishes into thin air*, including social rights.

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# International Humanitarian Law and COVID-19 in Colombia: the Construction of Peace in the Post-agreement and Post-pandemic Period \*

[English Version]

Derecho Internacional Humanitario y COVID-19 en Colombia: la construcción de paz en el posacuerdo y la pospandemia

PoDireito Humanitário Internacional e COVID-19 na Colômbia: construção da paz na era pós-acordo e pós-pandêmica

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## Abstract

**Objective:** to analyze the role of International Humanitarian Law in post-agreement and post-pandemic peace-building in Colombia. **Methodology:** of a documentary nature under the hermeneutic method, with a critical socio-legal approach guided by the qualitative research from the documentary review technique. **Results:** the relationships between International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and COVID-19 in the Colombian armed conflict are described, taking into account the diverse transition scenarios that society faces regarding the implementation of the

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Final Agreement (Mesa de conversaciones, 2018) in the so-called post-agreement and post-pandemic. **Conclusions:** IHL, beyond its legal-normative component, has great ethical and political potential to contribute to peace building in Colombia and thus strengthen the precarious exercise of citizenship deficient in contexts such as Latin America. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite its unpredictability, may constitute an opportunity to enhance the value and conditions of human life, and contribute to the construction of a more just and peaceful society based on the paradigm of imperfect peace.

**Keywords:** peace agreement; COVID-19; human rights; humanitarian law; post-agreement.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** analizar el rol del Derecho Internacional Humanitario en la construcción de paz en el posacuerdo y la pospandemia en Colombia. **Metodología:** es de carácter documental bajo el método hermenéutico, con un enfoque socio-jurídico crítico y orientada por la investigación cualitativa desde la técnica de la revisión documental. **Resultados:** se describen las relaciones entre el Derecho Internacional Humanitario (DIH) y la COVID-19 en el conflicto armado colombiano, teniendo en cuenta los escenarios diversos de transición que nuestra sociedad enfrenta en cuanto a la implementación del Acuerdo Final (Mesa de conversaciones, 2018) en el denominado posacuerdo y la pospandemia. **Conclusiones:** el DIH, más allá de su componente jurídico-normativo, tiene un gran potencial ético y político por aportar en la construcción de paz en Colombia y fortalecer así el precario ejercicio de la ciudadanía deficitaria en contextos como el latinoamericano. Los efectos de la pandemia por COVID-19, a pesar de su impredecibilidad, pueden constituirse en una oportunidad para potenciar el valor de la vida humana en condiciones dignas, y contribuir a la construcción de una sociedad más justa y pacífica desde el paradigma de la paz imperfecta.

**Palabras-clave:** acuerdo de paz; COVID-19; derechos humanos; derecho humanitario; posacuerdo.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** analisar o papel do Direito Humanitário Internacional na construção da paz pós-acordo e pós-pandémica na Colômbia. **Metodologia:** é de natureza documental sob o método hermenêutico, com uma abordagem crítica sócio-jurídica e orientada pela investigação qualitativa utilizando a técnica da revisão documental. **Resultados:** são descritas as relações entre o Direito Internacional Humanitário (DIH) e a COVID-19 no conflito armado colombiano, tendo em conta os diversos cenários de transição que a nossa sociedade enfrenta em termos da implementação do Acordo Final (2016) no chamado período pós-acordo e pós-pandémico. **Conclusões:** o DIH, para além da sua componente jurídico-normativa, tem um grande potencial ético e político para contribuir para a construção da paz na Colômbia e assim reforçar o precário exercício da cidadania, que é deficiente em contextos como a América Latina. Os efeitos da pandemia da COVID-19, apesar da sua imprevisibilidade, podem tornar-se uma oportunidade para aumentar o valor da vida humana em condições dignas, e contribuir para a construção de uma sociedade mais justa e pacífica baseada no paradigma da paz imperfeita.

**Palavras-chave:** acordo de paz; COVID-19; direitos humanos; direito humanitário; pós-acordo.

## Introduction

The Final Agreement (Mesa de conversaciones, 2018) between the former FARC-EP guerrillas (today the Commons political party) and the Colombian State, after almost six decades of armed confrontation, propitiated a fertile ground for social science research regarding the possibilities and scenarios for peace building in Colombia. However, the pandemic generated by COVID-19 and the arrival of the virus in the country in March 2020 paralyzed several academic and research processes in relation to the subject. stopped and displaced social and community processes of leaders and civil society organizations that, from their territories or their fields of action, were wagering on peace in the midst of the armed violence that was worsening in the country. Despite the signing of a peace agreement between the State and a long-standing armed actor in the conflict, other Organized Armed Groups (OAG<sup>1</sup>) continue in armed confrontations against the military forces and the police<sup>2</sup> in the framework of IHL. Additionally, there exists the aggravating circumstance that those who carry out the hostilities continue attacking the civilian population, which is protected against the effects of war, by both national and international law.

Moreover, by the end of March 2022, Colombia had recorded more than six million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and deaths exceeding 139,000 from March 2020 (Ministry of Health, 2020). The pandemic was another factor in the increase in violence associated with the armed conflict as will be explained following.

Therefore, the guiding question of this article is: what is the role of International Humanitarian Law in the construction of peace in post-accord and post-pandemic Colombia?

IHL is the body of international legal norms that regulate international armed conflicts (IAC) and non-international armed conflicts (NIAC). They also establish the means and methods of combat permitted and prohibited for those waging war and promote respect and protection for persons not directly participating in hostilities, such as the civilian population or those actors in the armed conflict removed from combat by injury, illness, capture, or surrender.

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1. The term Organized Armed Group, OAG, will be used in the terms proposed by the IHL in force in Colombia, to refer to those actors that continue to participate in the Colombian armed conflict.

2. As a general rule in international law, police forces are civilian in nature and should not be involved in armed conflicts since their function is aimed at ensuring peaceful coexistence among citizens, however, the role of the National Police in Colombia has mutated in some territories toward warlike confrontation with other OAGs, so that in Colombia the police force can be considered as an actor in the conflict.



In Colombia the multifaceted and multi-actor armed conflict<sup>3</sup> persists. But during the pandemic, the socioeconomic inequalities associated with COVID-19, were revealed accentuating direct, structural and symbolic violence according to Galtung's proposal (2016). Violence that, as the author states, can easily reproduce or mutate, especially in a society such as Colombia's, which is burdened by countless macro and micro conflicts. These sub-conflicts range from armed conflicts to territorial, socioeconomic, and socio-political conflicts. In the face of this, violence has prevailed as an equivocal formula for resolving said disputes.

This article is divided into four parts. The first section establishes the interaction between IHL as *lex specialis* – which regulates armed conflicts to protect their victims – and International Human Rights Law, which is the general legal framework for the protection of human dignity in times of peace or war. The second section focuses on language and its relationship with the implementation of the Final Agreement during the pandemic, as the Latin prefix *pos*, has become embedded in Colombian daily life with the concepts of post-conflict, post-agreement and post-pandemic. The third section interweaves the relationships explored in a horizon of peace, in which IHL, despite being by antonomasia the regulatory framework of war, can enhance its normative content based on ethical and political considerations on life and human dignity as a tool for peace building in Colombia. Finally, some final considerations of the research process are presented.

## Methodology

Qualitative research, according to María Eumelia Galeano (2011), addresses subjective and intersubjective realities. It focuses on the actors, seeks to understand from different perspectives and subjects, and is based on everyday life to understand this reality.

Thus, the methodology used has a documentary character under the hermeneutic method, with a critical socio-legal approach, oriented by the qualitative research from the documentary review technique. Primary

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3. IHL is still in force in Colombia, as the State ratified the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 through Law 5 of 1960, whose Common Article 3 enshrines the basic rules applicable to non-international armed conflicts such as Colombia's (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012a), in the same sense, Law 171 of 1994 approved the Additional Protocol II (1977) to the Four Geneva Conventions that regulates conflicts of the same nature (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012b).

and secondary sources were consulted, based on scientific articles, NGO reports, such as Amnesty International on a global scale and the Institute for Development and Peace (INDEPAZ) at the national level. Finally, official information from the Colombian State and international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross was consulted.

This methodological route was useful to establish how IHL, beyond the legal norms that comprise it, has an ethical and political potential to contribute to the construction of peace in Colombia in the post-agreement and post-pandemic scenarios.

## Results

### **The Relationship Between International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in Colombia**

As of January 31, 2022, the humanitarian toll of six decades of armed confrontation in Colombia leaves an overwhelming figure of 9,237,051 victims (Victims Unit, 2022)<sup>4</sup>. Almost a fifth of the Colombian population has been victimized and the universe of victims in the country exceeds the total population of states such as Israel or Switzerland, more than double that of Panama or almost triple that of Uruguay.

Due to the tragic history of Colombia's armed conflict, the issue of Human Rights, has had special relevance during the last decades, both to denounce systematic violations, and to claim the rights of victims to truth, justice, repair, and non-repetition or to become a topic of particular interest for research and social leadership from various disciplines and approaches.

The founding moment of human rights, in its legal dimension, was born with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 of the United Nations, an instrument that continues to be the cornerstone of this normative set in terms of the protection of the human being. The legal statute that integrates human rights is called International Human Rights Law, IHRL.

For its part, IHL is a legal statute older than IHRL, since its first instrument dates from 1864 with the issuance of the First Geneva Convention,<sup>4</sup> which

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4. Geneva Convention I for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field.

regulates International Armed Conflicts, with subsequent developments in the Second Convention (1906) on wars on the high seas, Convention III (1929) on prisoners of war and Convention IV (1949) on protection of the civilian population, as well as Additional Protocols I and II of 1977 on international and non-international armed conflicts, respectively.

Despite the aforementioned, interest, knowledge, and dissemination of IHL in Colombia is considerably lower than that of human rights because the former is a very technical area, with a specialized language and with a significantly smaller number of experts at the national level, despite its vital importance in the Colombian context, in which the protection of the civilian population against the adverse effects of war should be privileged. The foregoing indicates from the outset a deficit in basic political-legal training in the face of vital issues such as IHL and human rights, especially in Colombian society so accustomed to coexisting amongst death and violence.

### ***The Thesis of Convergence Between IHL and IHRL in Colombia: Complexities in the Post-agreement***

To understand the relationship between IHL and IHRL, it is worth highlighting the accentuated relationship between both normative bodies in the framework of the Colombian post-agreement. According to Kalmanovitz (2018), IHL and IHRL converge and are articulated with the common purpose of protecting human dignity, although from different spheres, since IHRL is in force at all times and places, regardless of the circumstances through which the territory of a certain state crosses (that is, in situations of peace or war). While IHL is a *lex specialis* reserved for international or non-international armed conflicts, and therefore can only be applied in territories where there are CAI or NIAC (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2015) such as occurs in Colombia.

The convergence thesis then understands that IHL and IHRL protect human dignity concurrently and simultaneously (Kalmanovitz, 2018) without distinction of any kind. They are two sides of a coin, since they have in common that they are articulated around the defense of life and the dignity of the human being as a political and ethical imperative, although mediated by current legal norms. The following table shows the interaction between IHL and IHRL. Both legal statutes are in force in Colombia.

**Table 1.** *Interaction between IHL and IHRL in Colombia*

<b>Realm</b>	<b>International Humanitarian Law, IHL</b>	<b>International Human Rights Law, IHRL</b>
Main Purpose	Protect the dignity and integrity of the civilian population in armed conflicts, including those who cease to participate in hostilities.	Protect the dignity and integrity of all people, without distinction of race, sex, nationality, political affiliation, religion or any other differentiating criteria.
Responsible for Compliance	Members of the armed forces (military and police), and members of the Organized Armed Groups (ELN, AGC, FARC dissidents) who participate in the hostilities.	The Colombian state as a subject of international law, since it is the one that legally commits to respect human rights and incorporate the content of these instruments into its internal legislation.
Scope of Application	In International Armed Conflicts (IAC) and in Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIAC) as in Colombia. If there is no armed conflict on the territory of a State, IHL cannot be applied.	They are permanently valid in times of peace or war, when there is concurrence between IHRL and IHL, the application of the most favorable norms for those who do not participate in the armed conflict will be privileged.
Main Instruments in Force in Colombia	Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV of 1949 (IAC). Article 3 Common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 (NIAC). *Additional Protocol I of 1977 (IAC) and Additional Protocol II of 1977 (NIACI). *Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines and their destruction (1997). *161 rules of IHL with customary character.	Universal Human Rights System: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Interamerican Human Rights System: American Convention on Human Rights (1969), Inter-American Convention against Torture (1985), among others.

The necessary convergence between IHL and IHRL became more evident after the signing of the Final Agreement (Mesa de conversaciones, 2018), because while other groups remained in arms such as the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Gaitanista Self-Defense

Forces of Colombia (AGC), sectors of the former guerrillas, opposed joining the peace process, such as the dissidents under the command of “Gentil Duarte,” and others such as the so-called “Second Marquetalia” deserted the process two years later.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has determined that the above armed actors are not simple gangs or criminal groups, but that they are effectively GAOs (2019), in terms of IHL, because they meet the requirements of Additional Protocol II of 1977 since: i) they exercise territorial control ii) they have the capacity to carry out sustained and concerted military operations iii) [b] they have a responsible leadership and an internal hierarchy and iv) they are able to apply humanitarian standards (Reino de los Países Bajos and Naciones Unidas Derechos Humanos, 2012).

Thus, although the implementation of the Final Agreement for the End of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace (Mesa de conversaciones, 2018) reflects that there is a peacebuilding project underway, the reality of the conflict in the country that can be compared in figures (as will be seen below) shows that the Colombian State faces various challenges in humanitarian matters.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (2022), in March, published its humanitarian balance of the armed conflict in Colombia during 2021, with landmark findings in the characterization of the armed actors and the warlike confrontation that is being waged. The 2019 International Committee of the Red Cross report established that there were five armed conflicts in the country, while during 2021 the ICRC was able to verify the existence of six, as explained in the following table.

**Table 2.** *Armed conflicts in force in Colombia until 2021, in accordance with IHL*

No.	Armed actors		Armed actor with which faced
1	Colombian State (military forces)	vs	National Liberation Army (ELN)
2	Colombian State (military forces)	vs	Ex -FARC-EP not included in the Peace Agreement
3	Colombian State (military forces)	vs	Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC)

No.	Armed actors		Armed actor with which faced
4	National Liberation Army (ELN)	vs	Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC)
5	Ex -FARC-EP not included in the Peace Agreement	vs	The Second Marquetalia's
6	Ex -FARC-EP not included in the Peace Agreement	vs	Border Commands – Bolivarian Army (hosts former members of the extinct FARC-EP and the AUC on the border with Ecuador).

Note. author's elaboration based on International Committee of the Red Cross; (2019 and 2022)

Thus, in Colombia there are six armed conflicts of different nature and intensity, but aggravated by the pandemic. It is not only about war and how it develops; it is also about existence and resistance in conditions of human dignity and enjoying physical and mental health for the populations affected by the confrontation. The ICRC's humanitarian balance says that, in Colombia, during 2021, most of the effects derived from armed conflicts and other situations of violence reached the highest level recorded during the last five years.

Victimizing acts such as confinement and massive displacement of communities increased, as well as incidents with explosive devices that amounted to 486, with 50 fatalities. The total violations of IHL during 2021 were 884 (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022, p. 3), which shows that violence in the post-agreement scenario is intensifying instead of decreasing, a paradox for efforts of peacebuilding derived from the Final Agreement.

### **The Citizenships of the Pos: the Post-conflict, the Post-agreement and the Post-pandemic in Colombia**

In Colombia, the exercise of citizenship can be described as restricted, as it seems to be limited to the formula: “Free elections + Variety of candidates = Democracy.” This narrowing vision of democracy is simple, but consistent with the deficient political-legal formation of Colombian society.

O'Donnell warned that democracy under this premise is precarious, and that if it were taken seriously "its full meaning implies the extended existence of other citizenships: civil, social, and cultural. The democratic regime does not guarantee, as the experience of Latin America shows, the validity of these other aspects of citizenship" (2007, p. 26).

In the country, the exercise of that deficit citizenship during the armed conflict is linked to another concept, that of the victim, it is not the purpose of this article to compose a genealogy on the category of victim, in this regard the works of Murad (2020) and Puerta (2020) can be reviewed. However, what this article seeks to highlight is that the exercise of citizenship or the concept of citizen in Colombia is somewhat displaced by the figure of the victim of the armed conflict, whose category continues to be incorporated into the Colombian legal system. As Professor Arrieta-Burgos points out:

... in our country, the survivors of the armed conflict are non-citizens in act to the extent that they are potentially so. Having said this: the category of "victim" replaces citizenship as an institutionally precarious form that refers to a non-citizen of exception, ultra-exception, re-exception, over-objectified, infra-humanitarian, apoliticized and, despite this, full, as long as their vulnerability condition is declared ceased or is not taken into account. (2016, p. 59)

This exceptionality fits with the *sui generis* of the armed conflict, because despite the signing of a peace agreement with one of its actors, six other confrontations persist that limit the exercise of the subjects marked as victims, their citizenship hangs on and depends on being declared such to achieve an exercise of factual citizenship, as Arrieta-Burgos indicates:

... if it is stated, from the entry, that the institutional category of victim is excluded from citizenship, why does it make sense to continue asking about it? Basically, because citizenship is a promise of the same victimization, it is a promise that the survivors hopelessly await, a citizenship in suspense that feeds as a passable and infamous possibility toward an institutionally unrealizable reality according to the current model. (2016, p. 59)

In a similar sense, Professor María Soledad Gómez proposes an active citizenship that does not depend exclusively on the role of State administration for its strengthening "as the only source of citizenship under the individual-State relationship. In such a case, citizenship also depends on the construction of a space for interaction that guarantees belonging to a political community" (Gómez-Guzmán, 2021, p. 225).

With this context, around the transition from the victim of the armed conflict to the citizen (full subject of rights), as an unfulfilled promise of the Colombian State, it is worth reflecting on how that citizenship in constant transition is articulated with the current moment of the country in a convulsive political community, since international standards, both IHRL and IHL, seek to develop the broadest possible protection for human beings. The standards alone are openly insufficient, and the law is a field of struggle and dispute in terms of Bourdieu (2000) which is limited in achieving the respect and protection of its recipients if there is no strong political will to comply with these legal obligations and honor the ethical and political commitments that they carry.

The transition and post-agreement scenarios pose another series of challenges for state institutions, social organizations, NGOs, and civil society as a whole. The assassinations of those who said yes to peace has not stopped, while the fear held by the signatories of the Agreement increases and the government in power denies the systematicity of this vertiginous annihilation. Members of the former guerrilla group and their families are now subject to a daily test of survival in a landscape hostile to their peace efforts – lethal and non-lethal violence exacerbated by the pandemic. The former guerrilla Martín Cruz, known during the war as Rubín Morro stated that: "it seems that what we signed was death and not peace" (2020).

It should be added that IHL rules require general protection for the civilian population, reinforced in the case of those who have ceased to participate in hostilities, such as members of the former guerrilla group, since once they have laid down their weapons, they once again acquire their status as civilians protected against the adverse effects of war. But it is curious how the legal norms of IHL operate like a pendulum between the lives and deaths of the protected subjects and those who are likely to attack in accordance with the rules of the conduct of hostilities

When speaking about post-conflict in Colombia, reference is made to a fiction, since the Latin prefix *pos* means that something is after, or in colloquial terms, that something "already happened." This is not consistent with what as a society "continues to happen to us," and that tragically seems to "continue to happen to us," in terms of the adverse effects of war that are reflected in various forms of victimization.

The American Lederach says that "the [peace] agreements have been aimed at ending the killings [but] actually, the agreements mean that a whole new series of negotiations, often more arduous and difficult, have just begun" (2008, p. 86). In Colombia, this is evident, and appealing to the post-conflict concept is an oxymoron because not only do the other armed conflicts persist, as already



explored, but other sociopolitical and socioeconomic conflicts also persist, now aggravated after two years of the pandemic.

As a society in transition, the implementation of the Final Agreement to achieve a comprehensive peace remains a goal, but in practice, as Lederach points out, it is difficult for a peace agreement to end an armed conflict, since most peace agreements are not solutions, but proposals (2008, p. 85). Hence, the concept of *post-agreement* better describes the time of Colombian society after a peace agreement that leads its various proposals around issues such as agrarian issues, illicit crops, truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, but all of them are still proposals underway (some with more significant advances than others, as the consolidation of the Integral System for Peace<sup>5</sup>).

The term *post-pandemic* has gained strength in recent months to imagine a relatively uncertain scenario in economic, epidemiological, political, and social terms, both nationally and globally. However, there are elements to consider that societies such as Colombia will not be strengthened by the pandemic and the effects of authoritarianism, xenophobia, discrimination, racism, and socioeconomic exclusion will be marked.

One of the testimonies of this sector of Colombian population, particularly vulnerable to armed violence during the pandemic, was collected by Amnesty International. Estupiñán, a Colombian social leader from the Pacific region, describes the situation as follows:

We are locked up, we move from one house to another to hide, and we only go out for need. However, in the current context, to be at home 24 hours every day is a death sentence, since the hitmen know where to find us. We are now an even easier target for those who want to silence us. For many people, quarantine represents the first time in life that their mobility has been restricted. But for four years I have not been able to walk to the store in my neighborhood alone, because I feel that if I do I will be killed. Nor can I go to the countryside, or go out to have fun, because this is risking my life. (2020)

The testimony of the leader reflects how the isolation favored the armed action of OAGs, who target social and environmental leaders for defending human rights, ancestral territories, goods of common, use and for contributing to the construction of peace in the country on a small scale. The permanent confinement situation, described by Danelly in the Colombian Pacific, is common

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5. The court is the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, SJP, while the non-jurisdictional bodies are the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth (CCT) and the Search Unit for Persons Reported Missing (SUPRM).

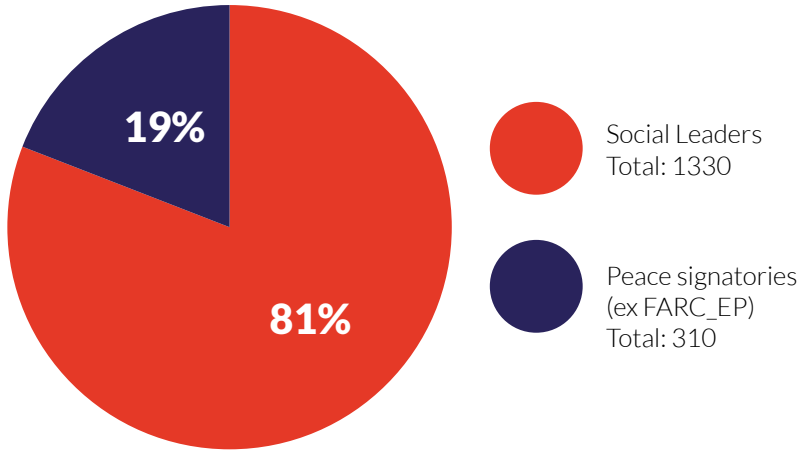
in other regions of the country. The pandemic revealed an already existing reality of restriction of freedom that many communities have experienced historically. Due to COVID-19, privileged sectors of Colombian population recognized this fact for the first time. The researcher Quiceno-Toro in her book *Vivir Sabroso* expresses in the particular case of Chocó that confinement already existed before the pandemic:

For many inhabitants, the fact of always being together in the village is a symptom of threats and fear. In addition, it is associated with the idea of being enclosed, that is, deprived of freedom to move and go for long periods to mountains, to other rivers or communities. (2016, p. 101)

In addition, lethal violence and confinement against leaders during the pandemic in the Americas was studied by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). The court stated that isolation contributed to exacerbating espionage and freedom of locomotion. In addition, 60% of homicides against social or environmental leaders, and human rights defenders in the world, occur in the Americas and to this lethal violence is added inequality and impunity of such crimes. Because human rights defenders are not only at risk for the exercise of their work, they are also part of most vulnerable population to COVID-19 due to precarious socioeconomic issues, also taking into account that "now the defense of Human Rights is done online." (Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020). These leadership activities pose several challenges taking into account the lack of access to information technologies in rural territories or on the periphery of cities, the limited socioeconomic conditions to access them, and the vulnerability to privacy and security in online environments.

According to the United Nations Verification Mission (United Nations [UN], 2022), ex-combatants killed from 2016 to the beginning of 2022 amounts to 310 confirmed by March data from the Observatorio de Derechos Humanos, Conflictividades y Paz (2022a). Data show that social leaders killed during the same period exceed 1,330. By extension, more than 1,600 homicides have occurred against ex-combatants, defenders of peace and the environment in just over the five years of implementation (Observatorio de Derechos Humanos, Conflictividades y Paz, 2021), as the following graph shows:

Figure 1. People killed during 2016 – 2022 related to the process of implementation of the Peace Agreement



Note. Author's elaboration based on Observatory of Human Rights, Conflicts and Peace(2022b); United Nations Organization (2022).

The strict documentation carried out by the Commons Party, a direct victim of this systematic extermination of its members, as well as by non-governmental organizations such as the Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (Indepaz), are useful for denunciation processes and visibility of levels of violence exacerbated in the post-agreement, and now with the addition of the post-pandemic scenario, as International Committee of the Red Cross remarks (2022). The reality in territories involves the increase in levels of violence, the highest since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016.

The conditions of confinement, generated from the pandemic, have led the OAGs to continue the warlike confrontation in several territories (the most remote from the centrality and institutionality in general) that threaten, intimidate, enact violence, displace and exterminate through selective assassinations, mainly, the signatories of peace and human rights defenders. It is also worth mentioning that there have been more than 200 massacres –mostly against the civilian population– during the two years of pandemic, between January 2020 and March 2022, and that so far in 2022 there have been 23 (Observatorio de Derechos Humanos, Conflictividades y Paz, 2022b). To paraphrase Butler, the exacerbated violence in Colombia shows us the finitude and little value of human life. It also points out its precariousness, because living in Colombia is linked to a fulfillment of social and economic conditions “to maintain life” (2017, p. 30).

In short, Colombians understand more about the post-agreement during the evolution of the pandemic in Colombia, because of the promises and unfulfilled legal obligations of the State, than because they are in a definitive transition from armed conflict to peace. However, it should be noted that "The pandemic has given us back the sight to recognize the reality of death, selfishness, and it has revealed to us the value of the other for each one." (Gómez-Serna *et al.*, 2021, p. 403). A society victimized for decades, being prepared for peaceful coexistence with the others, cannot tolerate a single life lost to direct, structural, or symbolic violence. The last section develops the relationship between the rules that regulate war and how they can contribute to the construction of peace.

### **Perspectives from IHL in a Horizon of Peace for Colombia**

As already explored, IHL involves a set of legal norms aimed at regulating the conduct of hostilities between those who wage war. In Colombia, there is a tendency to study this field from the perspective of military necessity or victim protection (Kalmanovitz, 2018), but much remains to be explored in IHL from a perspective of peace.

IHL norms can become a tool for peace building in Colombia, since the obligations derived after the end of a NIAC have been less analyzed than those in force during the war, this is due to the fact that the most harmful humanitarian effects are evident while the armed confrontation lasts, but IHL poses important duties to the warring parties, both to the members of the OAG as well as to the military and police forces.

These obligations include the search for persons reported missing, the duty to grant the broadest possible amnesty and pardon, the obligation to carry out all criminal proceedings to investigate, prosecute and punish, or to carry out demining processes in the territories affected by anti-personnel mines (APM) and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Although they are legal norms, they have a profound ethical and political meaning that can be strengthened through respect for life and recognition of the populations affected by the conflict.

If these norms transcend their legal component and are applied effectively, they can contribute to the construction of peace in Colombia, because these provisions are oriented both to counteract the humanitarian consequences of the armed confrontation and to achieve the expectations of justice and the rights of the victims. The norms alone are insufficient, but they are the starting point for the consolidation of the guarantees they prescribe.

Law is a tool with serious limitations to transform realities and a greater number of legal norms do not guarantee transformations either. IHL has a

global validity that allows the development of a harmonious relationship at theoretical and practical levels within the post-agreement. In this, respect for these norms becomes a tool that not only limits the subsequent effects of war, but also contributes from a preventive approach to violence to the construction and consolidation of peace, particularly during the implementation of the Final Agreement.

It is also fundamental to think about peacebuilding scenarios in the face of the eventual submission to justice of OAG members, which the 2018-2022 government intends to demobilize at the individual and not collective level based on Decree 601 of 2020 (Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2020). This has important legal and political consequences by ignoring the collective nature of hostilities and may be unsuccessful in the attempt to weaken OAG such as FARC-EP dissidents, the ELN, or the AGC. However, on a small scale and in a symbolic sense, it can be a micro peace-building action for someone to lay down their arms and reintegrate into life in one's political community.

The post-agreement and post-pandemic scenarios share something in common. In both, the focus of the discussion must be on the subjects of these human and fundamental rights, since it is impossible to move toward overcoming the armed conflicts in force or the socioeconomic and structural consequences derived from the pandemic without prioritizing the human beings who suffer from these circumstances.

The pandemic made it clear that the international system was not prepared at either the political or regulatory level to deal with a public health crisis of such proportions. It follows from this argument, then, that IHL and IHRL have major gaps in terms of maximizing the protective environment of the human being through international treaties, since physical and mental health seemed to be relegated to the public policies of each state and not to the strategies of multilateral organizations and the efforts of international law.

In coherence with the philosophical, political and legal discourses on human dignity protected by IHL and IHRL, the concept of "living well" can be vindicated as a collective aspiration in Colombia: "It is not a goal or an end, but a process, a doing, a day-to-day existence. Living well is something that is realized, but that is exhausted, and, therefore, does not cease to be sought." (Quiceno-Toro, 2016, p. 36). The lives taken by the armed conflict or by the pandemic cannot become mere figures and it must be recognized that these losses cannot leave indifferent the members of a political community that aspires to vindicate the conditions of a dignified existence free of all violence, in order to move during the post-agreement toward possible scenarios of peaceful and democratic coexistence.

## Conclusions

In Colombia, both IHL and human rights offer various possibilities to confront the crises to which Colombians are accustomed in relation to war: displacements, massacres, or forced disappearances. However, international treaties, paraphrasing Lederach (2008), should be seen as proposals rather than solutions, and in that sense their content can be used to consolidate peace building in Colombia. Because in the post-agreement scenario, and even more so in the post-pandemic scenario, there must be a symbiosis between law with emancipatory potential and its daily practice of materializing the dignity of human beings that can lead them to a full exercise of citizenship

Negative peace (as the mere absence of war) has eluded us for decades, but it is clear that this yearning for peace is not limited to the Final Agreement between the State and the former FARC, nor is it the collective demobilization or individual subjugation of OAG members. Peace is also expressed in those small daily manifestations of listening to the other, of generating empathy with those who have been victimized or of recognizing that at any moment the evolution of the armed conflict can turn anyone into another victim. This is why peace is a call to action rather than the result of a negotiation (Acosta-Navas, 2021).

The construction of peace in Colombia can appeal to the legal tools that the Final Agreement has revitalized. The convergence between the norms of IHL and IHRL are a fundamental piece to guarantee that victims obtain truth, justice, reparations, and the guarantee of non-repetition; but it also supposes an effort so that these victims overcome the condition that marks them forever or that revictimizes them in particular situations, so that the exercise of their citizenship is not limited to a mere label.

Aspirational citizenship consists of subjects with full rights who participate in the political community and who must transcend the precariousness that has characterized them in societies such as Latin America, to become an active, critical, reflective, and proactive citizenship that does not limit its democratic exercise to voting at the ballot box in each legislative or executive period. The pandemic generated by COVID-19 is an opportunity to demonstrate that negative peace as a simple silencing of the guns (in our case, only with one armed actor) is not enough, and that for this reason Colombians must aim at a project of positive peace-building. This is understood as project in which the population has its human and fundamental rights guaranteed. But peace must also be thought from: "[the] paradigm of imperfect peace, where peace still unfinished is built day by day, from below and horizontally" (Feo-Ardila and Espinel-Rubio, 2021. p. 68).

Only by understanding that peace is an unfinished project, can Colombian society be articulated around a collective objective as a political community, where the contributions to the construction of daily peace, from below and on a small scale, manage to transcend toward other wagers for the construction of national peace, an imperfect and unfinished peace that allows us to move toward an increasingly just, peaceful and democratic society.

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# Other research contributing to discussion on Social citizenship



Otras investigaciones que aportan  
en ciudadanía.  
Outras pesquisas que contribuem à  
discussão sobre Cidadania Social.

# Archive Order: Secrecy and Military Intelligence in Democracy \*

[English Version]

Orden de archivo. Secreto e inteligencia militar en democracia

Pedido de arquivo. Sigilo e inteligência militar na democracia

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## Abstract

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**Objective:** to identify the processes and practices involved in the definition of objectives, the search and classification of information of a naval intelligence office, and to contribute to the study of intelligence systems in Argentina, based on the analysis of a naval intelligence archive that covers the years (1985 to 2006) and that was confiscated as judicial evidence.

**Methodology:** anthropological and ethnographic research that includes in its design the analysis of a judicial file, interviews of different actors involved in the process of setting up the case, historical sources,

legislation, regulations of different hierarchies, and the detailed reconstruction of the intelligence file. **Results:** the analysis shows practices attributable to doctrinal

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frameworks corresponding to different time periods, sustained as strategies aimed at disputing areas of power and influence in the field of the State, and consolidating the sector's autonomy. The process of "policing" the sector and the relevance of the notion of "political policing" are discussed. **Conclusions:** the approach to the court case and the analysis of the intelligence file allowed problematizing the relationships and transmission of practices and knowledge within a Navy intelligence office beyond what is established in institutional legal guidelines. It opens the specific inquiry into the bureaucratic framework of the various intelligence agencies that make up the sector and the problem of their increasing automatization.

**Keywords:** military archives; espionage; political police; anthropology; Argentina.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** identificar los procesos y prácticas involucrados en la definición de objetivos, la búsqueda y clasificación de información de una oficina de inteligencia naval y aportar al estudio de los sistemas de inteligencia en Argentina, a partir del análisis de un archivo de inteligencia naval que abarca el período (1985-2006) y que fuera confiscado como prueba judicial. **Metodología:** investigación antropológica y etnográfica que incluye en su diseño el análisis de un expediente judicial, entrevistas a diversos actores intervinientes en el proceso de armado de la causa, fuentes históricas, legislación, normativa de diferente jerarquía, y la reconstrucción en detalle del archivo de inteligencia. **Resultados:** el análisis da cuenta de prácticas atribuibles a marcos doctrinarios correspondientes a temporalidades diversas, sostenidas como estrategias dirigidas a disputar ámbitos de poder e influencia en el campo del Estado, y a consolidar una autonomía del sector. Se aborda el proceso de «policiamiento» del sector y la pertinencia de la noción «policía política». **Conclusiones:** el abordaje de la causa judicial y del análisis del archivo de inteligencia permitieron problematizar las relaciones y transmisión de prácticas y saberes al interior de una oficina de inteligencia de la Armada, más allá de lo establecido en los lineamientos legales institucionales. Se abre la indagación específica sobre el entramado burocrático de los diversos organismos de inteligencia que conforman el sector y el problema de su creciente autonomización.

**Palabras-clave:** archivos militares; espionaje; policía política; antropología; Argentina.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** identificar os processos e práticas envolvidos na definição dos objetivos, a busca e classificação das informações em um escritório de inteligência naval e contribuir para o estudo dos sistemas de inteligência na Argentina, com base na análise de um arquivo de inteligência naval abrangendo o período 1985-2006, o qual foi confiscado como prova judicial. **Metodologia:** pesquisa antropológica e etnográfica que inclui em sua concepção a análise de um processo judicial, entrevistas com vários atores envolvidos no processo de constituição do caso, fontes históricas, legislação, regulamentos de diferentes hierarquias e a reconstrução detalhada do processo de inteligência. **Resultados:** a análise revela práticas atribuíveis a estruturas doutrinárias correspondentes a diferentes períodos de tempo, sustentadas como estratégias destinadas a disputar áreas de poder e influência no campo do Estado, e a consolidar a autonomia do setor. O processo de «policimento» do setor e a relevância da noção de «policimento político» são abordados. **Conclusões:** a abordagem do processo judicial e a análise do arquivo de inteligência tornaram possível problematizar as relações e a transmissão de práticas e conhecimentos dentro de um escritório de inteligência da Marinha, além do que está estabelecido nas diretrizes jurídicas institucionais. Ela abre o caminho para um inquérito específico sobre a estrutura burocrática das diversas agências de inteligência que compõem o setor e o problema de sua crescente autonomia.

**Palavras-chave:** arquivos militares; espionagem; polícia política; antropologia; Argentina.

## Introduction

This paper presents some relevant aspects of research that began with the access to an intelligence file from the Argentine Navy in 2006. The circumstances were made possible in the framework of a lawsuit filed by a human rights organization, the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), before the federal justice system, for carrying out illegal intelligence activities. Initially, the members of the intelligence office of the Almirante Zar Naval Air Base (Trelew, Chubut province), and finally the chain of command up to the head of the Navy, were charged. The investigator, the author of this article, participated in this case as a collaborator due to her expertise in the military issue, these being the conditions for access to the file and to the archive. The file is still in the custody of the Federal Court of Rawson.

To date, this is the only military intelligence archive to which access has been obtained, since all the so-called "repression archives" declassified in Argentina belong entirely to provincial police forces. They also usually cover the maximum dates 1960 to 1980, with some exceptions, and have been used as evidence in the trials for crimes committed during the military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983. The Trelew archive does not fall institutionally or temporally into this category, which constituted one of the first challenges for the research. This issue will be discussed in more detail in this paper.

The court case «CELS su denuncia»<sup>1</sup> was initiated when the naval intelligence office located in the city of Trelew was accused of illegal practices. Such practices were not in accordance with the principles contained in the National Defense Law (Ley 23554, 1988), the Internal Security Law (Ley 24059, 1991), or the National Intelligence Law (Ley 25520, 2001), which successively laid the foundations of a legislative structure and delimited military roles. This framework had been built based on a strong parliamentary consensus and two fundamental principles, with which a broad sector of the political spectrum tried to dismantle the foundations of the National Security Doctrine in Argentina, established in its Defense Ley 16970 of 1966. The first of these principles contends that the armed forces are part of the national defense system and that, therefore, they are only authorized to confront threats of external origin. The second of these principles delimits internal security and establishes that matters relating to the internal politics of the country may in no case constitute a working hypothesis for intelligence agencies.

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1. File. N° 186 - F° 134 - Year 2006- Federal Court of Rawson, Argentina.

After an extensive period in which different sectors of the armed forces and civil society struggled to modify the limits established in the regulations, the present case, known in the media as the "Trelew Espionage," became the spearhead to enact a series of modifications in the military intelligence system concerning the orientation, coordination, direction, planning, and supervision of the activities related to the intelligence production cycle carried out by the intelligence agencies of the Armed Forces (Poczynok, 2017; Calderon, 2016, Muzzopappa, 2018).

In the framework of the court case, the files of that intelligence office were seized, which provided judicial proof of the performance of illegitimate tasks, such as the tracking of politicians and representatives of very different types of organizations (social groups and relatives of victims of State terrorism, among others).

The seized documentation consists of a series of reports, memos and newspaper clippings organized in folders contained in a filing cabinet, minute books, binders, and two computers. The documentation covers a period from 1985 to 2006.

Research with intelligence archives, usually referred to as "repression archives," has had a particular impetus based on the report prepared for UNESCO by the International Council on Archives in 1995<sup>2</sup> (González-Quintana, 2008). This report highlighted the importance of access to and preservation of the archives produced by different security and intelligence agencies during the repressive periods, in relation to the processes of democratic transition and the guarantee of human rights.

Since the end of the military dictatorships, different sectors, human rights organizations, and social movements have demanded that their governments search for and open police and military archives as part of the conditions to guarantee the processes of democratic transition and even of the democratic systems themselves. In this context, their inclusion in judicial investigations made it possible to expose to the public light the support that intelligence systems constituted for the repressive machinery of past dictatorial regimes.

In Argentina, the archives contemplated in this process of "opening" are, for the most part, police files (from their Investigation or Intelligence departments, known as D2)<sup>3</sup> or from the provincial governments' civilian intelligence

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2. The report, coordinated by Antonio González Quintana and titled "Gestión de los archivos de los servicios de seguridad," was republished in 2008.

3. These may include: Information Department of the Police of Córdoba, Police Information Department of the Police of the Province of Santiago del Estero, Intelligence Department of the Police of San Juan, Intelligence Department of the Police of the Province of Mendoza, Intelligence Directorate of the Police of the Province of Buenos Aires. The Argentine federal system of government contemplates the existence of



services.<sup>4</sup> To a large extent, their maximum dates contemplate the period 1960 to 1980; some extend to the 1990s (Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires), and only two go beyond the first decade of the 2000s (Archivo de Prontuarios Policiales de la Policía de Chubut; Departamento de Investigaciones Policiales de Santiago del Estero).

This has meant that most of the research on intelligence systems and practices refers to the dictatorial periods, while there is little research focused on the period beginning in 1983, the year of the reinstatement of the democratic system in Argentina. A notable exception has been the work recently undertaken by the Provincial Commission for Memory of the Province of Buenos Aires, which has made fundamental contributions to the functioning of the intelligence system for judicial cases on illegal intelligence during the post-dictatorial period. This work is also intended to make a contribution in this direction.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the purpose described above, this research, which began in 2006, has investigated the following topics: 1) the historization and development of intelligence agencies in Argentina, taking into account their dynamics as state bureaucracies; 2) the historical configuration of dangers and threats, their relationship with the processes of militarization of security and "policing" of the armed forces, and with the problem of autonomy and civilian control.

This paper highlights how, based on the reconstruction and analysis of an intelligence archive of a "local" delegation, identifying practices and work logics of the naval intelligence system from 1985 to 2006 is possible. Thus, even if the issue of "civilian control" or the "relative autonomy" of the armed forces—which has been extensively addressed by specialists for the Latin American case (Varas and Agüero, 1988; Diamint, 1999), to name but a few classics—is not discussed here, they constitute an unavoidable reference for dialogue in research that has as its frame of reference the daily constitution of state bureaucracies.

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police forces under the orbit of the provincial governments. Likewise, each of these archives has received different types of treatment in relation to their preservation and access.

4. Included here are the files of the SICCh (Chubut Information Service) and DGI (General Directorate of Information of the province of Santa Fe). On the state of treatment of intelligence archives in Argentina see Nazar and García-Navarini (2021).

5. The Provincial Commission for Memory of the Province of Buenos Aires (CPM) has had custody of the intelligence archives of the former DIPBA (Dirección de inteligencia de la Policía Bonaerense) since 2001. In this task, the CPM has developed programs that investigate the actions and structures of state and para-state intelligence in Argentina, thus building a unique expertise on this subject and becoming a reference for judicial investigations.

## **Toward a De-reification of the State**

An anthropological inquiry into the question of the state<sup>6</sup> has been particularly fruitful in contributing to its "de-reification" (Abrams, 1988). The approach proposed here attempts to contribute to those works such as those of Corrigan and Sayer (2007) who, in this direction, took up the challenge of analyzing the processes of historical shaping of the "state" and to unveil the legitimizing argument under which, as shown by Bourdieu (2014), a myriad of offices, agents and bureaucracies that dispute the power of "the state."

In this direction, an anthropological and ethnographic perspective implies giving an account of rationalities, agents, processes, and productions: the file and the record of the judicial case became the two channels of analysis in this ethnographic investigation of the state bureaucracies, which supposed distinguish their dynamics of formation, trajectories and traditions, the networks, alliances and confrontations, as well as the circumstances that surround the agents, such as the "groups" of pressure, interest or belonging, which do not necessarily coincide with those that institutional boundaries demarcate (Muzzopappa, 2018).

Both the record and the file can thus be approached as "artifacts," as part of the apparently banal practices, mechanics of government (Sharma and Gupta, 2006) that constitute the center of the "administrative" tasks of different sectors of these bureaucracies. They can, therefore, be approached as fragments that help understand the role that records play within the state apparatus and how, on a daily basis, they shape it (Goody, 1990; Stoler, 2010).

De-reifying the state also means considering the analysis of such registers beyond the "content" or their "literal" reading and dwelling, both on the producer and on the dynamics, configurations, and categories from which they are produced. This means that the synchronous and microscopic view, which requires the analysis of an intelligence archive, is inserted in a perspective of long-term processes, to consider the historical development of the logics and practices involved, as well as the particular effect of its categories in the ordering of the world and the configuration of danger, threat, and the enemy.

## **Duty, Belonging and Secrecy**

The armed forces can turn out to be, in turn, a particular object of reification. Even when the historical analysis has revealed the heterogeneities and

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6. Consistent with the proposed approach, a distinction is made between "state" to refer to the concept that is theoretically analyzed and "State" to designate specific state configurations.

the disputes within it—particularly in the analyzes that address its relationship with the political contest—the truth is that the border or the limit that appears relevant is the one that is established between the “military” and the non-military (or “civilian”). Based on this cleavage, the question of the so-called “civilian-military relations” implies precisely the interest in investigating the relations of subordination or autonomy of the armed forces with respect to “civilian” political power. A good part of these studies were carried out in Latin America based on the study, especially from political science, of problems that included military influence in Latin American political systems (O’Donnell, 1975), passing through “military autonomy” (Varas, 1988) to the debates and proposals regarding “control” or “civilian supremacy” (Diamint, 1999).

The research presented here takes up the relevance of a category such as “corporation” (Durkheim, 1985), which in this framework allows reference to the relationship with the “profession” as a place of establishment of specific moralities (Frederic and Soprano, 2010) and the subjective feelings of belonging and transformation (Muzzopappa, 2005; Badaró, 2009) but in particular, as a mode of mediation of interests, historically situated and changing (O’Donnell, 1975), and of the forms of formation of groups to exert pressure on certain sectors of the State. The notion of “corporation” has thus made it possible to investigate the resources that are mobilized both to establish limits and to promote the internal integration of groups within the state apparatus.

This research stops precisely at the “secret” resource, used to establish and define such a border. This resource, in short, constitutes one of the ways in which the power of the state is erected, marking a limit with the outside.

The invocation of secrecy in the case of intelligence agencies allows us to see, in this case, how the dispute over “state power” (Bourdieu, 2014) occurs amongst the state bureaucracies. Although it is not part of the analysis of this work, it is worth noting that the recourse to secrecy was present not only in the aforementioned documented classifications of the file, but also constituted, within the framework of the legal case, a legal strategy of the accused to prevent supervision by other powers of the State (the Justice and the Executive Branch). The analysis of the dynamics established in this case, around the secret, allows researchers to advance in this “de-reification” of the state and visualize the corporate contours and limits, turning it into an index to reveal the network of relationships and interests that sustain it.

## Methodology

An investigation was carried out that included in its design the analysis of the judicial record, interviews with various actors involved in the process of assembling the case, search for historical sources, legislation, and regulations of different hierarchies, being of particular importance the detailed reconstruction of the intelligence file and its comparison with other similar files.

Based on the search records and some photographs of the filing cabinets, a reconstruction of the “original order” of this file was made, which had been disassembled during the seizure process. A first description includes that of filing cabinets, with labeled drawers as described below:

Table 1. Possible file ordering

Supporting files	Divisions	Folders
Gray filing cabinet	Chubut Factors	(Approximately 22, including): Religion; Minorities; drugs; Judicial; Photography; Energy; indigenism; human rights; Civilian Personnel Strike; ports; COAN Address 1/2 “S”; phone control; Guilds; Security plan; General interest; Fishing and Naval Correspondents.
	Diverse publications	
Brown filing cabinet	COOP Synthesis	SintCoop 2003; SintCoop 2004; SintCoop 2005; March 2004; May 2004; AUG; 22AUG
	Newsletter	
	Social Media	
Book of minutes, labeled "Book of naval shipments",		

Supporting files	Divisions	Folders
Bibliography with the label "Remitted-Received Encrypted P.I (Part of Information)"		
Hand-Annotated Notebooks		
Computers	Factors	Airports; Energy; Fishing; Government-Fisheries; ports; Semblances; Newsletter 2006.

The metal filing cabinets contain, in their folders, the material from which the reports prepared in the office were made, according to different documentary types (Summary for the Naval Operations Command -Sint. COOP-, Naval Messages, Encrypted Messages, Information Parts). There are newspaper clippings and printouts of informative Internet pages, not finding other types of files—of the personal file type, for example—even though in the writing of the referred reports these other sources of reference can be identified, particularly in those that specify that no information was found in "Own File."<sup>7</sup> Finally, practically all of the reports and memos contained in this archive have an "ESC" classification: Strictly Secret and Confidential.

This description of the archive, which is developed more extensively in other works (Muzzopappa, 2017, 2018), was key to establishing a comparative dimension with other intelligence files, especially with that of the Intelligence Directorate of the Police of the Province of Buenos Aires,<sup>8</sup> the most complete and extensive archive of police intelligence departments available in Argentina.

The comparative perspective was used to shed light "on regularities, variations, connections and correlations not always expected" (Balbi, 2015) from the contrast of the categories and the classification system of the archives of the Buenos Aires Province Police (DIPPBA) and the Chubut Information Service (SICH).

7. The claim for the existence of this file has been a constant by human rights organizations in Argentina. References such as those found in those reports suggest that, at least until the time the raid was carried out, said file—probably a central intelligence file—existed and was still being used. However, there have been no new results in this regard.

8. This Intelligence Directorate had been dissolved in a police reform in 1998, its records (which extreme dates are 1932 to 1998) were ceded, by law, to the Provincial Commission for the Memory of the Province of Buenos Aires (CPM).

It also takes up a strategy that requires logically bringing together disparate situations, spatially or temporally disconnected, carried out by a diversity of actors, with a heteroclite *corpus* for analysis: laws, decrees, judicial records, and institutional discourses, among others. This perspective is assumed since it is understood here that, for the study of this type of state bureaucracy, it is fruitful to open up to a diversity of spaces, thus avoiding the claim of "primitive isolation," even more so when the objective does not lie in the definition of the characteristics of the groups involved, but in the ways in which they think and constitute themselves in terms of relationships and mobile boundaries with various "others" (Barth, 1976, pp. 9-47).

Regarding the review of the anthropology records, researchers returned to the proposal of Stoler (2010), who understands that the records are constituted as a privileged place for an ethnography of the state, where the interest should focus on the process of conformation of the documentary collections to highlight their role in the state knowledge production process, but also in its condition as a cultural artifact for the production of facts and taxonomies in the making of its bureaucracies.

Finally, based on the archival principles of respect for order and provenance,<sup>9</sup> a reordering of the documentation was carried out, which had been intervened in the judicial search. This allowed the description and identification of the groupings and categories used by the intelligence office, and to establish links with other intelligence files produced by other agencies (police and provincial intelligence systems) in different historical periods. The archival category of "documentary types" was also used, that is, the identification of documents that, having similar external characters—support, measurements, etc.—and internal—organization and arrangement of information— (Heredia-Herrera 1991, p. 135), give an account of specific administrative procedures.

## Results

As has been mentioned, this research has been following various lines of interest. The main results related to the knowledge of the practices of the

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9. The principle of origin implies respecting and maintaining the documentation from a united institution, without mixing it with that of other institutions. On the other hand, the consideration of the "original order" implies considering the ordering that the same producing institution gave it. For this, it is very useful to have the so-called organizational diagrams that, in turn, allow understanding the different "documentary types" that each of the instances generates, in their multiple activities. On archival principles see Antonia Herrera Heredia (1991).

intelligence agencies in Argentina, in particular on the post-dictatorial period, 1985 to 2006, and the theoretical problem on the processes of militarization of security, of the role of "political police" and "policing" of the armed forces and their intelligence agencies.

### **Schema and Categories**

The work with the archival perspective made identifying a classificatory scheme possible, that is, a certain type of information retrieval and ordering that allows for investigating the logic from which the archive was created and used. The need for an analysis that would help determine the legitimizing support of such an organizational proposal was also postulated.

This work involved advancing with respect to the question of the trajectory, from which this file had been formed both in terms of the distinction of themes (labels and folders) and the organization criteria of the reports. This reconstruction allowed corroborating that the categories present in the file did not correspond to those stipulated in the current regulations that establish the institutional "missions and functions." In other words, the description of the "factors," as it appeared in the metal filing cabinet label and in the writing of the reports, was not part of the functions delegated to the naval intelligence system by the Navy Intelligence Plan. This lack of coherence, however, did not imply the existence of an institutional separation between the Trelew intelligence office and the rest of the system in carrying out these tasks. On the other hand, the identification of senders and receivers in memos and reports (made from standardized forms that record both the origin of the request and the different destinations to which the response is sent and/or copied) revealed a circulation of institutional type of this information. In other words, the tasks carried out there, far from being part of individual decisions or circumscribed by Trelew staff, had to be analyzed within the framework of institutional logic, even when they were not "legitimate" or "legal."

The Navy, like other forces, submits a good part of its staff to a system of rotation of destinations, which leaves open the question regarding the education and training involved in the use and maintenance of a file. Considering that this requires basic knowledge, it is proposed here that the archive is intervened based on rules that can be understood within the framework of a classificatory habitus that does not need anchoring in the formal registry. That means, these archive organization criteria are not explained by what is dictated in the current regulations, the intelligence plans or the contents supposedly taught in specialties training instances, but also require other variables for their understanding.

Thus, the notion of *habitus* allowed an analysis of the archive and classification practices with relative independence from the external determinations of the immediate present (Bourdieu, 2014), in this case from the doctrinal updates in force at the time.

For this definition the material contained in the drawers of the filing cabinets was of particular interest: labeled “Factores Chubut” and “synthesis COOP” (see Table 1).

The organization in “factors” was identified as part of an extensive tradition regarding the construction of “dangers” and the institutional practices formed around them. Thus, great similarities were found with the organization established for the police intelligence of the Province of Buenos Aires in 1984<sup>10</sup> and previously in the Intelligence Bureau of the government of Santa Fe from 1977 (Águila, 2013) or that of the Ministry of Government of Rio Negro in 1978 (Muzzopappa and Mereb, 2020). They are the “factors”: political, relating to unions, socioeconomic, educational and religious, psychosocial, foreign minority.

To these categories, which accounted for continuities of classification criteria from previous periods, others were added, which had to be analyzed in relation to the configuration of a scenario after the fall of the Berlin Wall. With this objective, the folders “Drugs,” “Human Rights,” and “Indigenism” were identified, which appeared together with the rest of the “factors,” but which resulted in this “novel” trajectory. Then, the influence of the doctrinal changes that occurred throughout the 1990s on the international scene and the disputes over the installation of the paradigm of “new threats” or “asymmetric threats” as part of the functions of the instrument were considered as military defense in Argentina. The considerations contained in the Intelligence Plan, which was part of the material contained in the file, specified the role of the naval intelligence system in analyzing information related to “asymmetric threats.” Thus, the Navy included as its own task the conspiracy of those dangers that include terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, arms and people trafficking, among others. It is in this perspective that categories such as “Drugs” and “Indigenism” can be understood.

Although the issue of “Drugs” is recurrent in police intelligence files from previous periods, it is closely associated with the moral characterization of individuals under surveillance due to their links with “subversion” or because of their sexual orientation. While the type of information collected in the folders of the Trelew naval archive, as well as the reports prepared, allow us to account

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10. Intelligence Directorate Fund of the Police of the Province of Buenos Aires, Central File and File Division, File 269.



for a delimitation of the drug trafficking phenomenon as a network of illegal trade or transnational crime.

For its part, the "Indigenism" brings together newspaper clippings on different public activities carried out by communities and groups of native peoples, in particular the Mapuche people of the province of Chubut. It is worth clarifying that certain sectors attribute to this people their character of "foreigners" and origins in Chile, with which their claims seem to put territorial sovereignty in check.

Finally, a special mention should be made of the folder labeled "Human Rights," whose origin can be established in the conflictive relationship that the organizations of relatives of disappeared detainees during the 1976-1983 dictatorship in Argentina have had with the armed forces due to his reluctance to provide information on the fate of the victims. In the specific case of this folder, information is compiled regarding the carrying out of public activities and the details of the meetings of the relatives of the "Trelew massacre" that took place, precisely, at the Almirante Zar Naval Air Base in the year 1972.<sup>11</sup> Throughout all those years, the Navy had different protection measures for those who were charged as the guilty and meticulously followed the activities of the relatives of the murdered.

That said, it should be noted that despite the apparent disconnection of these "new" categories added to the file, the addition was made preserving the interpretation and classification scheme based on that dichotomous vision where the negative pole, which characterizes individuals, groups and activities that are put under suspicion, continues to be defined by a possible location to the "left" of the political spectrum and by a spurious characterization between politics, crime and morality.

### **Militarization and Political Police**

Regarding the ways of organizing the information circuit, the comparison with the archives of other organizations allowed for considering the organization of the naval intelligence system and specifying the hierarchical place of the Trelew intelligence office. Based on this, it was identified as a file of a "local" delegation, this is the first step in the chain of the information survey and sending circuit, from which information is sent with pre-established criteria

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11. In the early morning of August 22, 1972, 19 political prisoners who were arrested at the Almirante Zar Naval Air Base were shot by members of the Argentine Navy. The incident caused great commotion in society and was one of the events that precipitated the end of the dictatorship of General. Onganía. However, it was not until 2006 that the relatives were able to open the judicial case to try the guilty parties.

to a central body, which gathers, in its own file, the reports of the sections or delegations and from which it carries out a new analysis process.

This genealogical investigation of the continuities in the tasks, activities, organization, and characteristics of the classification system of the intelligence agencies allowed verifying, in turn, the persistence of cooperation mechanisms between them. This collaboration, which historically received the name of "Information Community" (Sain, 1997), was for an extensive period of time under the aegis of the armed forces, where the criteria regarding the interrelation and coordination of tasks of the intelligence agencies (Funes, 2008; Águila, 2013; Montero, 2016). Despite the fact that the framework was dismantled with the sanction of the Internal Security (1991) and National Intelligence (2001) laws, the case analyzed showed the informal permanence of these collaboration circuits based on "uses and customs." Due to this historical conformation, the works on the intelligence organisms have highlighted what is called a process of "militarization" throughout the 20th century.

It is worth clarifying that the notion of "militarization" is polysemic and refers to a multiplicity of meanings and levels of application (Muzzopappa, 2017, Hathazy, 2016; Sánchez-Ortega, 2020). Thus, several works highlight the current processes of "militarization" of police forces at the international level defined by the adaptation of special bodies with notorious firepower (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997; Kraska, 2007; Hathazy, 2016). Then, the use of the term "militarization" is widely spread to identify the process of historical formation of police forces based on "military" characteristics, both in terms of the organizational structure and the method of training its members. With "militarized," the process of conformation of a hierarchical system and the importance given to the notions of "body" and "discipline" are usually designated (Sain, 1997; Varela, 2007; Galeano, 2007; Barreneche, 2008; Barry, 2010 cited by Caimari, 2015) because they emulate the characteristics of the armed forces. These works aim to show the deep influence that, particularly the armies, have had on the design of police forces.

Particularly relevant here is the definition of the objectives and training of the security forces or intelligence agencies on strategies based on the identification and persecution of the "political enemy" (Sain, 1997; Águila, 2013; Montero, 2016; Sozzo, 2016; Marengo, 2018; Scocco, 2019) that particularly affected intelligence agencies. Such a process was especially strengthened during the military dictatorships that followed one another in Argentina from 1930 and was accelerated with the implementation of the principles of the National Security Doctrine when training, the hierarchical system and the definition of the objectives of the corps were combined with police and intelligence agencies from the military leadership. In relation to this diagnosis, during the period of

democratic reinstatement, the task of "demilitarizing" politics was assumed, as well as the security and intelligence agencies (Sain, 1997).

Now, based on the similarities and continuities in terms of practices and categories used in police archives and in the Trelew naval archive, it is that this investigation began in the opposite direction, asking about the process of "policing" of military intelligence (Sain, 1997; Kalmanowiecki, 2000; Muzzopappa, 2018). In other words, the question about the historical process of transformation of military intelligence into political "police" is introduced here, taking into account that the identification and nomination of what is suspicious or dangerous, based on categories such as "dissolving element," "subversive," or "activist", among others, requires a proper procedure for the exercise of surveillance and control that is different from the care of the balance of forces between states that was typical of military doctrine until late in the 20th century. This difference is understood as the distinction between high and low police (Brodeur, 2007, L'Heuillet, 2010), *high* police involves the function to "instruct power," to control identity rather than the boundaries of territory. The police model takes the domestic model in its continuous search for the consolidation and perpetuation of an order; the order is the function of the police and is based on an idea of politics that ensures home care, rather than threshold (L'Heuillet, 2010, p.142). The remark that opens from here is, then, how and why Argentine armed forces turn to tasks that are properly belonging to the "police."

Kalmanowiecki (2000) finds, in the 1930s, the time in which this transfer of intelligence practices from the "political police" to the armed forces takes place in Argentina. The care of this internal order, as an idea of politics, becomes the goal of the armed forces in this early period in such a way that, by the time the guiding principles of National Security Doctrine are consolidated, military intelligence will have already built its own path and experience regarding internal danger. At the same time, a logic classification will be forged that will extend throughout the century and will continue even in the post-dictatorial period from 1983.

Trelew's files shows, precisely, both the permanence of some categories—economic, social, union factor, etc.—and the inclusion of others—indigenism, human rights—that support how intelligence activities continued to be raised as "high police." The scheme that supports this logic configures as a particular interest the relationships established by certain subjects, as well as their political and moral characterization, and extends much further back to the period of the cold war to beyond different changes in the political system and legislative reforms. Thus, this characteristic allows to raise, the hypothesis of a confluence of organisms of the sector divided or not necessarily linked to the institutions

to which they belong organically and functionally (armed forces, security, police, provincial governments).

This long-term look from 1985 to 2006 recovers for the analysis of this file, the perspective of the "files of repression" regarding the relevance and relationship of intelligence systems with various state agencies, their specific development, the link and correlation between the classification categories and doctrinal framework, without reducing the analysis to the mere corroboration of continuities and/or breaks. The notion of "political police" makes it possible to understand the logic of the incorporation of categories into the classification system even within the context of doctrinal changes in different times. In this sense, it is possible to observe how a general scheme remains where categories produced in different historical times coexist: those of the period of National Security Doctrine can be distinguished from the perspective of "new threats," typical of the period that begins after the end of the Cold War.

#### Autonomization of Intelligence

Finally, it is possible to review what was once the "reason of state" when the perspective from which such a "reason" is established does not correspond to the highest state authorities of a democratic system. On the contrary, the analysis shows a process of autonomization of intelligence agencies that has now become a problem of political agenda in relation to the *lawfare* (Romano, 2021).<sup>12</sup>

The participation of the armed forces in internal activities, under the paradigm of "new threats" or "asymmetric threats" implies a scenario that has been well received by certain sectors of the armed forces. And, as it can be seen from their inclusion in Naval Intelligence Plan mentioned here, this framework was included in this institutional file contrary to national directives and legislation. But, beyond autonomy, in democratic periods there is still concern about debate issues that in Argentina are not completely settled. Thus, if during the governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández (2003-2006 and 2006-2015), strengthening the perspective of the armed forces and intelligence agencies for defense was ruled, that should have as their objective the eventual "external state aggression," the management of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019) repealed Decreto 727/2006 again installing the possibility of action of armed forces considering that their action was legitimate in the face of an simply "external aggression." Additionally, it included phenomena such as drug trafficking or terrorism. Nowadays, the government of President Alberto Fernández has ruled in favor of restricting the actions of armed forces and promoted an important advance

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12. Just to mention Argentina, after the scandal over the Trelew espionage case referred here, a series of cases were happening that revealed the spurious relationship established between intelligence agents, Justice and different levels of politics. See Romano (2021).

on the control of all the agencies that make up the intelligence system, when the level of autonomy had only increased since the case of Trelew referred here.<sup>13</sup> Although the goal of this research is not the analysis of such a process, it can be stated that it has also been evidenced there how the function of "secrecy," daily and capillary, is ultimately the first fence against what is perceived as subjugation of other powers and state bureaucracies and a resource for autonomy of the sector.

The inquiry into this file made it possible to extend the deadline with regard to intelligence files, to cover an unexplored period that begins with the democratic restoration. It allows installing the problem of intelligence agencies beyond the dictatorial repressive logic and considers the information released within the framework of the course of the agencies nowadays, their relationship with the force of which it is a specialty, as well as their autonomous action as a sector. Based on this, "secrecy" appears as a strategy rather than as a remark used to exclude possible competitors in the field of the state, access and use of information.

## Conclusions

The judicial conflict came up from the suspicion of carrying out "illegitimate" intelligence activities. The research conducted here took this first and fundamental step, beyond the individual accusations made by the Justice, to account for an institutional logic that goes beyond specific members of the Navy. According to historical context, this case managed to seize the intelligence archive and thus deepen the hypothesis about the tasks of military intelligence agencies in Argentina since the return of democracy in 1983 (Muzzopappa, 2018).

This assumption was made possible by deepening the role and function of archives in state bureaucracies. To understand the file as a practice rather than as a mere repository of information, or a count of intangible categories, implies considering that the activities and denominations that crystallize in

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13. After years of inactivity, the current composition of Bicameral Commission for Prosecution of Intelligence Agencies and Activities presented a report on "illegal espionage" that took place between 2016 and 2019. According to the conclusions, during this period a device would have been established that dealt with the illegal surveillance of people based on their religious faith, private actions or political opinion, as a form of political extortion. The report is available on the website of the Honorable Congress of the Nation, <https://cutt.ly/kRNzcYc>

folders and reports respond to a logic that is common, it is shared, at least by those who have been trained in the specialization of intelligence. It also implies emphasizing that these logics are not necessarily embodied in specific institutional regulations or plans. It entails the challenge of tracking, identifying, and understanding the mechanisms from which a strictly institutional function is learned and transmitted outside and beyond the legitimate and official training and functioning spaces.

In this sense, considering the "illegality" of the practices does not mean disassociating them from an institutionality. The anthropological and ethnographic approach opens the possibility of knowing a *native perspective* on the modality assumed by relations within the armed forces, beyond a merely legal or institutionalist perspective. The continuity of intelligence practices, as they had been established decades ago, confirmed the permanence of logics despite legislative reforms.

The court case "CELS denounce" re-staged the "military question" and "civil-military relations" during a period considered to be the subordination of armed forces to civilian power; or, as some analysts already suggested, characterized by a subordination that included wide margins of action.

Reviewing the stated information, it is essential to understand that, if an archive can be considered, on the one hand, an objectification of thought schemes and, on the other, as the sediment of state action and functioning (Nazar, 2021, p. 24), it is understood that this reservoir of documentation accounts for the practices of this intelligence office. And that, if these practices are configured in a divergent way to what is established in the regulations and the legal principles in force, the question of the "autonomy" of these systems (Sain, 1997) and the way in which criteria and institutional dynamics are defined, established, and endure reappears.

A process such as the detailed one makes it possible to highlight the difference between the practices of intelligence office and the directives issued constitutionally and legally. This perspective finds a convenient line of inquiry from the perspective of "military autonomy" or regarding the processes of subordination of military and defense policy in Argentina almost into the democratic period. Thus, Poczynok (2017) takes up the distinction between defense policy and civil control proposed to underline how the former—which includes the adequacy of military institutions to the needs defined and perceived by those who legitimately govern the State—since democratic restoration, has been notoriously deficient in relation to what has been achieved at the level of subordination or subjection, as a political actor from the armed forces to civilian

control. In short, a case such as the one mentioned highlights this significant leap in terms of comprehensive defense policy, understanding that in matters such as intelligence activities, among others, the armed forces retained high levels of autonomy by then (Diamint, 2008).

Finally, it was presented as a unique opportunity to track and search the practices and categories of intelligence activities as constitutive of state bureaucracies and strategies for the dispute of "state power" (Bourdieu, 2014). And, even more important, it contributes to defining a problem that over the years has only deepened: the problematic role of intelligence agencies, their composition, formation and democratic control. This debate goes further along the explanatory axis that distinguishes dictatorship/democracy, and has become urgent in several Latin American countries. It requires deepening studies regarding the problem of the autonomy of intelligence agencies and their constitution as a corporation.

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# Existential Trajectories of People from Armero: from Soil Fertility to Uprooting and Marginalization \*

[English Version]

Trayectorias existenciales armeritas: de la fertilidad de su suelo, al desarraigo y a la marginación

Trajatórias existenciais de pessoas de Armero: da fertilidade de seu solo ao desenraizamento e à marginalização

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## Abstract

**Objective:** to understand identity configuration features of a group of survivors from the Armero tragedy according to their ideological positions and their memory processes. **Methodology:** information was gathered over a two-year period, using ethnographic instruments such as field diaries, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and documentary reviews. The triangulation strategy was used for the analysis. Thirty-three people from Armero were interviewed nine in person and 24 remotely. In addition, two focus groups were conducted and archival material and information from the Facebook

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\* This article is the result of the ongoing research project: "Geographies of memory and disaster: social imaginaries, beliefs and struggles of people from Armero 35 years after the tragedy" in the research line on Memory, Experience and Belief of the Doctorate in Social Studies from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá. This research is directed by PhD. Adrián Serna-Dimas and has been developed with the author's own resources.

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social network were analyzed. The purpose of the information gathering was to answer the following questions: Where are the survivors and what is their relationship with the process of memory? **Results:** findings show that survivors of Armero are dispersed throughout different areas of the Colombian territory. Their relationship with the process of memory can be analyzed in terms of two large groups. The first group was excluded from any possibility of social participation due to the conditions which uprooting and poverty have condemned them. The second group, in the work with and through memory, has found the possibility of advocacy with the State to achieve recognition and reparation. **Conclusions:** the dismantling of the territory in which life had been lived until 1985, the inadequate care of survivors, the impact of the catastrophic event on the existence of each person, among other factors, has made overcoming the trauma caused by this disruptive event difficult.

**Keywords:** memory; tragedy; territory; identity.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** comprender aspectos de la configuración identitaria de un grupo de personas supervivientes de la tragedia de Armero, en lo relacionado con sus posturas ideológicas y elementos de sus procesos de memoria. **Metodología:** la información se recolectó durante un periodo de dos años, a través de instrumentos del enfoque etnográfico como diario de campo, entrevista semiestructurada, grupos focales y revisión documental. El análisis se llevó a cabo mediante la estrategia de triangulación. Se entrevistaron 33 armeritas; 9 presencialmente y 24 de manera remota. Además, se realizaron dos grupos focales y se analizó contenido de archivo e información de la red social *Facebook*. Todo ello, para responder a estos cuestionamientos: ¿Dónde se encuentran los últimos armeritas? y ¿Cuál es su relación con los procesos de memoria? **Resultados:** en la investigación se encontró que los armeritas se hallan dispersos por diversas zonas del territorio colombiano y su relación con los procesos de memoria se puede analizar a partir de dos grandes grupos: el primero, excluido de cualquier posibilidad de participación social por las condiciones a las que lo han condenado el desarraigo y la pobreza. El segundo, ha encontrado en el trabajo *con y por* la memoria la posibilidad de agenciamiento frente al Estado para lograr reconocimiento y reparación. **Conclusiones:** el desmantelamiento del territorio en el que devenía la vida hasta 1985, la inadecuada atención de los supervivientes, el impacto del hecho catastrófico en la existencia de cada persona, entre otros factores han dificultado la superación del trauma ocasionado por el evento disruptivo.

**Palabras-clave:** memoria; catástrofe; territorio; identidad.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** compreender aspectos da configuração de identidade de um grupo de sobreviventes da tragédia de Armero, em relação a suas posições ideológicas e elementos de seus processos de memória. **Metodologia:** as informações foram coletadas durante um período de dois anos, utilizando instrumentos etnográficos como diários de campo, entrevistas semi-estruturadas, grupos de discussão e revisão documental. A análise foi realizada utilizando a estratégia de triangulação. Trinta e três pessoas de Armero foram entrevistadas; nove pessoalmente e 24 remotamente. Além disso, dois grupos de foco foram conduzidos e o conteúdo e informações de arquivo da rede social Facebook foram analisados. O objetivo era responder as seguintes perguntas: Onde estão as últimas pessoas de Armero e qual é a relação deles com os processos de memória? **Resultados:** a pesquisa constatou que as pessoas de Armero estão dispersas em diferentes áreas da Colômbia e sua relação com os processos de memória pode ser analisada em termos de dois grandes grupos: o primeiro, excluído de qualquer possibilidade de participação social devido às condições às quais o desenraizamento e a pobreza os condenaram. O segundo grupo encontrou no trabalho com e através da memória a possibilidade de agência perante o Estado a fim de alcançar o reconhecimento e a reparação. **Conclusões:** o desmantelamento do território no qual a vida foi vivida até 1985, o cuidado inadequado dos sobreviventes, o impacto do evento catastrófico sobre a existência de cada pessoa, entre outros fatores, dificultou a superação do trauma causado pelo evento perturbador.

**Palavras-chave:** memória; catástrofe; território, identidade.

## Introduction

In her ethnographic account of the peasants from northern Tolima, Guzmán-Pañuela (2021) states that walking embodies the action of living, which implies "thinking, living, and working in a concrete world as the same action" (p 66). This involves learning to know the nooks and crannies of the trail, shaping, and measuring one's steps, calculating the steps and distances, making friends with the trail, etc. However, what happens when those traced, known, appropriate, and loved paths become blurred? Do they disappear due to the uprooting caused by violence or a socio-natural disaster? Where do people go when there is no path because it has been wiped out by a socio-natural disaster? What factors affect the fact that the past geography is still attached to one's feet and life, and make it difficult to walk along new paths without falling, falling apart, or getting lost? These are some of the initial questions, partially reported in this manuscript, of this doctoral research.

Before advancing the epistemological configuration, relevant information is provided for the understanding of the social group under research. People from Armero are the survivors of the town Armero, a Colombian municipality located in the department of Tolima, which was destroyed on November 13, 1985, after the eruption of El Nevado del Ruiz Volcano. According to official figures, its geographic area was 166,796 square miles at 352 meters above sea level, and its average temperature was 80.6°F. The National Department of Statistics (DANE), in the census carried out in October 1985, established that Armero had 29,394 inhabitants; 20,962 resided in the urban area and 8,432 inhabitants in the rural area. This figure also accounted for the seasonal population of commercial, tourist and agricultural activities, and an estimate of a 8,000 floating population the night of the tragedy. According to Cruz (2017), experts considered that the volume of volcanic lava that destroyed Armero ranged between 85 and 90 million cubic meters of all kinds of debris and stones that ended the lives of about 22,000 people from Armero over an area of 21.67 square miles. The report presented by Paulsen and Cárdenas (1998) shows the loss of crops, which most likely meant more than just food for consumption: 6.75 hectares of sorghum, 1,633 hectares of rice, 1,298 hectares of cotton, 1,227 hectares of peanuts, and smaller amounts of coffee, soybeans, corn, cassava, sugar cane, and different types of fruit trees, for a total of 11,187 cultivated hectares. Thus, in addition to the precious lives of many Amero's inhabitants, the country lost 31,660 tons of agricultural production from this area.

After this explanation, it is also worth explaining that this research consists of the survey of the *memories* of a group of survivors from Armero to determine



the role of the *territory* and the *social imaginary* in the *ideological* positions which shape their *identity* and account for the struggles for memory that they have been carrying out in relation to the uprooting caused by such a disruptive event. In this sense, the paradigmatic proposal of this research is based on Durand's (2013) approaches of his symbolic imaginary. According to his ideas, humanity dispersed in the social world develops from a mythical structure that preserves a collection of established, preserved, and communicated images thanks to memory and language. These images form a social imaginary in the psyche, shape the collective unconscious, and determine the ideologies from which people act in society.

Accordingly, the notion of territory is problematized as a material and symbolic framework (Bourdieu, 1999) in which human life takes place. In such a way that, based on the particular characteristics of each territory, a model for *being and being* in the world is established. This model is configured depending on the material conditions that determine the forms of production, exchange and consumption of elements within the different social fields in which community life takes place. Therefore, because it impacted the territory directly, the tragedy destroyed the material and symbolic already built, affecting the inhabitants' reality in two ways. It destroyed the material constructions, economic production and all activities aimed at establishing their order and sustainability. It also dismantled the social structure that determines their territoriality. Thus, the territory can be defined as a geographically differentiated, politically delimited, and culturally characterized area. (Bourdieu, 1999; Ochoa, 2017; Mora, 2017).

Now, according to Hall (2003) and Candau (2008), identity is a changing element that is basically configured on the basis of two substrates: one fixed, linked to the tradition of the founding group, and one unstable, linked to the individual's existential journey through the social world. With the rupture of the conditions framed in a territory, of that web of symbolic networks that make up the culture of the social group and that directs the significance on which people build their existence, the survivors must undergo an identity transformation in which their founding substrate struggles not to disappear under the weight of the new identity layers that begin to be part of the ontological constitution of these people in other places. (Ramírez, 2014; Arteaga and Ugarte, 2015; Berroeta *et al.*, 2015; Timo de Vries, 2016; Flores-Cisternas and Sanhueza-Contreras, 2018; Naylor *et al.*, 2020).

Thus, to approach the survivor's identity configuration to identify, among other things, the consequences of the disaster, it is key to access their memory through language within the existential frameworks from which the people from Armero recall their past, become their present, and project their future. Accordingly, this research aims to understand some features of the identity

configuration of a group of survivors from Armero, through the review of aspects of their imaginary that determine ideological aspects and cultural situations linking them to the territory, configure their memory and become perceptible through their discursive constructions. Therefore, memory is assumed as a psychosocial process providing a collection of memories and things forgotten that define people's actions in the present. (Durand, 2013; Serna-Dimas, 2020; Halbwachs, 2004).

This article reports the results of the characterization stage of the survivors who participated in this research – this means that some aspects, as those related to the imaginary and identity, will not be dealt with in depth. The first section describes the methodology used to carry out the first phase of this research. Next, the ideas related to some of the findings obtained during this stage in relation to the categories are showed: *people from Armero at the margin of memory work and those who work with and for memory from the margin*. Then, aspects related to the two sides of the situation are reviewed. The one linked to people from Armero who, due to their current circumstances do not have access to a digital space and the one of those who do have access to it and have become active agents striving to make the dynamics of their daily life visible as a way of resistance of the state's neglect. Finally, relevant elements on the established questions and on this research experience are concluded.

## Methodology

By assuming territory as the main articulator of identity, disaster as the disruptive event that fractures it, and memory as the repository for the imaginary, ideology, and other aspects of life that remain, the ethnographic method was considered the most pertinent to investigate the identity of survivors. The above, taking into account that it gives centrality to language and to the individuals who, through it, refer to their existential journey. In such a way that culture is not assumed to be anchored to fixed entities but to language, because linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic codes allow for the informants' memory content and their positionings on the reality of their lives. Thus, in the narrative, the research individuals report their culture, and therefore their identity, and the ethnographer captures aspects of their interest and inserts them into a broader narrative. In this regard, De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2015) posit that through language individuals construct their world image, place themselves in it and negotiate their identity – across different discursive

orders. The stories about personal experiences are constructed from the context in which the present is lived, but and from the reinterpretation of past experiences. Thus, the content of the story becomes a source of great value when working with the uprooted, because it condenses the lived experiences in the lost territory and accounts for the identity configuration of the people in the present. (Fabian, 2012; Pollak, 2006).

The inquiry for the role of the territory in the identity configuration and its relationship with the memory processes in terms of imaginary and ideology implied an initial stage of tracing to ascertain the location of the members of the community that was disintegrated by the tragedy of 1985 that left the people from Armero dispersed in different areas of the national territory. – This vis-à-vis the impossibility of continuing inhabiting the territory that had already been wiped out twice and likewise juxtaposed against any other relocation strategy presented by the Colombian State. – The research perspective is socio-anthropological and appeals to the ethnographic approach, which tends toward an exercise of reflexivity of the subjects who construct knowledge from certain epistemological, political, and ethical positionings. Such an exercise is typical in the field of social studies, as Serna-Dimas (2011) states, since it includes multiple emerging phenomena and vindicates historically marginalized individuals and collectivities, which allows for the rescue of the centrality of the subject and the particularity of the phenomenon addressed.

In accordance with the delimitation of the object of study, individuals over fifty years of age were required; men and women who had been impacted differently by the tragedy. This is based on the assumption that situations such as the loss suffered, the conditions of the new territory inhabited, the length of the life trajectory that took place in Armero, among other circumstances, have a direct impact on the existential reconfiguration and on the processes of remembering and forgetting, as stated by Timo de Vries (2016). In this sense, two questions were formulated for this article: Where are the last survivors from Armero? And what is their relationship with processes of memory?

The information search began in November 2018 and, for the purpose of locating community members, concluded in December 2020. Based on documents such as the Relocation Budget Register, established by the RESURGIR<sup>1</sup> foundation, it was possible to corroborate that there are neighborhoods built in cities such as Bogotá, Cali and Ibagué, and in smaller places as Armero Guayabal, Lérída, Mariquita, Honda, Venadillo, Ambalema, and Cambao. Other survivors were assigned to plots of land for cultivation in the townships of Méndez and San Felipe. Similarly, it was found that there are micro-communities

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1. The foundation in charge of the relocation process of the survivors after the tragedy.

of people from Armero in cities such as Medellín, Barranquilla, Villavicencio, Neiva, Manizales, Pereira and Armenia. These small groups have been formed by people who found the best way to *be* and to *be* in the world after the tragedy in these places. In this regard, it is worth clarifying that most of this information did not come from official documents, which, in several cases, were found to be inaccurate, biased, or incomplete, as in the case of the census prepared by Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística in 1985, just a few months before the tragedy occurred.

Thus, one of the first hurdles overcome was related to the incompleteness and dispersion of the information that accounted for the survivors. For example, after a long journey through different DANE offices and agencies, it was not possible to find figures on the number of children living in the municipality at the time of the eruption. In the response received regarding the incompleteness of the disaggregation corresponding to Armero, it is stated that this difficulty is related to the fact that the company in charge of recording the information and later providing it to DANE was unable to deliver it, so part of the information collected was lost during the natural disaster. As already mentioned, according to this census, Armero had 29,394 inhabitants. This figure does not coincide with that stated by González of the Armando Armero Foundation (2021), since testimonies, such as that of the last Armero notary, led to affirm that until 1985 there were around 10,000 births, which would be consistent with the fact that each family had an average of between four and five members. This figure also agrees with the number of neighborhoods and villages that made up Armero.

The researcher found that the memory work carried out by some survivors was an adequate way to keep track of them and discover their locations, as well as their particular situations and interests. So, she began to keep a field diary to record everything that happened in the encounters that took place on the occasion of the commemorations or meetings to discuss dialogues with the administration in power. This was directing the focus toward the virtual space, more specifically toward the social network *Facebook*; however, finding some survivors that were committed to the theme of memory work implied that there were others who were not and it was interesting to discover the reasons they had. This involved, in addition to working on the field diary, conducting face-to-face personalized interviews, establishing focus groups, and document review. All this aimed at achieving an in-depth analysis of the information collected. Table 1 provides more detailed information in this regard.

**Table 1.** Summary of strategies used to collect the information

Strategy	Objective	Specifics
Field Diary	To register information related to the research process in general, regarding the imaginary that supports the ideologies on which people from Armero support their struggles for memory and recognition, in order to understand their identity transformation.	Carried out throughout the entire process and comprises impressions of what is observed in person and virtually. It constitutes the synthesizing element of the entire investigative process and an essential source for the writing of an ethnographic novel.
Documentary Analysis	To use the file as a primary source that allows for the corroboration of information reported by the interviewees.	To date, a total of 27 documents have been reviewed, including minutes, resolutions, decrees, COMPES and others (found in physical archives in Guayaabal, Lérida, Ibagué, and in private areas). Press articles, audiovisual material, photographic records, research articles (all found mainly on the Internet) and printed books have also been analyzed.
Focus Groups	To identify people from Armero who work for memory, as well as to learn about their ideological positions and the strategies they carry out in order to achieve recognition and reparation.	Due to the contingency caused by COVID-19, only two focus groups could be held; one at the beginning of the investigative process (14/11/2018), in Armero Guayaabal, and another in the middle of it (31/10/2019), in Bogotá.
Semi-structured Interviews	To identify aspects of the identity configuration of people from Armero who have suffered the impact of the catastrophic event in different ways, due to the physical and psychological effects derived from the volcano eruption and due to the treatment received during the relocation.	Nine of the 33 interviews were conducted in person before the COVID emergency, and the remaining 24 were carried out remotely. Each survivor was interviewed on average twice (this due to the peculiarities of work in the social studies of memory).

## **Considerations on Digital Ethnographic Work with Communities that Have Lost their Territory due to Socio-natural Disaster**

According to Pons (2013), in the era of information and communication technologies, all research inevitably begins on the internet. The virtual context allows for the tracking of what others have done in a field of interest, to understand the feasibility, relevance, scope and, even, the usefulness of an investigative process. This author states that in the digital age “Historians should not be analysts of isolated technical problems, drawn from the past, but narrators of worlds in motion, complex, unpredictable, and transitory worlds” (p. 58). This raised referring to history is even more true for the dynamic field of memory. Thus, time and space, as essential elements that frame human existence, converge in the dense digital universe. But neither time nor space are empty concepts; they are social constructions that give rhythm and meaning to the life of communities. These considerations lead to the understanding of virtual communities as places with enough power to approach certain human dynamics that account for the frameworks of meaning that are built around a social group’s situation. Given the impossibility of having a physical territory for interaction and work that brings them together regarding the disaster, people from Armero have found in the digital space a place for reunion and work with memory – which never ceases to exacerbate the sense of frustration and uprooting for coming from a space in which life flowed so closely linked to the materiality of the territory, due to the great agricultural development that characterized Armero.

However, in relation to the usefulness of the digital space as a provider of information for this investigation, authors such as Ñaupas *et al.*, (2013) state that the research carried out from the ethnographic approach privileges work *in situ*, leads to the collection of data that facilitates the interpretation of realities within social groups. This implies a close link with the target community and, through a process of constant recording of everyday situations, the necessary information to analyze and understand social phenomena in specific contexts is collected. Thus, the research design from the ethnographic approach implies a reading of the text and the textualities that constitute the social reality of a group. This reading must include both contextual aspects, which determine the dynamics of people's daily lives, and symbolic elements that are part of their social imaginaries and the representations they have of the world. In this sense, Espinosa (2010) states that this requires a conscious approach to social grammar, understood as the compendium of “implicit norms, rules and principles of community life that make up the territory” (p. 115). According to this author, it is imperative for the researcher to understand the texture (physical

aspects from which a community is structured) and the textualities (meanings with which individuals give sense to aspects of the group's daily life).

As evidenced in Table 1, this involved work that articulated the use of various sources and collection and data analysis instruments to avoid the digital-centrism mentioned by Sarah Pink *et al.*, (2019); this is related to the fact that the researcher should not be astonished at the mass of information and the ease of access to it, but recognize that behind the large volume of information that circulates on the internet, there are corporeal beings who have reasons to inhabit the *web* in one way or another. Ultimately, to access the circumstances that make a reality internalize and mimic itself in one through symbolic frameworks that account for the existential wandering of people through the social world, as Rovira-Rubio and Giraldo-Hernández (2021) propose. In relation to differentiating aspects between the traditional ethnographic method and digital ethnographic practices, these authors state that the most significant change occurs in the researcher's relationship with the members of the community. In this regard, Pink and her colleagues assert that close relationships between the researcher and their subjects, as well as texts and textualities are modified, while other types of artifacts are analyzed, all inserted within broader contexts such as blogs, wikis and groups in social networks, as in this case.

For the analysis of the information collected, a matrix has been established to triangulate the data (Flick, 2014). In this matrix, what the survivors say and do is contrasted with what the researcher observes. This information is complemented with that found in the archives. From the initial work, two categories emerged: *people from Armero at the margin of memory work* and *people from Armero who work with and for memory from the margin*. The analysis presented in this text was divided into these categories. In this way, the findings outlined here are related to aspects such as ideology and the fact that the processes of remembering and forgetting are transitory, and the emphasis is placed on the questions: *Where are the survivors? And what is its relationship with processes of memory?*

## Results

### People from Armero at the Margin of Memory Work

In the first instance, it is important to mention that the researcher had drawn up an ethnographic work leading to the writing of life stories. Through those stories written by people from Armero, the purpose was to analyze aspects of

their remembering and forgetting processes that would reveal existential trajectories, in order to identify aspects of their identity configuration. Therefore, during the first six months of the exercise, she interviewed nine people, six men and three women, all over 50 years of age and in a vulnerable condition due to their socioeconomic and health statuses. Eight of the nine study participants knew how to read and write, but could not do so because they had problems with arthritis, tremors due to muscle weakness, or vision problems; three participants lived alone and had difficulty even preparing their food – they are men who spoke little, but could not contain their tears when they remembered the life they had in Armero, compared to the conditions of misery and abandonment in which they currently find themselves; two subjects lost their entire family in the eruption and the other was left alone afterward. Five of the nine participants survived and quite possibly still do thanks to the subsidy of the Colombia Mayor program and the charity of their neighbors. Only three people had a cell phone with the capacity for applications such as WhatsApp; and two did not have any type of telephone or device that would allow them to communicate. “What do I need a phone for, if I don't have someone to call me, much less someone to call. Loneliness arrives alone,” (Antonio, personal communication, November 16, 2019). He spoke of loneliness as if it were a person, his eternal companion since the disaster claimed all the members of his family, his material possessions and the symbolic network on which he sustained and projected his existence. Only his deep faith and fear of a superior being had prevented him from ending his life and with it the pain that does not leave the memories of Armero alone.

The other eight people were in similar conditions. How can they remember without hurting, if their current situation has not allowed them to weigh the loss in any way? The shortcomings on which their lives currently exist make remembering an intense, constant, and painful process, because they remember the impairment, the abundance that was lost in a traumatic way. The researcher noted that their memory has been configured around the disaster, that they live in a present time that is perceived as light because the past is heavy and is only a few days away; it cannot be seen far away either in time or in the space. The present life is diluted in a kind of lethargy in which the physical and emotional conditions do not even allow them to envision a path on which to plant traces so that there is a future. Walking is difficult not only because of physical degeneration, but because life has been too short to forget the paths learned in Armero and to grasp and stick to the paths of the new territory. Several of them recognized that they did not make the best decisions when faced with the obligation to continue living. In this regard, Mr. Ricardo, son of one of the founders of the famous orchestra Las Águilas del Norte, and who, without a leg, begs for alms in the streets of the Center-South of Bogotá, stated:



I received a little house in Guayabal, but I sold it. I gave part of it to my children and another part I wasted on alcohol. Understand me, when you get up every day thinking that at any moment death will come, you do not want to cling to material goods, you know that what you enjoy at the moment is the only thing you have ... But sometimes life takes longer and you have to struggle so you don't have to walk around with an empty belly and without a place to sleep. (Ricardo, personal communication, December 5, 2019)

Mr. Ricardo, like other people from Armero, is a living reflection of the poor psychosocial care with which they were received after the tragedy. Many survivors did not receive any assistance because the Colombian State assumed that giving them four walls and a roof was all they needed to get on with their lives. In this regard, in one of the interviews with the secretary of FEDEARMERO<sup>2</sup>, he stated:

Mrs. Dora de Barragán was a successful businesswoman in Armero, she had a Subaru truck, several businesses and a large house. After the eruption, she received a little unstuccoed house in Ibagué, she put a wafer (obleas) stand at the door, until Alzheimer disease and sadness reduced her to the bed from which she can no longer get up. (Secretary of FEDEARMERO, personal communication, March 4, 2020)

As has already been said, adequate psychosocial care would have helped them find meaning in life despite the emptiness left by the disaster; it would have allowed them to recognize and adapt to reality instead of fleeing it or distorting it, increasing the trauma, as proposed by Bernal-Maz and García-Corredor (2016).

After the first group of nine survivors, other people from Armero were approached, who also remember being marginalized from Colombian society. Some of them were contacted by phone and others by internet due to the pandemic that suddenly appeared and prevented physical contact. These 24 survivors are also crammed with memories with which they choke to speak. They fear oblivion because they know how it is to live in it, but also because they see it as a large shadow that threatens to crush them forever and, with them, their beloved Armero. They live day to day, aware that time does not give up or wait, and their bodies deteriorate without pause, without even being able to recognize the twists and turns of the roads in the new territory. It is difficult for

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2. Federation of survivors of Armero

their hands, their eyes, and their minds to sow words on paper, but the liveliness of their stories gives a lucid account of their existential trajectories.

Thus, they are left with the word and all the suprasegmental elements of oral communication to empty the content of their memory and bring to the present the remnants of the town, which, although they can no longer inhabit it, has not stopped inhabiting them forever. The survivors drown in their own memories, because, far from being valued and recognized as members of a valuable lineage from which they should not be so painfully uprooted, they are at the margins of a society prone to indifference and injustice, as Aguillón-Lombana (2021a) points out. Table 2 summarizes aspects of the interviewed population.

Table 2. People from Armero personally interviewed

Location	Bogotá	Ibagué	Cambao	Lérida	Guayabal	Villavicencio	Mariquita	Age range			Type of damage caused by the disaster	
Women	3	3	0	3	2	0	1	50-59	60-69	70-80	Physical	Psychological
								4	6	2	3	12
Men	7	2	2	2	4	2	2	50-59	60-69	70-80	Física	Psicológica
								5	6	10	9	21
Total	10	5	2	4	6	2	3					

### People from Armero who Work *with* and *for* Memory

The tracking of various groups of survivors established in the *Facebook* social network turned out to be quite fruitful in terms of the conglomeration of survivors and ideological diversity, as will be seen later. Table 3 shows the results of this tracking. The information has been organized taking into account the

Table 3. Groups of people from Armero who work for memory through Facebook

<b>Name of the group</b>	<b>Purpose of the group</b>	<b>No. of members</b>
Armero and people from Armero	To return to Armero through memories	6531
Memories of people from Armero	To establish a place for meeting with the people from Armero	4948
Armero: Unforgettable Friends	To preserve the links with survivors	2068
Armero	To gather the people from Armero for the memory	2665
Memories of Armero	To build up daily life activities	274
Armero: re-birth stories	To review meaningful experiences of people from Armero	1242
People from Armero. What do you think of the Law 1632 of 2013?	To share points of view of law 1632	995
Fedearmero:	To gather people from Armero to standardize ideas	1435
Foundation for building up Armero	To work for the memory of Armero	10000
Lost children from the tragedy. A cause involving everybody	To help in the search of lost children	8568
I also have good memories of Armero, Tolima	To rebuild daily life activities	277
Memorial Museum of Armero	To inform people from Armero about what is happening there	4983
Virtual Armero	To inform regarding the official work of memory	8733
Armero, reunion with the missing people	To provide and look for information concerning the missing people	2162
Armeo, San Pio X school	To find school graduates to remember	325
Colegio Americano de Armero	To find school graduates to remember	595
Born in Armero. People from Armero	To gather people from Armero to remember	1200
Alumni from Colegio Americano de Armero	To find alumni to remember	341
FUNDASED, people from Armero to the world	To gather people from Armero from all over the world	318
Armeronoteolvido	To gather people from Armero to remember	782
We are people form Armero with the same purpose	To gather fellows to preserve identity	1124

Name of the group	Purpose of the group	No. of members
Amero's community	To gather for the reunion and the memories	620
Armero: Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	To advise on the claim before the State	1724
Memorial Armero Armero's community	To gather with the purpose of remembering the lost life To foster work with the memory	127 376

As can be seen, in these groups there is an eagerness to highlight the centrality of the town by making use of toponymy, but not in all cases is a "surname" added that refers to virtuality, because according to some of the creators, associating the name of the town with the word "virtual" or another that alludes to this condition can generate an association with fantasy, and for them "nothing is more real than Armero". In fact, the only group that uses the word *virtual* is the one created by the person who represents state institutions. It is also important to mention that in most of these groups one observes aspects that were decisive for the location of a broad group of people from Armero, such as the hyperlinkage feature offered by the *web*, but also to understand at the outset some ideological aspects underlying their struggles for memory as a form of recognition. This, since the dynamics exposed therein, has been framed in temporal and spatial conditions that are accounted for through the information provided, and that are part of the communicative and existential ecosystem established in the digital space. Thus, it gathers coexistence relationships in which links and interactions are perceptible, which according to Ramírez-Velázquez and López-Levi (2015) cause the construction, transformation, perception, and representation of a reality.

This implies the characterization of a space framed for remembrance according to certain intentions of the community, spaces for working with memory are framed (Truc, 2011). In this sense, the shared and territorialized virtual space, is set with elements such as photographs, videos, films, audios, press clippings, official, or personal documents such as letters, postcards, banknotes, and invoices. The use of emoticons is also observed quite regularly. Memes, on the other hand, have not managed to gain a significant place in such groups, this may be due to the sacredness with which the images posted there are assumed, even in those in which people who are still alive appear, considerate and respectful comments are observed – a fact that is somehow incompatible with the nature of the meme. This reality tends to be transgressed in times of elections or social upheaval, as is currently the case due to the pandemic, because these are

favorable situations for ideologies and social imaginaries to emerge and generate questions and, almost always, confrontations between some of the members.

Of these struggles for memory it is worth noting that the issue of religion generated a lot of controversy when the tragedy was more recent, but as time went by those detractors began to be less participative or were expelled from the groups because most of their members are older and very religious. Thus, one still finds comments on beliefs such as that the tragedy was the consequence of a curse pronounced by the conservative priest who was murdered by the liberals and other situations that are linked to the so-called "shameful memories" referred to by Connerton (2008). These interactions have decreased in frequency due to the aforementioned actions. Currently, the most controversial ones have to do with images or videos shared by some members in which they claim to observe ghosts or other types of paranormal entities. Similarly, the economic issue is offensive to some survivors who feel that their pain cannot be measured, much less bought. It is also offensive to other people from Armero, because they feel that what they are being offered is very little, "handouts," compared to all that they lost, but, above all, because of the large amount of resources that have been diverted due to corruption; which led to the fact that *not* all the victims were treated fairly.

Finally, there are those who have been swindled by some unscrupulous people who have offered to help them with procedures such as obtaining documents to access the economic reparations contemplated by the State in Ley 1632 of 2013. As previously mentioned, these disagreements have favored the creation of new groups, some of which have the purpose of dealing with specific topics that require a certain rigor in the struggle for memory. Thus, it has been possible to learn about the debates that take place in groups such as *Armeritas: ¿Qué opinan de la LEY 1632 DE 2013?* (People from Armero: What do they think about LEY 1632 OF 2013?) In these debates, positions linked to particular interests become evident, positions of disagreement or approval of the actions of the representatives of state policy or of the "entrepreneurs of memory" mentioned by Jelin (2012), ranging from those who earn their livelihood by selling films, prints and other items in the cemetery, to those who have obtained economic benefits in the political sphere by being people from Armero, but have not defended the interests of the community.

Despite these disputes, there are facts that cross the hearts of all groups and in the face of which prudence and a high sense of sensitivity and respect are evident. Such events have to do with the death of a recognized person from Armero, notices from people who are still looking for their missing persons,

the videos, and images of the commemorations of each November 13, or also due to the insecurity that has occurred in the cemetery due to the lack of state presence. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that, in October 2018 a recognized Bogota radio station planned a Halloween night special from the cemetery and the indignation was widespread and of such magnitude that all groups joined in protest and managed to get the event canceled, although there was no lack of non-conformists who saw in it the possibility of generating "Black Tourism" as Bilbija and Payne (2011) pose. On the other hand, it is important to note that the fact that certain people from Armero are linked to these groups does not guarantee their inclusion or participation in them, since it has been younger family members who have linked them, but they do not know how to use or do not have access to the resources offered by the *web*, so the researcher had to contact them personally or by telephone.

## Conclusions

Returning to the idea that to live is to walk and the new paths that the people from Armero have had to walk as a result of the disaster, it can be concluded that there were more of them than those mentioned in the official figures and not all of them succumbed on November 13, 1985. Many have been dying over these 35 years of uprooting, some by physical death and others because the practices of the Colombian State have condemned them to oblivion to devour in pieces the population that they keep in their memory; everything that makes them people from Armero in essence, and that is of little interest before the morbidity caused by the centrality of the catastrophic fact that has been advocated through the media as proposed by Bernal-Maz, García-Corredor (2016). Therefore, several have died for the world because they do not want or cannot talk about the only thing that many people want to hear: what happened during and after the eruption, as if it were so difficult to understand that there are things that need to be forgotten in order to continue living, as Rieff (2017) – although by inverse logic, the more people want to forget an event, the more it remains present.

After the eruption, the nights of the survivors were full of nightmares, everything came but sleep; the sound of the rain on the roof was like the tears of the dead crying for the hell in which their living were left; fear came from the hand of silence and got between the blankets; in the darkness of those nights appeared sockets that searched for their eyes lost under the mud; hands came groping for other hands to pull them back to life; shreds of skin that asked for

their flesh; worm-eaten lips came to kiss them goodnight. How hard it was to reconcile with sleep, to control the sphincters of crying, to taste food, to smile again!

From the research work that has been carried out so far, it can be affirmed that the people from Armero possess a great mnemonic capacity and a deep rootedness to that founding substrate condensed in Armero. They preserve the vivacity and joy of a thriving race, although sometimes after the laughter that comes with the memory of an amusing anecdote, uncontrolled crying occurs because it is impossible to shake off the disaster, and this ambiguity is not understood by other people. The people from Armero are very good communicators, although many can no longer write. They want to talk about their town, their childhood, their adolescence, and adulthood; they want to talk about all that past life that the mud did not take away because, although they inhabit different spatial-temporal frames, Armero has not stopped inhabiting them.

How could the trauma not become greater, when once the tragedy happened, the government of the day decided to distribute the survivors – more than 9,000 – around different areas of the country, as García (2016) and Cruz (2017) expose, and is corroborated by this research. Thus, there were people from Armero to whom the heat gave its last embrace and the cold shook their hands and settled in them forever. So, if for Guzmán-Pañuela (2021) living is walking, for this researcher that walking makes sense because one goes to the encounter with otherness, because at the end of the day and in some corner of the world someone is waiting for us. So that's the destination, but the journeyers are not going to anything, they're going to interact through memory and language. According to Aguillón-Lombana (2021b), humans are MELOS beings, that is, **Memory, Language** (and this allows us) to **Organize Socially**. But where does one go when no one expects it? What does one talk about if what one has to say is of no interest to anyone?

The people from Armero addressed in this research present a strong mnemonic activity because it is the only way in which existence finds meaning after the conditions they have had to face. Thus, those who remember on the margins of society feel the weight of a past that becomes present to indicate that it was always better because it guaranteed the rootedness to a land that, in addition to being prosperous, was known and loved. They no longer have the strength to complain, their daily struggle is against hunger and disease, and remembering what they were and what they had allows them to resist with fortitude "the test of their superior being" and wait patiently for the arrival of the future. These survivors say that initially going anywhere was all the same, especially since the hope of finding loved ones lost under the mud or lost in the great human market that threw children and young people to different parts

of the world was already lost. A situation that corroborates Paltemaa (2017), who states that a socio-natural disaster activates behaviors and attitudes that are contradictory, since, in the realm of chaos that emerges with a disruptive event of such proportions, the instinctive and the rational, the collective and the personal, the private and the public meet face to face. According to this author, a socio-natural disaster is a sort of realm of contradiction, which makes it conducive to understanding a society as a whole.

The desire to return has always been present, to go back in time and try to prove that everything was nothing more than a nightmare. To return to the place, to the territory and fill their existence with sensations that bring back memories of a life that is no longer there, but from which another time and another space have not been able to empty them because they know what they *are* while the past fills them, occupies them, entangles them with its tangle of memories, as Aguillón-Lombana (2021a) asserts. The people from Armero were united by the fertile territory in which they were born and to a certain extent grew up in, one that, when analyzing the existing imaginaries, its historical and geographical configuration, seems to be written in the domains of death. The inhabitants of Armero were children and adults; some were men, others women; some rich, others poor; some from the urban center, others from the rural area; some loquacious, others reserved. In short, *they* were profoundly human and so accustomed to the goodness and abundance of their paths, that in every territory to which the eruption threw them they seek the soil of their people. They are far from each other, but they are united by the disaster that broke them all, they are united by uprootedness and the train of nostalgia passes by every day to remind them that they are alone and that they are becoming fewer and fewer and less strong.

The time that has brought the catastrophe to adulthood has revealed the dimension of trauma in the life that goes on every day. For some people from Armero, there is now a virtual space for remembrance, one that is territorialized as much as possible, that serves as a meeting place and to which each linked person from Armero brings his or her memories and is nourished by those of others. However, they express uncertainty about the durability of these meeting areas in a social network with strong commercial interests, and call for decisive action by the Colombian State, such as the creation of a virtual museum, which in addition to collecting and disseminating the culture of Armero, can preserve it for the future in a convincing manner. The people from Armero who work for the memory have grouped together to fight from the possibilities granted by the digital world, they have built their own spaces for reunion and remembrance about the indolence of a State that has only known how to turn its back.



The people from Armero recognize ideological diversity as a co-natural element in the way the Colombian State dealt with the situation even before the eruption. The segmentation evidenced in the struggles for memory that are currently being waged is nothing more than a consequence of how broken they were, of the cracks that separated them, of a pain that in no way can be objectified or measured, and, therefore, is expressed in different ways. The current fragmentation is nothing more than a consequence of the inequity and harshness with which many were treated, of the corruption that fed and continues to feed at the expense of their misfortune, of the absurd decision to separate them when they should be more united.

It can also be concluded that if it had not been for the possibility of digital ethnographic work, the research would have had to be stopped because mobilizing in times of pandemic for COVID-19 has been difficult. In addition, the quality of the research work has been favored because it has been possible to broaden the coverage of members of the community and, consequently, information has been obtained that transcends the traditionally structured spatio-temporal boundaries.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that one limitation of the study is linked to the fact that the people selected for the study are over 50 years of age, which leaves out those who, at the time of the occurrence of the disruptive event, were below the age of 15, as is the case of this researcher. From this perspective, it is possible to consider that, although trauma exists, it has been configured by factors different from those that configure the traumatic experience in people who were already adults at the time of the disaster; the experience of a truncated childhood because the schooling process was interrupted and all the social dynamics that occur in the educational institution, for example. This is an area that may be of interest for future research.

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# Urban Communication Processes in the Production of Graffiti. Heritage as an Arena for Disputes\*

[English Version]

Procesos de comunicación urbana en la producción de grafitis. El patrimonio como escenario de disputas

Processos de comunicação urbana na produção de grafites. O património como cenário de disputas

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## Abstract

**Objective:** the objective of this research is to reconstruct the socio-symbolic plot in which a particular work of graffiti in the Lavapiés neighborhood of Madrid is inscribed, in order to analyze the meanings and representations that it activates in the social imaginary. The topic is part of a broader research on cultural heritage issues. **Methodology:** the methodology used is qualitative and seeks to inscribe and understand the images in a broader historical context. **Results:** show urban communication processes that reveal tensions, resistances, and struggles in the face of the changes and transformations that took place in the dynamics of the neighborhood in question. Graffiti thus become devices with the capacity to be read and reread, generating multiple appropriations that exceed the graphic themselves and refer to the always dynamic identity of a space that is lived and discussed. **Conclusions:** it is concluded by identifying the ways in which these demonstrations operate in the public arena. On the one hand, it operates at the service of the international market for its tourist attraction and, on the other hand, as a neighborhood expression and communication, discussing policies that are detrimental to local interests and needs.

**Keywords:** street art; neighborhood; communication; heritage; identity.

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** el objetivo de la presente investigación es reconstruir la trama socio simbólica en la que se inscriben un conjunto de grafitis en el barrio Lavapiés de Madrid, con el fin de analizar los sentidos y representaciones que los mismos activan en el imaginario social. El tema (y recorte) se inserta en una investigación más amplia sobre temas de patrimonio cultural. **Metodología:** la metodología utilizada es cualitativa y busca inscribir y comprender las imágenes en un contexto histórico más amplio. **Resultados:** se da cuenta de procesos de comunicación urbana que revelan tensiones, resistencias y luchas frente a los cambios y transformaciones que se fueron sucediendo en la dinámica del barrio en cuestión. Los grafitis se convierten así en dispositivos con capacidad de leerse y releerse, generando múltiples apropiaciones que exceden la gráfica propia y que refieren a la identidad siempre dinámica de un espacio que es vivido y discutido. **Conclusiones:** se concluye identificando los modos en que dichas manifestaciones operan en la escena pública, a saber: por un lado, al servicio del mercado internacional por su atractivo turístico y, por el otro, como expresión y comunicación

vecinal desde donde se discuten las políticas que van en detrimento de los intereses y necesidades locales.

**Palabras-clave:** arte callejero; barrio; comunicación; patrimonio; identidad.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** o objetivo desta pesquisa é reconstruir a trama sócio-simbólica na qual se inscreve um conjunto de grafites no bairro Lavapiés de Madrid, a fim de analisar os significados e representações que eles ativam no imaginário social. O tema (e recorte) faz parte de um projeto de pesquisa mais vasto sobre questões de património cultural. **Metodologia:** a metodologia utilizada é qualitativa e procura inscrever e compreender as imagens num contexto histórico mais amplo. **Resultados:** relatamos os processos de comunicação urbana que revelam tensões, resistências e lutas face às mudanças e transformações que tiveram lugar na dinâmica do bairro em questão. Os grafites tornam-se assim dispositivos que podem ser lidos e relidos, gerando múltiplas apropriações que vão para além dos próprios gráficos e que se referem à identidade sempre dinâmica de um espaço que é vivido e discutido. **Conclusões:** concluímos identificando as formas como estas manifestações operam na cena pública, nomeadamente: por um lado, ao serviço do mercado internacional devido à sua atração turística e, por outro, como expressão e comunicação de vizinhança a partir da qual são discutidas políticas que são prejudiciais aos interesses e necessidades locais.

**Palabras-chave:** arte de rua; bairro; comunicação; património; identidade.



## Introduction

This article presents part of a study conducted in Madrid (Spain), in the central neighborhood of Lavapiés, on local cultural expressions and manifestations. It was conducted within the framework of a postdoctoral research grant and was part of a broader project related to "Cultural Heritage Management," by a research group with the same name, belonging to the College of Geography and History of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. The general objectives of the project include work on participatory processes in heritage management, the study of social perceptions and historical urban landscapes in the community of Madrid and other areas. Within this framework, a study was conducted in the Lavapiés area of downtown Madrid, taking into account its characteristics and particularities, which made it an urban space of interest for the research.

### The Neighborhood

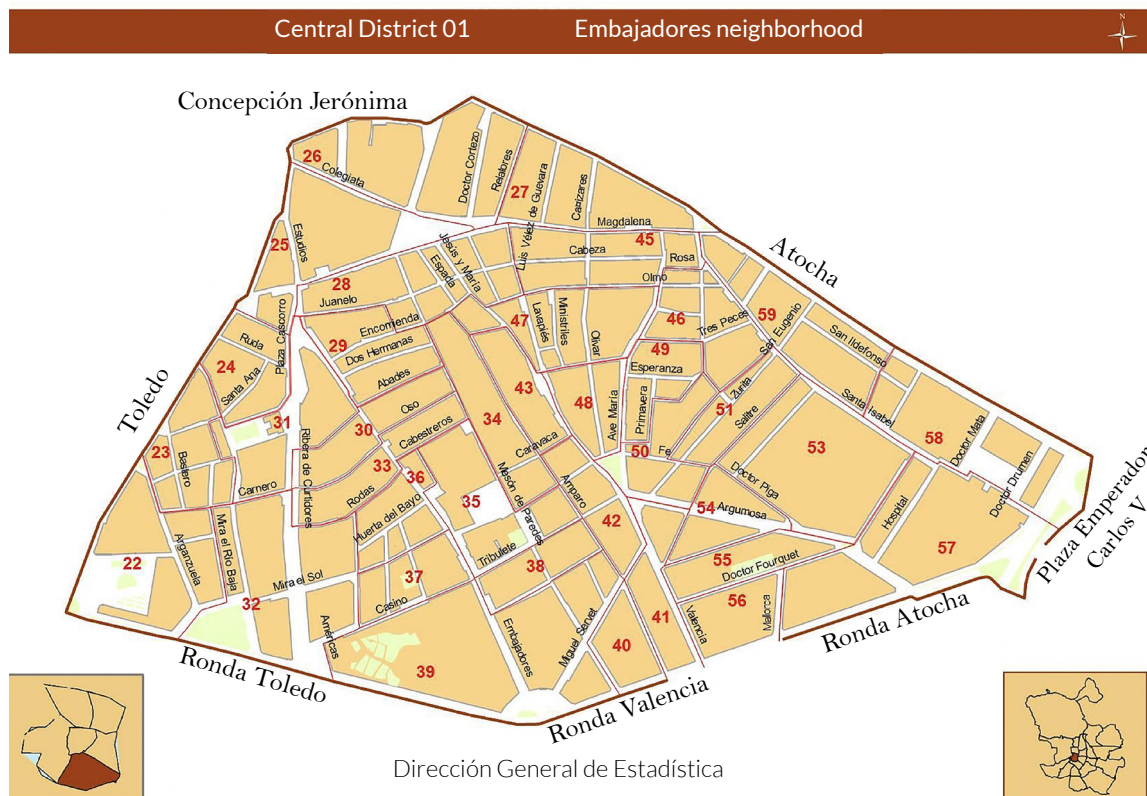
Lavapiés is one of the oldest areas of Madrid, located in the Embajadores neighborhood, belonging to the Central District (Figure 1), whose first buildings date back to the 13th century (Peñalta-Catalán, 2010; Bonfigli, 2014). It is usually considered a "disadvantaged" (Pérez-Quintana, 2007) or "vulnerable" (Hernández-Aja, 2007) neighborhood, with a low-income level and a high percentage immigrant population.<sup>1</sup> Due to its central location, it features good communications with the rest of the city, is very busy because it is a residential area, as well as a place for leisure and meetings because of the variety of bars and restaurants typical of different countries, and also because of the theaters and venues that program cultural activities. Since its consolidation as a neighborhood at the end of the 17th century, the houses were built in precarious conditions (Cañedo-Rodríguez, 2009; Ruiz-Palomeque, 1989) with small dimensions, with external and shared toilets, and without ventilation. The so-called corralas, square-plan buildings with a central courtyard, optimized a layout that sought to efficiently organize and distribute the new immigrants arriving in Madrid (Schmidt, 2012). The problems of overcrowding and substandard housing persist to this day and serve to explain the neighborhood's more recent history, linked to a large population concentration and

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1. According to the Municipal Register of Inhabitants of the City of Madrid (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2018) the largest foreign population in Madrid is located in the Sol and Centro districts. The Lavapiés neighborhood far exceeds the average for the city and also for the district to which it belongs.

grouping of immigrants who live in a different way — ethnically, politically and economically — within the neighborhood (Crusellas-Rodríguez, 2015).

Figure 1. Map of Embajadores where the Lavapiés area is located. Downtown District of Madrid.



Note. Taken from the Madrid Cityhall web portal, general addresses of Madrid Community Statistics.

However, at the end of the 1990s, Lavapiés was declared a "Preferential Rehabilitation Area" (ARP) by the public administrations, which meant a renovation of the infrastructure and the urban environment, the recovery of the buildings' heritage, as well as an improvement and integration of the social fabric; implementing sectorial programs aimed at the less favored, endowments and facilities, and promoting commercial activity, central objectives of the ARP (Ministerio de Fomento, 1998).

Despite this, the renovation of the neighborhood implied strong rises in the real estate market, causing the expulsion of the traditional low-income population, unable to support themselves in the new market. In 2000, a new wave of residents with a different profile — based on a high educational level and certain purchasing power — settled in Lavapiés because of its central location, as well as because of its historical and multicultural character (Crusellas-Rodríguez, 2015). These processes of change, defined as gentrification, which have been developing in the old quarters of large cities since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Smith, 2012) are related to the reinvestment of capital by governments and financial entities, the incorporation of a population with greater economic and cultural capital, and changes in urban spaces (Sequera, 2013).

As a consequence of the above, the image of Lavapiés as a degraded and impoverished neighborhood gradually gave way, although without disappearing, to the image of a modern, cosmopolitan neighborhood, of tourist interest and attractive to live in, more recently receiving nicknames such as "the cultural neighborhood" or the "new neighborhood of theaters" (Fanjul, 2014).

However, the counterpart of this new scenario is the emergence of neighborhood groups that, mobilized by this transforming dynamic of urban space and their own ways of life in the neighborhood, carry out concrete resistance actions such as marches, street demonstrations — including artistic creations — and the occupation of sites. They are the ones who seek to halt the advance of the gentrification process. Such is the case of various collectives, such as Lavapiés *dónde vas?* which campaigns for the right to housing and also is involved in the resolution of problems related to evictions. The Courage collective helps immigrants without residency papers who live in the neighborhood. The Eskalera Karacola<sup>2</sup> women's group who, raises issues related to the problems of the neighborhood, such as the precariousness of life and work, the right to citizenship of migrants, etc. from a feminist and self-management perspective. Other groups with diverse projects actively participate in initiatives that vindicate the alternative against the imposition of capital, and whose meeting and debate space is the Self-managed Social Center the Tabacalera.

This center was a former tobacco factory that housed thousands of women workers known as "las cigarreras" (the cigarette makers). It was temporarily ceded by the Ministry of Culture and now functions as a social center managed by neighbors and activists in the area. The Tabacalera is, for many neighborhood collectives, a place of struggle and resistance that aims to survive as a popular and self-managed group, and on the basis of the recognition of rights

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2. The use of the K in the name of the group reflects the will to transgress the spelling rules, which appears directly related to the squatting of the place, without the consent of its owners, as a form of protest and visibility in the neighborhood's own territory.

(Rodríguez-Ibáñez, 2014). The tobacco factory began operating in 1809, manufacturing tobacco products. Unknowingly, it also created the portrait of Madrid's working-class society, led mainly by women.

The salaried cigarette workers became the protagonists of protest and trade union episodes due to the situation in which they lived, a consequence of the factory's unhealthy conditions and the high degree of overcrowding and mortality in the Inclusa neighborhood, where a high percentage of the factory's workers lived (Candela, 1997). After the closing of the Tabacalera in 1998, the factory was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest and was the object of a rehabilitation plan which sought to convert the building into the National Center for Visual Arts. In 2003, the Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés submitted an action project to the Ministry of Culture for the possible transfer of the Fábrica de Tabacos to the neighbors. The collective argued that the building should be used by the inhabitants of the neighborhood, mainly because of its social heritage, with the aim of housing expressions and neighborhood needs that the public administration was not able to meet.

Under this perspective, in 2010 the Tabacalera opened its doors, creating a cultural alternative with a variety of proposals aimed at meeting the demands of the neighborhood, with high neighborhood participation, organized under non-hierarchical patterns (in assemblies and committees) and interactive and self-financed, hence its name as Self-managed Social Center (CSA) (Rodríguez-Ibáñez, 2014).

These spaces and groups are just a few examples that reveal daily construction interests and neighborhood practices that represent tensions, conflicts, and dissonances in the face of official policies linked to the logic of the market.

In this context, and as part of the aforementioned project, a series of investigations were conducted in Lavapiés, which have already been published, and which included, on the one hand, a discursive analysis of the news about the neighborhood constructed by the graphic press — local and national — (Giacomasso, 2019) and, on the other, a study of social perceptions around heritage values identified from the work carried out with the local actors themselves (Giacomasso and Castillo-Mena, 2022).

With the aim of continuing to delve into other dimensions, this article proposes to reconstruct the socio-symbolic plot in which a set of images of the neighborhood are inscribed to produce new knowledge about the meanings and disputes that are communicated/expressed through them. Specifically, it deals with eight works on graffiti (four analyzed separately and another four jointly due to their location) that appear in the public space, that were created at different times and by different authors, and that become significant and characteristic elements of the neighborhood in question.

For its approach, a theoretical perspective based on urban communication is proposed as a multidisciplinary field of study on the transformations that the growth of cities brings about (Cuesta-Moreno and Meléndez-Labrador, 2017). It allows, in the terms of Reguillo (1995), for understanding the ways of inhabiting the plots of the cities in which tensions and negotiations occur between multiple groups that bid for social senses. For this reason, urban communication is recovered as a universe of the mediations that it inevitably expresses and with which it produces subjectivities (Álvarez-Pedrosian, 2018). In this framework, a dialogue will be held with authors who analyze the symbolic constructions that are exhibited in the spaces of the city, and who communicate meanings with different intentions. Thus, graffiti becomes a creative expression that reveals social and recreational aspects (Falconí, 1996), political constructions (Chacón-Cervera and Cuesta-Moreno, 2013) and forms of collective communication (Abreu, 2003) in permanent rewriting (Silveira, 2006).

### **Graffiti and its Link with Urban Space, Memory, and Cultural Heritage**

Graffiti, as an expression of urban art, is understood in this work in the terms of Juan Chacón Cervera and Oscar Cuesta Moreno (2013) as "interaction, creation, and transformation of worlds, where the political realm is a fundamental axis in the constitution of subjectivities" (p. 65). These authors maintain that, like any artistic expression, graffiti has the ability to represent different relationships and dynamics —social and cultural— as well as communicate and signify something through its semiotic content.

Promoting an analysis of the representations that graffiti and their images activate in the imagination of those who live and walk through the neighborhood, from a communicational perspective, allows for a renewed reading of issues related to identity processes, collective memory, and disputes. Likewise, a study of this type makes it possible to deepen the reflection on the place of graffiti as a social practice, as a testimony and as a visual device that has the capacity to interact and challenge.

The term graffiti has been extensively analyzed and delimited through a set of characteristics that define it as:

A messy, ironic, and irresponsible voice that seduces due to its belonging to the urban environment in constant construction and in permanent boiling (...) Hence its freedom and self-assurance. (...) Words, signs, lines (...) harmonic distribution of one or more meanings in a linear/intertwined/superimposed order. (...) Discourse that is there now, but can be erased, crossed out, superimposed,

recycled (...) That is why the sense of provisional means the sense of collective construction. It is done, it is being done, it will continue to be done. It is read, recycled, rewritten, renounced (...) The city, with its intersection of knowledge, actions and feelings, facilitates the margins for the co-creation of a reflective, ironic, mischievous discourse (...) The city is, then, the one that writes and reads at the same time. That is why graffiti is the discourse of urban space. (Paulinelli, 2002, p. 81)

When it was decided to work with this topic, the concept of graffiti presented some challenges, in principle, the choice of images as they did not correspond directly to the elements and characteristics with which the ideas about graffiti were defined and delimited. The limits of what graffiti is and is not, is rethought here based on its social uses and meanings within a unique cultural space. For this reason, an approach to these limitations is sought that is not exhausted in the space of the clandestine and anonymous world, but rather transcends it. In this sense, the interest in works on graffiti is inscribed in their understanding as a testimony of reflections and multiple interpretations (in dialogue, in contradiction, in dispute, or harmony) and the relationship of those graffiti with memory and local identities.

The choice of graffiti for this work was made knowing that they allow the articulation of three fundamental axes: communication in urban space, memory, and cultural heritage.

The urban space allows one to recover the idea of the city as a material and symbolic scenario in permanent construction, crossed by political, economic, and social mediations (Reguillo, 1995, p. 22). In this sense, it is chosen to work with the idea proposed by Paulinelli (2002), for whom the city is the social space in which phenomena emerge, that configure it as a "turning point between hegemony and response, between legitimacy and representativeness" (p. 80). In it, the actors delineate traces that mark, fix, and remind them who they are, making use of space as a source of socialization (Ayala-García, 2017). For this reason, the concept of memory is also approached. It allows one to address processes of construction of "spaces of divergences and confrontations, of forgetting and silencing in which the different strategies of appropriation, reconfiguration, and recovery intervene in the mixture of voices and experiences" (Paulinelli, 2002, p. 81), aspects that other reference authors also apply to the subject (Ramos, 2011; Trouillot, 1995). And, lastly, and completely related to the first two, the notion of cultural heritage is recovered as a field where all these elements converge and enter into dialogue (García-Canclini, 1999; Prats, 2007; Rosas-Mantecón, 2005). In this sense, it has begun to be observed that the uses of the concept of cultural heritage allow addressing the changes that were experienced in relation

to the emergence of other social actors, which reveal new strategies of visibility and legitimation through their cultural manifestations. In this way, as expressed by authors such as Canclini (1999), Rotman (2000), and Morel (2007), an approach emerges that strengthens democratic and community instances with a marked participation of civil society. In this context, certain traditional and popular manifestations begin to have an emerging value and significant social recognition.

### **Communication as a Transversal Perspective**

The theoretical approach, of the three previously developed notions, is carried out from the perspective of communication (Uranga, 2007), as it allows interpreting a set of expressions (in this case artistic visuals) within the framework of “discursive grammars” (Martín-Barbero, 2002) that manifest themselves as communicative strategies. The approach then implies understanding the complexity of communication processes as spaces of interaction between actors in which processes of production of meaning, creation and recreation of meanings and relationships are recognized. In this framework, the public becomes involved in a communication scenario — a complex, multisectoral and multiactor scenario — where the interests, demands, needs, political projects, power relations, and alliances of these same actors become visible. In this way, the scenarios of action in society, public policies, areas of action and incidence, political and cultural life can be understood as public spaces that, in turn, are complementary to each other. Hence, communication must understand precisely that complex web of meanings that include the personal, the collective, the massive and, ultimately, culture as an expression of multiple meanings.

This work seeks to overcome any simplification that reduces communication to the game of messages-senders-receivers. On the contrary, it seeks to understand the communication process as a significant whole, which is constituted by discursive networks and the interweaving of different, opposing and contradictory discourses, which reveal the conflicts and power struggles within the framework of a certain situation of communication. Seen this way, this perspective proposes communication as the articulating axis of the social, the political, and the cultural (Reguillo, 2000) and (Reguillo, 2007). It is also significant to point out what Restrepo (1999) proposes when he considers that the city, being interconnected by networks and spaces of flows, is articulated to global processes that complicate the local, which would produce new relationships with the territory, redefining the dynamics of the places.

Finally, the idea of Ortega (1995) is recovered. She states that two types of discourse are articulated in cities. One is built with “signs converted into marks of order and uniformity, by assuming the voice of power, planning the reality configuring a space between the legal, with its ordinances and laws, and the ‘confused social reality’” (1995, p. 61-62). The other space is one from which the spontaneous movement of everyday life bursts forth. Ortega says, “on that ordering city the spectacle of graffiti rises in a space — the street — that appears hyper-semiotic, where it is possible to notice a popular brand” (1995, p. 64), aspects that are also identified in the works by Martin-Barbero (1987).

## Methodology

Regarding the previously explained concept and continuing with Ortega: “the visual feast of graffiti appears linked to a concrete material reality: the illegal nightlife of the streets that, in its exhibition (...) brings into play non-traditional modalities of writing” (1995, p. 65). At first sight, the common denominator seems to put graffiti on the side of the clandestine, associated with nocturnality and the anonymous format that demystifies and discusses the discourse of power. However, and as mentioned before, what characterizes our sample is the total non-correspondence with those elements that traditionally shaped the idea of graffiti. The selection presented here has a wide diversity of elements, however, common elements are presented.

First, all the interventions chosen for the elaboration of this work are found in public spaces such as shop fronts, walls and corners. Some of these spaces were provided for this purpose, breaking with the clandestine nature of their actions and articulating, in some way, these two types of speeches (mentioned above) that appear separated: the official and the alternative. Second, and directly related to the above, many of them join projects launched by different groups (neighborhood, governmental and non-governmental). Third and last, because, either directly or through interventions added later (to the original image) they show a set of disputes, claims, and peculiarities of what happens in the neighborhood.

Methodologically, this work is based on a qualitative perspective that approaches certain social practices in their particular contexts from a communication standpoint (Uranga, 2018). For this, data was collected through different techniques such as contextual photography. The search for data was conducted in national and local digital media as well as on Internet sites. In this sense, the authors understand that the registry is not merely a techno-methodological



resource of academic disciplines, but a complementary form of field work in social sciences. Photography was central insofar as it allowed safeguarding the design but also the context in which each work of graffiti is inserted for its subsequent analysis and, in turn, because it constitutes a vehicle, a format, in which the decisions and perceptions can be made based on researchers in a reflective process.

In terms of Guber (2020), the criteria of significance and relevance respond to the degree of openness of the researcher's view in the field work, since it is in the record that the perspective of knowledge about a given reality or particular situation.

The original photographic record has 60 photos (many of them around the same graffiti) taken during the fieldwork. However, here a corpus of eight images is selected (those that presented the best quality, framing, focus, and location) that are representative of the research interest. In relation to the participant observation, for clarification, it was carried out over a period of three months, but with the deliberate intention of surveying and systematizing at least 10 tours of the neighborhood. The constructed data are explained and presented in the reconstruction of the cases.

## Results

The presentation and analysis that begins following includes not only the description and recording of the communication situation, but also a subsequent assessment of the information collected. This involves different aspects that allow for the analysis of a communication situation from the perspective of social practices, stories such as: a) the subjects that enter into relationship and that appear cleanly or implicitly in the expressions analyzed (authorship of the work, participating groups, associations involved, etc.); b) the explanation — or lack of explanation — of links (symmetrical or asymmetrical) between the different actors represented, the ways in which they manifest themselves, the construction of legitimacy, and the exercise of power; c) the production modes of meanings, the shape that the communication product adopts, the context in which it is produced, the space of emission and reception of the actors and its uses; d) the significance of communicative practices, the perceived result of this entire process and the multiplicity of relationships, the certain features that end up constituting the identity of that space, group, community or territory (Mata, 2011). These data will be interwoven with the

set of theoretical categories that were enunciated in the introduction (heritage, memory, and urban space) and that will later give rise to the discussion and conclusions.

**Figure 2.** *Graffiti allusive to the immigrant street vendor Mame Mbaye (Graffiti 1)*



This graffiti is located on the side wall of a bar on Embajadores Street in front of the San Fernando Market. It was made by the Concrete artist in the framework of the fifth edition of the C.A.L.L.E Festival in 2018. C.A.L.L.E is the Festival of artistic interventions in the public space of Lavapiés that has been taking place every year since 2013 and is promoted by the Lavapiés Merchants Association. It launched this initiative with the aim of promoting artistic creation in the neighborhood in an open and participatory way, and contributing to its enjoyment in a close and daily way, with the collaboration of the Madrid Street Art Project; an independent organization focused on creating, organizing,

producing and communicating projects and activities related to urban art, with the aim of promoting, disseminating and supporting art in the public space and its creators, in order to value it and bring it closer to all kinds of viewers<sup>3</sup>.

The image is a painting that represents immigrants in Madrid, specifically those of African origin (who mostly reside in this neighborhood), many of them do not have residence and/or work visas, and subsist through work such as that of "street vendors"; selling products on blankets on the ground of different sidewalks of urban centers. The text that accompanies the image allows anchoring its meaning related to the memory of Mame Mbaye, a Senegalese street vendor, inhabitant of Lavapiés, who died in 2018 from a heart attack after a police chase. This fact generated the complaint and demonstration of neighbors against the actions of the security forces. Likewise, in 2019, different gatherings were held to remember the street vendor. A plaque was even placed in the neighborhood in his memory, but it was removed by the government because it read "victim of institutional racism"<sup>4</sup>.

The situation occurred with Mame Mbaye is related to similar experiences in other large cities, both in Europe and the United States, which show tendencies toward social ethnic segregation in the urban space, with high levels of marginalization and exclusion that emerge with greater force in certain areas or neighborhoods (Schmidt, 2012). In Lavapiés, the growing presence of a foreign population has redefined, in a context of diversity, the relationships in the neighborhood, unleashing new dynamics and impacting the imagination of the native residents. On the one hand, some representations reveal prejudices and stereotypes, many of which link crime and insecurity in the neighborhood with immigration (mainly African), perceptions generated by a dominant discourse and by the media (Giacomasso, 2019). This is correlated with a series of European immigration policies that restrict the free flow of people of foreign origin and place undocumented individuals at the center of an administrative legal problem, categorized as illegal (Schmidt, 2012). On the other hand, these new dynamics generated from the migratory phenomenon have given rise to forms of sociability based on bonds of intercultural coexistence, close relationships and solidarity, which have generated the collaboration of the old settlers—through different groups—in the struggle and recognition of the rights of new residents.

In this context, the phrase "Fighting for the VISA," in the analyzed graffiti, refers to residence papers, is altered with an intervention that modifies

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3. Visit <https://enlavapiés.com/calle2020>

4. Lavapiés remembers the street vendor Mame Mbaye, "victim of institutional racism" (March 15, 2019). *Madridiario*, without page number. Taken from <https://www.madridiario.es/466077/lavapiés-record-al-mantero-mame-mbaye-victima-del-racismo-institucional>

the letter "S" for the "D" and changes the meaning of the phrase, being linked to the struggle of immigrants for their own "VIDA" (Life) or to survive. In this message, senses cross regarding the control and surveillance policies that operate on the "illegality" of African inhabitants and, at the same time, their unemployment that places them among the hardest hit foreign groups (Observatorio Permanente de Inmigración [OPI], 2010), and with few resources to access housing and other basic social services such as healthcare and education.

**Figure 3.** Graffiti Floating Identity (Graffiti 2)



This image is entitled "Floating Identity." It is a mural composed of three panels along a wall of the bar on the streets of Meson de Paredes and Miguel Servet.

It proposes a design with perspective that differs from others with a flat aesthetic. The neighborhood is characterized with detailed drawings of buildings, houses and people in a foreground outlined in front of a background in soft and smooth colors.

This work was also made within the framework of the 2018 C.A.L.L.E. festival, in this case by the collective the Inverted Wheel. The signature is written on the mural itself (Figure 4). On its website, this group defines itself as "a collective dedicated to cultural production and contemporary art education" that understands art as a "vehicle that generates dialogue and reflection, both individual and collective." They match the belief that art has potential as a "catalyst capable of forging strong bonds within a liquid and unstable society." Through their artistic practices they are committed to a "cultural democracy" capable of creating bridges that "connect people with culture and activate their participation in socio-cultural actions" (La Rueda Invertida, n.d.).

**Figure 4.** *Colectivo la Rueda painting the mural at the C.A.L.L.E. Festival*



Note. Taken from the newspaper El País (2018)

The text that accompanies the drawing is "What is a neighborhood without everything that makes it a neighborhood? Nothing." On its website this group takes up the words of the author Daniel Sorando, which refer to the idea of neighborhood identity and could be interpreted as a possible answer to this question: "... A neighborhood stripped of its identity is a book without content, a veiled photograph, a story without argument" (La Rueda Invertida, n.d.).

In social theory, the neighborhood is understood as a physical, social, cultural, and symbolic space where sociocultural relations are reconfigured

and redefined. As an urban and neighborhood unit, within a local context in proportion to the city, the neighborhood is the space of coexistence, it is always complex and dynamic, between various groups of action in it (Giménez, 2005). In this context, Lavapiés has been characterized by its own inhabitants as a traditional, working-class neighborhood, with an artisanal economy, a neighborhood with a lot of immigration, a place of shelter for people from different nationalities who settle through activities, trades, ties and social ties that have lasted over time (Giacomasso and Castillo-Mena, 2022). Despite other forms of sociability such as "coexistence" and "hostility" (Giménez, 2005), commonly combined and simultaneous in the dynamics of neighborhoods, mainly those with a high incidence of immigration. Lavapiés has developed fluid neighborhood interactions, although not free of conflict, as well as personal relationships and social networks of support (Schmidt, 2012).

Different groups of neighbors and associations try to preserve this identity sense of Lavapiés in the face of the threat of gentrification linked to an international tourist market, which grows strongly in large capital cities, and becomes a focus of attention for foreign investors who see the possibility of doing business in the area. The representation created by graffiti and the ideas transmitted by this group in other spaces — the internet for example — allow us to understand how this image and its text invite us to reflect on everything that has made (this place) a neighborhood that can gradually disappear due to the advances of tourism.

**Figure 5.** *Mural of the ape (Graffiti 3)*



This image is located on the front of a building on the corner of Embajadores and Travesía de Cabestreros streets. The artwork was made in 2019 by two artists who worked together. They created two different facades of the monkey represented. Although the artwork is not signed, one of the facades corresponds to a recognized and prestigious Spanish artist, Okuda San Miguel. His style is characterized by the creation of geometric graffiti and symbols loaded with colors that are well-identifiable and are included within the movement called pop surrealism. The other facade corresponds to the Portuguese artist, Artur Bordalo, with his interventions in relief and in recycled materials.

This artwork, by well-known artists, is the protagonist of a busy space in the neighborhood. Its location, color, design, and size generate an important visual impact. An interesting fact to mention referring to place was previously used by Okuda for another artistic production. It became a strategic location within institutional projects, especially and taking into account that the artwork was framed in the Theriomorphism IV exhibition, an international contemporary Art Fair ARCOMadrid, that since 1982 has been one of the main platforms of the art market.

The most significant thing about this graffiti is not its double authorship or its size and location, but a sentence subsequently drawn on it. This addition runs in the image appealing to those traditional elements that define graffiti. It is an anonymous — and even collective — phrase that denounces one of the

main issues of dispute of the neighborhood with a statement: "Yes, the monkey gentrifies".

This intervention generated several journalistic notes that revive and reference protest and resistance processes associated with gentrification, from the imposition of an aesthetic that qualifies the neighborhood as "the coolest in the world." It encouraged the use of the territory by tourism to the detriment of its inhabitants, who were negatively impacted, for example, by the rent increases. It should be noted that the recognition of Lavapiés as the "coolest neighborhood" was carried out by the well-known British magazine *Time out*<sup>5</sup> in which Lavapiés stands out first of all for "its color." A note from the newspaper *El País*, written by Begoña Gómez Urzaiz,<sup>6</sup> wonders if street artwork gentrifies. It refers to the varied offer of accommodation through Airbnbs and "experiences" including the graffiti tour with guides who report on urban artwork and finish the tour by inviting visitors to write their own captions on a wall.

**Figure 6.** Graffiti related to the walls. (Grafiti 4)



5. see 40 Coolest Neighbourhoods in the World Right Now [timeout.com](http://timeout.com)

6. see [https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/06/03/eps/1559569999\\_961348.html?id\\_externo\\_rsoc=FB\\_EPS\\_CM&fbclid=IwAR08wQLkN0jWwpA5stE5q8XxVuNS4HGxvGDC9tTjAoNJeoa6VFu6i7rmCo](https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/06/03/eps/1559569999_961348.html?id_externo_rsoc=FB_EPS_CM&fbclid=IwAR08wQLkN0jWwpA5stE5q8XxVuNS4HGxvGDC9tTjAoNJeoa6VFu6i7rmCo)



This image is located at the end of *Calle Embajadores*, one of the main streets in the neighborhood. It is artwork made by the artists Mazilan and Doa Oa, although its signature does not appear in the artwork. The year it was painted is unknown. It is composed of different drawings that together show a chain of events that tell a story.

The achievement of the first images would mean a process in which there is collective appropriation of a space in which relationships and bonds of companionship would be woven. This are represented by figures who meet to celebrate, drink, dance, produce music (guitar and drum), and intervene on the wall with graffiti. In the fourth image new actors appear; two of them, with cameras and a microphone, representing the media, and two others (one with a sack and one with a briefcase with the sign of \$ and €) observing the space.

The image that follows has the first protagonists on the building, protesting and resisting the arrival of more cameras and investors. This image could be thought of as escalation of the conflict that began in the previous image and that would account for a struggle for the appropriation, use, and senses of place.

The end is the destroyed building and its wall. An image shows bricks falling on people. It represents the power of those who have economic and political capital over neighborhood interests and identities, and the ones who promote a real estate explosion of the neighborhood without paying attention to the problems from gentrification.

**Figure 7.** Set of four graffitis of the Tabacalera. (Graffiti 5)



On this occasion, the work was done with a set of four images of the outer perimeter of the patio of the Tabacalera on the walls of la Glorieta de Embajadores, Miguel Servet, and Mesón de Paredes streets. These are also part a project of the Subdirección General de Promoción de Bellas Artes of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, that proposed using the walls of the Tabacalera building as a space for urban art.

In a second edition of the "Proyecto Muros," the creations focused on the Urban Nature concept and its meanings as a critique of the amount of pollution and the lack of natural spaces in the neighborhood. This proposal aimed to substitute, through art — albeit metaphorically — the gray cement for the colors of nature.

However, something to highlight is the artistic work with messages of protest and rejection toward "the politicians" from Madrid. Two of them show the complaint with evictions and forced displacements which is a recurring theme in the cases previously mentioned. Even on the front door of the Tabacalera building the phrase "morios modernos" appears as an expression used against gentrification.

Among all the spaces chosen, the Tabacalera building is perhaps the one with the greatest possibility to hold a great diversity of meaning. It is not a wall, but a place with a history linked to women's work and now a center managed by neighbors with the purpose of strengthening and claiming rights. In this sense, here the ideas of memory and cultural heritage can be explicitly linked as follows: one, the transfer of the factory to the residents is part of the idea of social inheritance — a concept strongly associated to the notion of heritage; two, it exhibits alternative aspects of culture, which are not reduced to the restricted and elitist uses, but to the broad and popular ones; three, participation is arranged as an important organizational structure that fosters equitable and non-hierarchical spaces for interaction. Finally, this space is appropriated and re-purposed by social actors who take advantage of a set of discourses through different artistic works, such as graffiti.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The introduction to this article anticipated subsequent communication as the theoretical perspective to analyze the proposed topic because it allows for approaching the urban context and identifying the practices and strategies used by different situated social collectives. This participates in the construction

of collective representations which define uses and actions in the city. This approach allowed the authors to think about the processes in which different devices linked to identity and memory are connected.

The devices of memory and identity have not yet been provided anywhere in reality. Insofar as they are part of the socio-cultural dynamics and are deeply involved in conflict, in contradiction, in the debate between submission and resistance, between the uncritical and passive assumption of an imposed reality and the explicit or botched response of this reality. (Reguillo, 1991, p. 45)

The challenge of this work was to register the graffiti in broader social processes. This was a necessary condition, since each piece of art refers to disputes that were (and are) historically constructed in the evolution of a neighborhood of multiple and rapid transformations. Its first buildings date back to the 13th century and it was considered disadvantageous due to its characteristics and low-income level. This fact allowed for the inclusion of a high percentage of immigrants and, at the end of the 1990s, it was declared a "Preferential Rehabilitation Area" (ARP), which meant a renovation of the infrastructure and urban environment and the recovery of the buildings' heritage, among other aspects.

All these transformations were shaping and reconfiguring the identity of the neighborhood, and resulted in sharp rises in the real estate market. This is not a minor fact insofar as it led to the eviction of the traditional inhabitants who were unable to meet the new costs imposed by the market. Additionally, the arrival of neighbors with economic profiles that allowed them to have access to these real estate dynamics further complicated the situation of the neighborhood's historical residents.

This latter issue is important, because it allows for understanding the dialectic between the processes of gentrification and its counterpart, the neighborhood groups that resist and argue the advance of these transforming and excluding dynamics. Within this context, the selected works of graffiti and how they communicate the different ways of inhabiting the city are rethought; that is, with which ideas characterize them and which elements are used to discuss them are analyzed.

The notion of heritage was chosen because, in its anthropological and critical sense, it allowed for the introduction of the idea of a space for disputes. In this regard, the cultural patrimony is a fighting arena. The meanings that this notion involves do not respond to a single order or logic. Just as in an area of knowledge, there are certain actors who, by means of their economic and political capital, try to impose a stance on others. This patrimony does not imply a unanimous consensus, but a space for response (Van-Zanten, 2004, p. 37) since, as a cultural good, it is "praxis, open and crossed by power relations, which can

generate the naturalization of the arbitrary, as well as the struggle to make alternative meanings emerge or recreate" (Briones, 1998, p. 6).

Although it would have been easy to adhere to the traditional idea that links heritage with restoration and tourism, this article shows a complex usage of heritage. From the public policy perspectives, projects have been conducted for the preservation of old places in the neighborhood and within this framework, tourism has been favored. There was a true interest in fostering, from these policies, the participation of the local community in this process. This was reflected in the creation of spaces for murals and graffiti; however, the interesting thing is that even in those places (the walls, corners, and store fronts intended for that purpose) the diversity of meanings of what the neighborhood should be like was evident. In their analysis, the indications of a policy of modernization and resistance against eviction, rising rents, exclusion and inequality appeared. The walls on which the graffiti appear clamor for a level playing field and there is a revaluation of what is proper and communal which has been overlooked by private interests.

The walls become the backdrops that diverse actors choose to use to highlight the conflicts experienced through graffiti. Therefore, the idea of cultural heritage makes it possible to articulate these tensions that arise from resisting the new meanings imposed by gentrification. The idea of a homogeneous, balanced, common and conflict-free cultural good is not subscribed. On the contrary, the idea that appeals to the unequal appropriation of the different actors related to the meanings contained in the graffiti is recovered. Thus, it is a significant notion in this article, because, in turn, it raises new elements to the notion itself. For example, in the processes of heritage activation or in the recovery of collective memory (and also in graffiti), decisions are at stake. Some elements are excluded, others are included. There is selection, trimming, reflection, moral values, conflict, etc. However, something different is that from traditional heritage processes graffiti are not constructions with a tendency to be preserved, they are products of a specific time, far from the idea of durability and conservation. In fact, they hinder the very idea of inheritance, transmission and sustainability in the traditional sense of the concept (normally very present in current heritage work).

The works on graffiti reviewed are situated, contextualized productions that reinvent themselves over time. These are historical processes. These works do not transcend the material, but are part of the discursive and immaterial fields. Therefore, the concept of memory, or the possibility of a photographic record that loads each image with content, becomes important here. The 2018 graffiti honoring Mame Mbaye, and the removed plaque denouncing institutionalized racism, is staging a clear protest against inequality, xenophobia, and the abuse

of power. Conflict is worldwide repeated with greater or lesser repercussions in the media (as in the case of George Floyd in the United States).

In this sense, and finally, in spite of the tourist attraction that these street artistic works also represent, they become vindictive works that serve as an impulse to listen to the voices that find on the walls a possible scenario of interlocution and that, paradoxically, are superimposed to the pre-established meanings in them, constituting opposition and contestation. These demonstrations, together with other protest activities previously mentioned, have succeeded in changing the course of some official policies, as shown in the Tabacalera building that is one of the most emblematic neighborhoods in Madrid.

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# Working Memory and Consciousness: Three Theoretical Frameworks\*

[English Version]

Memoria de trabajo y Consciencia: tres perspectivas teóricas

Memória de trabalho e consciência: três quadros teóricos

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## Abstract

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The view of Working Memory (WM) as a conscious process has allowed defining consciousness as the content of working memory. However, concerns have emerged over comparisons between consciousness and working memory. **Goal:** although the relationship between these two study fields has been the matter of psychology, philosophy and neuroscience, a theoretical review addressing the core elements of highly cited perspectives would enrich the discussion in this study area. **Method:** this review focuses on three theoretical frameworks: 1) the multi-component model of working memory, 2) the global workspace theory, 3) the hierarchical framework. The authors analyzed 113 articles which discussed the previous three models. **Results:** the multi-component model of working memory contributes a basic functional description on how mental representations remain on-line during complex cognitive processing. Thereby, the information exchange between the central executive and the episodic buffer, in one sense, and the phonological loop and the visuo-spatial sketchpad in the other is given through conscious processing. **Conclusions:** likewise, the central executive controls and changes attention but the episodic buffer allows multimodal information availability.

**Keywords:** consciousness; working memory; global workspace theory; hierarchical framework; self.

## Resumen

La perspectiva de la Memoria de Trabajo (MT) como proceso consciente ha permitido definir la consciencia como el contenido de la MT; sin embargo, han surgido inquietudes sobre las comparaciones que se han realizado entre ambas. **Objetivo:** aunque la relación entre estos dos campos de estudio ha sido planteada desde la psicología, la filosofía y la neurociencia, una revisión teórica que aborde los elementos centrales de las perspectivas más citadas enriquecería el debate en esta área de conocimiento. **Metodología:** esta revisión se centra en tres perspectivas teóricas: 1) el modelo multicomponente de memoria de trabajo; 2) la Teoría del Espacio de Trabajo Global (GWT); 3) el modelo jerárquico. Se analizaron 113 artículos en los que se abordaron las tres perspectivas anteriores. **Resultados:** el modelo multicomponente de memoria de trabajo aporta una descripción funcional básica sobre cómo las representaciones mentales permanecen en línea durante un procesamiento cognitivo complejo. De este modo, de un lado, el intercambio de información entre el ejecutivo central y el búfer episódico; y de otro lado, el bucle fonológico y la agenda visuoespacial se presenta a través del procesamiento consciente. **Conclusiones:** asimismo, el ejecutivo central controla y modifica la atención, pero el búfer episódico permite la disponibilidad de información multimodal.

**Palabras-clave:** consciencia; memoria de trabajo; teoría del espacio de trabajo global; modelo jerárquico; yo.

## Resumo

A visão da Memória de Trabalho (WM) como um processo consciente permitiu definir a consciência como o conteúdo da memória de trabalho. No entanto, surgiram preocupações sobre as comparações entre consciência e memória de trabalho. **Objetivo:** embora a relação entre estes dois campos de estudo tenha sido a questão da psicologia, filosofia e neurociência, uma revisão teórica abordando os elementos centrais de perspectivas altamente citadas enriqueceria a discussão nesta área de estudo. **Metodologia:** esta revisão se concentra em três estruturas teóricas: 1) o modelo multicomponente de memória de trabalho, 2) a teoria do espaço de trabalho global, 3) a estrutura hierárquica. Os autores analisaram 113 artigos que discutiam os três modelos anteriores. **Resultados:** o modelo multicomponente de memória de trabalho contribui com uma descrição funcional básica sobre como as representações mentais permanecem on-line durante o complexo processamento cognitivo. Assim, a troca de informações entre o executivo central e o buffer episódico, em um sentido, e a alça fonológica e o bloco de desenho visuoespacial no outro se dá por meio de processamento consciente. **Conclusões:** da mesma forma, o executivo central controla e muda a atenção, mas o buffer episódico permite a disponibilidade de informações multimodais.

**Palabras-chave:** consciência; memória de trabalho; teoria global do espaço de trabalho; estrutura hierárquica; auto.

## Introduction

According to integrated information theory (Tononi and Koch, 2015), consciousness is the brain's ability to promptly integrate information. It is a holistic context synthesizer in which the individual is immersed. This type of ability requires a functional thalamocortical system which generates oscillations in gamma frequency (Tononi *et al.*, 2016). In fact, thalamocortical injuries are highly related to global loss of consciousness, as can be seen after comas (Laureys *et al.*, 2004). Neural activity correlated with conscious experience is widely distributed over the cortex which suggests that consciousness depends on the thalamocortical network instead of a unique cortical area (Tononi *et al.*, 2016). This statement suggests that injuries over specific cortical regions can impact conscious experience without affecting global consciousness like the inability to perceive faces (Kolb and Wishaw, 2006).

The Neural Correlate of Consciousness (NCC) is defined as the minimum neuronal mechanisms jointly sufficient for any one specific conscious percept (Crick and Koch, 1990; Frith, 2005). There are two possible interpretations of this definition, depending on whether referring to the specific content of consciousness or to the overall state of being conscious.

The specific content of consciousness are the neural mechanisms that determine a particular characteristic within the experience. For example, the NCC for experiencing the specific content of a face are the neurons that fire on every trial, whenever a person observes, imagines or dreams a face, and are silent under other circumstances (Frith, 2005). When these neurons are artificially activated through transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), an individual should see a face, even if there is none on the screen, but if these neurons' activity is blocked, an individual should not see any faces, even if showed on the screen (Koch *et al.*, 2016). From a different perspective, the NCC is the neural substrate that promotes the conscious experience as a whole (Koch *et al.*, 2016).

Research around the NCC has seen the discovery of synced neural discharges over the visual cortex, as a response to two visual stimuli that produce gamma waves (30-70 Hz). However, this has raised questions and doubts in the scientific community (Gray *et al.*, 1989). It is now well accepted that consciousness requires neurons to be synced through rhythmic discharges (gamma waves) (Crick and Koch, 1990) to explain multiple stimuli integration in a single experience (Singer, 1999). Syncing over the visual cortex is elicited through attention (Roelfsema *et al.*, 1997) and reticular activating system stimulation (Herculano-Houzel *et al.*, 1999; Roelfsema *et al.*, 1997). Likewise, it reflects perceptual dominance in binocular rivalry tasks, although firing rates might not

change (Fries *et al.*, 1997). Previous works using electroencephalography and magnetoencephalography suggest that gamma synchrony correlates with visual consciousness as well (Melloni *et al.*, 2007; Rodriguez *et al.*, 1999).

However, most studies did not differentiate conscious visibility from selective attention. Once this has occurred, wide range gamma waves syncing correlate with attention, whether the stimulus was seen or not, but middle range gamma waves correlate with stimulus visibility (Wyart, and Tallon-Baudry, 2008). Gamma synchrony might increase during non-rem sleep in anesthetized patients (Imas *et al.*, 2005; Murphy *et al.*, 2011) or in seizures (Pockett and Holmes, 2009) or even when exposed to stimuli that provoke unconscious emotional responses (Luo *et al.*, 2009). These findings suggest that gamma synchrony might occur when there is a lack of awareness. A previous study used electrocorticography over the visual cortex and showed that low amplitude gamma oscillations are elicited through spatial patterns (light grids) but not with noise or images that can be seen (Hermes *et al.*, 2015). Finally, these findings suggest that gamma waves are not entirely necessary to be seen (Ray and Maunsell, 2011).

Another electrophysiological marker for consciousness is an event related potential (ERP) around 300 ms (P3b) after the stimulus presentation. It is provoked by visual or auditory stimuli and found over the frontoparietal region (Sutton *et al.*, 1965). Some studies using paradigm-based tasks have shown that the P3b component is a neural correlate of the stimulus detection report (Dehaene and Naccache, 2001; Del Cul *et al.*, 2007; Sergent *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, the P3b component which is measured through the auditory odd-ball paradigm has been proposed as an accurate signal of consciousness over the frontoparietal network (Dehaene and Changeux, 2011).

However, this perspective has been underestimated along experimental studies. For example, an irrelevant stimulus for the execution of a task will not activate the P3b component (Silverstein *et al.*, 2015) even if an individual is completely aware of it (Pitts *et al.*, 2014) but, those stimuli that the individual is not aware of can activate the P3b component (Silverstein *et al.*, 2015). This is not a signal of conscious perception once the stimulus is already in working memory (WM) (Melloni *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, an ERP starting 100 ms after the stimulus has been presented will reach its peak around 200-250 ms. It is located in the posterior cortex (Pitts *et al.*, 2014; Railo *et al.*, 2011) and correlates with conscious perception.

Low-voltage rapid discharges in the EEG while awake, also known as active EEG (Moruzzi and Magoun, 1949) was one of the first consciousness index and remains as one of the best sensitive markers. Intracellular recordings of cortical and thalamic neurons in cats have revealed the underlying mechanisms of the transition from low-voltage rapid discharges (awake) to high voltage slow



discharges which is common in deep sleep or even under anesthesia (Steriade, 2000). When thalamic neurons are hyperpolarized, they change from a tonic mode to a fast trigger mode which results in the EEG syncing in theta waves (5-7 Hz) (Steriade, 2000). The widest oscillations in delta waves are seen when cortical neurons start alternating between depolarization and hyperpolarization states every second (Steriade *et al.*, 2001).

This group of physiological changes will present along with loss of consciousness under pharmacological, pathological, and physiological conditions (Brown *et al.*, 2010). Within the most accurate strategies to assess loss of consciousness, the detection of slow waves with large amplitude has been found to be the best choice (Kertai *et al.*, 2012; Murphy *et al.*, 2011). As an example, slow waves are more common under deep sleep the first hours of the night and once every individual has been awakened, they would deny any perception (Siclari *et al.*, 2013). Likewise, a sudden increase in the wave power matches loss of consciousness when inducing anesthesia through Propofol (Murphy *et al.*, 2011; Purdon *et al.*, 2013). In a clinical setting, a pattern change from delta to alpha waves will explain the transition from vegetative state to minimally conscious state (Schiff *et al.*, 2014).

Given these previous findings, some studies have stated that consciousness is a way of processing information and have set the importance of the NCC (Aleksander, 2011; Baars, 1988; Earl, 2014; Fingelkurts and Fingelkurts, 2017; Tononi, 2012). Consciousness allows the transmission and processing of information. Now, because the information it produces, is meaningful for the person who consciously experiences it, the person, who consciously experiences it, knows what it means for him/her. Finally, because the information it produces is “individuated” (Jonkisz, 2016), in the sense that it has “that” meaning only for the person experiencing it, and not for other people. For example: I know what it means for me to experience “fear,” but another person cannot directly know what it means for me to experience “fear” (and vice versa).

Therefore, a relevant issue when analyzing consciousness is addressing *the self*, which is understood as a mechanism that allows individuality and continuity of the conscious experience. That is how the self becomes relevant to the organism, it makes up body and mind in a single unit: personality. So, the self is an autobiographic characteristic, constantly being updated and at the same time it expands on the subjective representations of reality, even on the emotional setting. This device owns a physiological correlate which is understood in the representation of the body (neural circuits), its projections to the hippocampus, amygdala, and middle prefrontal cortex (Damasio, 2003a, Damasio, 2003b). To make this happen, the conscious self requires continuous storing and updating

of every single experience in memory. This perspective has WM as the basic cognitive domain underlying consciousness (Marchetti, 2018).

WM is a cognitive system involved in the temporary storing and processing of information to be able to perform a task (Baddeley, 2007). Likewise, WM discriminates between relevant and non-relevant information when performing a cognitive task (Unsworth and Engle, 2007). WM is heavily involved in attentional control (Broadway and Engle, 2011). This point of view has allowed considering WM as a “working space” where thinking and cognition take place (Baars and Franklin, 2003). This statement has been proved empirically given the strong association between WM and higher cognitive processes (Engle, 2002).

The relationship between WM and consciousness is clear in Alan Baddeley’s multicomponent model, which is relevant in current research (Baddeley, 2017). For example, it is assumed that information that remains in WM is conscious. This previous idea would consider that WM operates with information that is accessed consciously and, somehow it is assumed that WM and consciousness are the same. This is a very arguable perspective that may justify a better definition of consciousness than merely the content of WM. However, doubts have been raised against the idea of WM being compared to consciousness given that both concepts are integrated units (Cowan, 2012).

Although consciousness and WM share functional properties, how they relate to each other is of great interest. For example, a research field is focused on how WM content may impact consciousness. This perspective addresses how visuo-spatial representations are kept on-line and assesses consciousness through stimuli suppression (Jiang *et al.*, 2007). When performing this task, a group of stimuli projected toward one of the eyes, suppress the visibility of a fixed stimulus which is presented simultaneously to the other eye (Tsuchiya and Koch, 2005). Finally, each individual should indicate once they are conscious of the fixed stimulus, this usually takes a couple seconds.

A clear example of the previous idea is a study where patients had to remember a color while taking a circle detection task (Gayet *et al.*, 2013). These findings have shown that the content of visuo-spatial WM trigger an alert threshold. This threshold was lower when the color of the circles was similar to the one kept on-line in WM. It has also been found that an awareness threshold was lower when a sample face shown in a screen was similar to the face kept on-line in WM (Pan *et al.*, 2014). Together these studies suggest that the content of visuo-spatial WM can impact a visual awareness threshold but also biases the access to conscious information.

Another research line has related consciousness to several WM processes and to prefrontal activity. For example, a study had participants learn a group of

letters while they performed a masking task where they had to detect a specific digit (De Loof *et al.*, 2013). These findings have shown that the detection task had lower scores when the number of letters had increased. This would indicate an increase in the awareness threshold once information reaches WM (Lavie, 2005).

These previous findings indicate that WM impacts consciousness. However, the relationship between them is still unclear. In the next section, three theoretical frameworks that address this relationship will be explained. Although WM is explained from diverse perspectives this review article will not address the embedded-process model (Cowan, 2012) since its main focus is to emphasize links between memory and attention. From this point of view, stimuli with physical features that have remained relatively unchanged over time and are of no key importance to the individual still activate features in memory, but they do not elicit awareness.

Another approach to explain WM comes from Oberauer who defined WM as a medium for building, holding, and manipulating temporary representations that control current thoughts and actions (2009). However, like Cowan's model it has maintained the role of attention as a selection mechanism, then WM is a form of attention: the contents of WM are selected for being relevant for the current task. Often, different theories—of WM or otherwise—cannot be compared directly because the theories, though nominally on the same topic, actually are based on subtly different definitions of what is being studied (Alloway *et al.*, 2005).

Since this article aims at reviewing the close relationship between WM and consciousness, other approaches that have explicitly introduced this interest will be presented. In the last section, a research line is proposed for future studies.

## **The Multi-component Model of Working Memory**

Baddeley's WM model suggests a hierarchical organization composed by the central executive and some slave systems for storing of information (Baddeley, 2007). Slave systems allow the temporary storing of modality-specific information: verbal (phonological loop), visual, spatial (visuo-spatial sketchpad). Likewise, access to slave systems is considered to be conscious. In fact, an individual is conscious of verbal rehearsal of information stored in the phonological loop.

An arbitrary fact about the phonological loop is that verbal rehearsal itself has no internal storage capacity. In other words: "the inner voice cannot be heard itself" or "the inner voice is deaf" (Buchsbbaum, 2013). On the other hand,

if verbal rehearsal is thought of as a mechanism that stores and reactivates its own content, then, verbal rehearsal becomes self-sufficient from the information processing theory: it is an inner voice that can be heard.

Leaving aside these behavioral considerations in favor of or against the architecture of the phonological loop, it would seem that they were against the scientific evidence that states: inner speech is a private version of outer speech. Therefore, auditory qualities of the inner ear are quite similar to listening to external speech. For example, from a phenomenological perspective once a green dot has been imagined, it is like observing the same stimulus (Shepard and Chipman, 1970; Smart, 1995). Likewise, during inner speech, verbal information is related to the content of an auditory image in the inner ear, therefore it can be reported consciously.

However, it is not the same case for the inner voice: although someone may report a feeling of agency during inner speech (Morsella *et al.*, 2011), this feeling does not have linguistic content and there are no other types of feelings that can be described as the representation of a verbal message. Consequently, an introspective analysis of the inner speech favors the existence of two independent and conscious components.

The inner voice is a well-known agency marker, it conveys the idea: “It is you who is speaking,” but the inner ear carries the conscious content of the message: “This is what you are saying.” In fact, the conscious experience of the inner behavior lacks content, except some agency markers like impulses, plans and intentions (Morsella *et al.*, 2011). To be able to have conscious access to the motor program of speech, the representation of behavior should be able to project itself to the sensory-perceptual space. Therefore, it could be stated that the content of the motor program is not vulnerable to introspection without being completed. This is a necessary quality of a self-conscious organism: it will be able to anticipate a behavior once it has been executed or at least internally simulated (Libet *et al.*, 1982). One more way to understand the access to the motor program content is to assume that conscious representations are independent from each other. In other words, a representation cannot observe itself.

On the other hand, the conscious state of the central executive is less clear. It is focused on controlled cognitive processing (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 2016) so, it should be conscious. Conscious executive processes seem to be related to voluntary change of attention or inhibiting distraction from irrelevant stimuli to perform a task. This WM model also relates conscious experience to the central executive (Baddeley, 1992). Empirical evidence is seen when realizing that daydream suppression does not depend on a single modality; it relies solely on the central executive. Given that daydreaming is a state where the mind is

completely independent, the central executive has become the WM component who access conscious information (Baddeley, 1992).

However, executive processes like search strategies in long term memory are not under conscious control. Therefore, conscious access to the central executive is partial (Velichkovsky, 2017).

As every WM slave system was thought as modality-specific, it was updated later through the episodic buffer to keep on-line multimodal episodes (Baddeley, 2000). Episodes on the episodic buffer are the result of sensory integration, remembrances and imagination. On one side, the episodic buffer interacts with single-modality storing systems and on the other side with long term episodic memory. This is how the episodic buffer links memory and consciousness (Baddeley, 2000). Moreover, it is a passive store that holds integrated information units (chunks) and allows the central executive to access consciousness (Baddeley *et al.*, 2010).

In summary, the storing system holds consciously experiences representations. The episodic buffer holds multimodal integrated units to be able to encompass the conscious experience. However, it is the central executive that interacts with consciousness and allows conscious access to those stimuli that remain in WM (Baddeley, 2010).

The multi-component model of WM has introduced one of the strongest theories to back up a conscious WM. In fact, it is assumed that every WM operates on conscious content. The central executive is a conscious system due to the fact that it carries out conscious control over WM and attention. The storing systems themselves, represent consciously its content as is evident in the phonological loop and the visuo-spatial sketchpad. Once stimuli have dissipated from consciousness, it is assumed they have completely left WM (Velichkovsky, 2017).

Given the above, it is not an easy task to reconcile the idea of an unconscious WM with the multi-component model. It seems to be the challenge inside Baddeley's WM model given that on one side a difference between WM and long-term memory is proposed and, on the other side, the difference is posited between controlled and automatic cognitive processing. To be able to understand unconscious WM in the multi-component model is a future research line. It will require changes in the current model such as incorporating the representational states to the slave system (Velichkovsky, 2017).

## **Global Workspace Theory of Consciousness**

A widely accepted model that addresses the close relationship between WM and consciousness is the Global Workspace Theory (GWT) (Baars, 2005). From this perspective, (1) The brain can be shaped as a massive parallel processing system so that, (2) brain processors can work together through data interchange. The role of consciousness is data availability for brain processors. A common example of shared data through the global workspace is the sensory input. The GWT is based on scientific evidence that states that the conscious experience involves multiple activations along the brain (frontoparietal network) as compared to unconscious states as sleep and coma (diminished interhemispheric activity) (Baars, 2005).

The GWT is also known as the metaphor of consciousness where actors (data) in a scenario (WM) are lighted up by a spotlight (attention) (Baars and Franklin, 2003). The dark area of the scenario is related to those aspects of immediate memory that are not the focus of attention. The work done by the actors is controlled “behind the scenes” by executive processes like the *self* (Baddeley, 2007). Finally, the whole scene is observed by an unconscious audience composed of motivational systems and automatic processes (Baddeley, 2007).

Both the GWT and the WM model seem alike, in fact, it has been stated that several WM processes comply with the GWT principles which sets a close relationship between the two theories (Velichkovsky, 2017). However, a more demanding analysis of the GWT discloses the differences between WM and consciousness. From this perspective, WM assumes several unconscious processes (Bergström and Eriksson, 2014). For example, the pre-conscious storing of information over the slave systems is supposed to be modality-specific. Then, the cognitive interplay between WM and consciousness could be explained as: once the sensory input has been recorded, it is sent through the attentional processes to the brain processors to become conscious. The content of consciousness is kept in the phonological loop (Soto *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, action plans and goals start working once operating over conscious data. Likewise, these plans are under the supervision of WM that operates unconsciously. For that reason, conscious operations encompass a single part of the cognitive cycle (Velichkovsky, 2017).

It seems that consciousness as an attentional spotlight is essential to better understanding the relationship between consciousness and WM in the GWT (Baars, 2005). This spotlight chooses a fraction of the cognitive representations that will be accessed by the unconscious cognitive processors. Universal availability of data allows brain processors to start planning a task under little conscious control (Hassin *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, the aim of consciousness is to pick the inner representations inside the content of WM. This idea turns consciousness into an inner attentional process. Then, the relationship between

consciousness and WM from this perspective is inclusive. Consciousness is incorporated into WM and is composed by unconscious motor, executive, and perceptual processes. Thereby, consciousness is a subset of WM (Baars, 1988).

Some concerns have been raised around the GWT since it was developed to describe the role of consciousness in goal-directed behaviors (Baars and Franklin, 2003). This theory has not explained the inner mechanisms of WM; therefore, it is not an easy task to explain the interplay between the conscious and unconscious content of the model. A future research line is related to the qualitative differences between the conscious and unconscious content of WM (Velichkovsky, 2017).

### **The Hierarchical Framework (Donald Stuss)**

A series of articles about the study of the frontal lobes were published (Burgess and Stuss, 2017). As a result, three study stages about the frontal lobe function can be identified: (1) the development of tests to assess executive symptoms, (2) the current knowledge in neuroanatomy, (3) studies using neuroimaging techniques to better understand the human brain (Burgess and Stuss, 2017). Finally, three levels of brain hierarchical organization were proposed.

The first level is related to shared brain activity of the functional systems (Stuss and Alexander, 2005). Its neuroanatomical correlate is over the frontal medial and dorsolateral cortex. These two brain areas seem to allow: (a) information organization in a meaningful sequence and (b) skills to direct behavior. The second level of frontal lobe functioning is related to control; its anatomical base is the prefrontal cortex (Andrs and Van der Linden, 2001). This control function is related to consciously focus on a goal and can be divided in several psychological functions: anticipation, goal selection, planning, and monitoring (Crick and Koch, 2003). The last level of the frontal function is consciousness and self-awareness. The neuroanatomical correlate is over the prefrontal cortex which is also close to metacognition (Stuss and Alexander, 2005).

However, a later study about this model allowed to establish three cognitive processes related to performance in executive tasks: *energization*, seen as the process of initiating and sustaining a response; *task setting*, the ability to establish a stimulus-response relationship to respond to a target with specific attributes (planning and organizing); *monitoring*, the process of checking a task over time; and for quality control (Burgess and Stuss, 2017). Most likely, monitoring is

the closest cognitive process to WM because it can be assumed as an on-line supervision. It is also one of the most important skills related to metacognitive regulation (Schraw and Dennison, 1994).

Finally, metacognitive monitoring involves a calibration process where a subject monitors his/her own thought process and state of knowledge through each WM slave system (Schraw and Moshman, 1995).

Next, some clinical examples about the previous stages are presented:

**Energization:** an individual with dorsomedial cortex damage exhibits a series of specific deficits like slow processing speed. For example, they cannot keep information on-line (word list) during the last 4-5 seconds of a verbal fluency task as compared to the first 15 seconds. This is due to a failure to initiate and maintain a response (Picton *et al.*, 2007).

**Task setting:** an individual with left hemisphere damage will increase the false positive rate in tasks like the Stroop test. This deficit is quite common during the first stages of learning (Stuss and Knight, 2009).

**Monitoring:** an individual with right hemisphere damage will increase the false positive rate. Likewise, it is not easy to perform arithmetic tasks (calculation, retrieval, strategy use, decision making) (Stuss, 2011).

Probably, anosognosia is one of the most known clinical cases where an individual sees a decrease in his levels of consciousness. This is a domain-specific deficit and is related to a single functional system where the lack of consciousness seems to be the absence of factual knowledge (Stuss, 1991).

Patients with a focal posterior right hemisphere brain injury display several deficits such as: left hemianopsia, prosopagnosia, and heminattention (Stuss, 2011). If this injury extends to anterior areas, the patient will display left hemiplegia. Likewise, anosognosia can also be interpreted as a secondary deficit related to the preservation of necessary abilities to perform the basic activities of daily living.

### ***The Self as an Integrating System of the Conscious Experience in WM***

The self is one of the basic cognitive systems underlying the conscious experience. It develops on biological values, naturally selected and culturally acquired. It is the engine that allows holding and expanding an individual's welfare as a whole. The self is expressed through the central and peripheric nervous system which maps the body, its background and the environment. It is through the self that an organism's complex structure becomes the voice of a single individual (Marchetti, 2018).



A wide set of values rules the self, an individual may feel overwhelmed by multiple internal and external stimuli, the body is constantly adjusting to the environment. This requires a mechanism to focus on the most important data to achieve a goal according to the context, but on the other hand it inhibits the noise of irrelevant stimuli. This mechanism is known as attention (Marchetti, 2018).

Attention allows an individual to control large amounts of information, but it also lets him/her select the most important data to meet a goal (Awh *et al.*, 2012). This can be achieved in multiple ways: through an exogenous, unintentional bottom-up processing; through an endogenous, voluntary top-down mechanism (Carrasco, 2011; Chica *et al.*, 2013); addressing internally or externally the focus of attention (Corbetta *et al.*, 2008; Corbetta and Shulman, 2002), holding attention for a limited time (Zeman, 1996), even when it has been distributed in multiple stimuli (Eimer and Grubert, 2014).

Attention is an accurate tool for problem solving: in fact, it allows to divide the information flow in attentional episodes and every episode will only consider the content of a momentary subset of problems (Duncan, 2013). Finally, the process of attentional selection sets up new experimental dimensions in addition to those previously established. When selecting non-related stimuli, simulating new scenarios that an individual may not have consciously experimented if attentional capabilities were not available becomes possible (Marchetti, 2018). Therefore, human consciousness is able to use the brain power to build sequential thinking and do simulations while awake with no need of sensory input (Baumeister and Masicampo, 2010).

Although the role of attention can be theoretically assumed as an uninterrupted and continuous process which allows task switching, current data support the idea of attention acting periodically. This periodicity is the product of brain oscillations (Marchetti, 2018). Attention provides a template to shape conscious experiences, therefore, these experiences adjust to the role of attention to detect changes in the self.

However, attention itself is not enough to make the most complex conscious experience happen. Attention is in charge of selecting the core elements of the conscious experience but a mechanism like WM is still necessary to combine and assemble these elements (Marchetti, 2018).

WM is not only about recalling information it is a more general skill related to attentional control that performs top-down control on cognition. WM also allows sequentially combining stimuli. One of the main functions of WM is keeping representations through temporary binding between the content (stimuli, words) and context (stimulus location in a visuo-spatial task)

(Oberauer, 2009). Likewise, binding has also been involved with declarative and procedural features of WM.

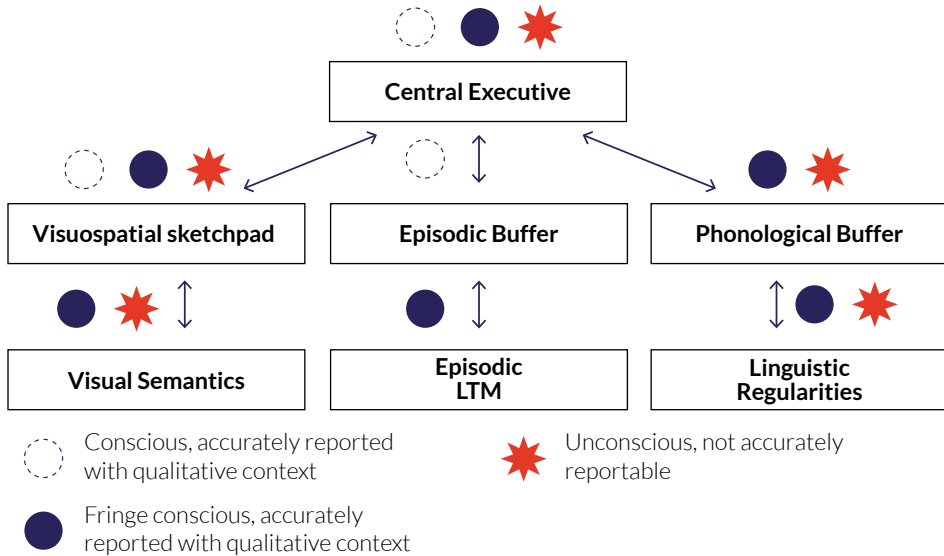
Some works using neurophysiological techniques like EEG have started focusing on this system. Studies have found that for the brain to be able to encode, hold, and retrieve information through WM, it needs to synchronize various tasks with the support of local neural assemblies that work in different temporary scales nested into the same operational hierarchy (Fingelkurts *et al.*, 2010; Monto, 2012). Specially, operational modules (span) seem to be necessary for a successful memory (Fingelkurts *et al.*, 2003). In fact, although memory encoding and retrieval share common regions in the brain cortex, the operational synchrony of every task is seen as a group of modules nested to short-term memory tasks (Fingelkurts *et al.*, 2003). Both, a large or small number of operational modules could cause a memory deficit.

Thereby, the interplay between theta band waves (4–8 Hz) and gamma band waves (30–200 Hz) is the core feature for sequentially ordered stimuli in WM (Lisman and Jensen, 2013). Once information is integrated, WM allows the combination and assembly of information in consciousness (Marchetti, 2014).

## Concluding Remarks

Baddeley's WM model is perhaps one of the most influential in cognition over the last decades (Andrade, 2002; Baddeley, 2017). Every single component is easily assessed, like the phonological loop (word or number repetition), the visuo-spatial sketchpad (mental imagery), and the central executive (voluntary manipulation). Figure 1 shows that WM is heavily involved with consciousness, both from a qualitative perspective (inner speech), or conscious experiences like the intention of rehearsing previously stored stimuli in WM (Baars and Franklin, 2003). The self is involved both in the central executive and the phonological loop and allows the individuality and continuity of the conscious experience. This is how the self becomes a reference for an organism composed of body and mind. A single indivisible unit: *Personality*.

Figure 1. A schematic presentation of the Working Memory Model



This WM model contributes a basic functional description of how mental representations remain on-line along the complex cognitive processing (Baddeley, 2017). Both the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad are involved in the storing of visual and verbal information. They are conceived as buffers, highly processed information containers which are not involved in the perceptual analysis of sensory information (Buchsbau, 2013). They are both controlled and monitored through a cognitive control mechanism known as the central executive. The visuo-spatial sketchpad is also described as a single unit for the storing of information (Logie and Pearson, 1997). The phonological loop is composed by the phonological store and the articulatory rehearsal process.

The phonological loop can store speech-based information for a short period of time before it decays. The role of the articulatory rehearsal is to prevent this information decay by periodically refreshing the content of the phonological loop through subvocal rehearsal (Buchsbau, 2013).

On the other hand, the episodic buffer is involved with information binding, although multimodal isolated pieces of information (moving object) are experienced through different channels, the episodic buffer allows the stimuli perception as a whole. At some point, representations converge and are consciously experienced as a single event (Angelopoulou and Drigas,

2021). Therefore, the most important mechanism to retrieve information out of the episodic buffer is conscious awareness (Baddeley, 2000). Thereby, binding has become the most important biological advantage of consciousness (Baddeley, 2003).

Hence, the interplay between the central executive and the episodic buffer on one hand and the phonological loop and the visuospatial sketchpad on the other is mediated by conscious processing. The central executive controls and changes attention while the episodic buffer allows the availability of multimodal information (Baars, 2005).

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# Re views

Reseñas · Resenhas

# Thinking Philosophically from Mexico

[English Version]

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## About Carlos Pereda's book, *Pensar a México Entre Otros Reclamos*.

The latest book published by the philosopher Carlos Pereda (UNAM-Gedisa, 2021) offers a set of essays aiming at exposing methodological routes and novel epistemic constructions to reflect on philosophy from Mexico. However, it seems that Mexico is the pretense to test the always open paths of what Pereda calls "nomadic thought." This is distinct from static thought, placed in *arrogant reason* plagued by colonial vices, that shelters either in an abstract and empty universalism or in particularisms without major explanatory horizons; the *porous* reason unfolds along multiple paths that the author names 'detours.' Additionally, it avoids colonial vices to try to explain the phenomena of its dynamics. This means, learning to ascend from the abstract to the concrete or from the universal to the particular and descend back to the abstract to enrich concepts and categories, among other things.

*Pensar a México entre otros reclamos* is made up of three essays. Each one has its own approach; they are well articulated when thinking, from nomadic perspectives, about philosophy in Mexico. The first of them, "Colonial Vices. A Sketch of a General Perspective," brings us closer to a critique of colonial vices that affects the production of philosophical thought. Pereda develops *craving for novelty*, *subaltern fervor*, and *nationalist enthusiasms*, among these vices. These are three vices that become a straitjacket for arrogant reason, their prejudices can lead one astray in the understanding of phenomena. An alternative to not falling into such vices is to approach certainty and truth through a porous reason that

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uses detours to think critically. The first chapter lays out the author's epistemological and methodological foundations.

In the second essay, "Fragments of Mexican Philosophy, for Example," Pereda moves from the universal or abstract to approach the particular and concrete with examples of thinkers who reflect on Mexico, to test the viability of their methodological paths. This time, the author of *Vértigos Argumentales* revisits Ignacio Ramírez's — who called himself *Nigromante* — and Luis Villoro's proposal, to explore nomadic thinkers who were concerned with concrete problems, microphysical experiences of injustices, marginalization, and exclusion without renouncing the panoramic explanations, and pretensions for universality in the construction and management of concepts, but without reproducing colonial vices.

The third essay, "Uncomfortable Mexican Thinkers, and, in Addition, Irreverent Claims," is aimed at testing the methodology announced in the first chapter, but this time based on Enrique Uranga and José Revueltas' proposal. The former is an important but little remembered exponent of the Hyperion Group, and the latter, a strong critic of it, as he did not share the idea of being able to reduce Mexicanness to a certain identity or substance.

Regarding Enrique Uranga, Pereda analyzes his interest and his gaze on scrutinizing the Mexicans. The need for "substantializing" the Mexican being through an ontology that determines that being is striking. However, this ontology is accidental, unforeseen, and unexpected. The accident becomes the nourishment for Pereda's nomadic philosophy which, far from closing itself on a philosophical system or certain axioms, attempts to explore, question, and reason. Pereda as Revueltas distrusts labels and prejudices to impose determining an identity which is itself indeterminate; thus, somehow, we are what we are becoming.

Nothing is written in advance. Despite the Marxist context and the economic analysis of the phenomena that characterized it, Revueltas had the virtue of *enclosing* the schematism of his time and considered what Uranga enunciated but did not see: the accident.

Only a nomadic attitude can allow for the exercise of a porous reason that learns to read events as the emergence of hidden stories and abrupt counter-knowledge hegemonically disqualified.

The path of *claims*, typical of Carlos Pereda's nomadic thought, alerts us to: "be careful with words." And, indeed, words denote the world, shape statements, and sharpen arguments. If words are misused, our cognitive edifice is undermined, what we think we know we do not know and we are shipwrecked in the drift of vices.

Still, in a world with a lot of violence and great injustices, *Pensar a México entre otros reclamos* offers a breath of fresh air: the deontological perspective is not abandoned; on the contrary, it is used to argue claims and denounce relations of domination. Not only does it teach us to go beyond the obvious, but also to ask ourselves why the consolidation of the obvious.

These days, *nomadic thought* exercised through a *porous reason* can become a paramount tool for critically thinking about organized crime and its social roots in terms of costs and opportunities, femicide and the patriarchal organization of the social fabric together with frustrations and circles of violence, migration and capitalist civilization, the subjugation of market forces over State institutions, and the decline of the latter as a guarantor of rights and freedoms.

Some concerns arising from Carlos Pereda's book are: what to do if the stationary thinking of arrogant reason considers the critique of nomadic thought arrogant, which in turn claims a porous reason? Is the truth and certainty approach of power relationships safe? Or in other words, is hermeneutics safe from power relationships? As long as there are open questions, philosophy will continue its nomadic wanderings.

# The value form policy. Ávalos Tenorio, Gerardo (2021), *Ética y política en Karl Marx*, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Xochimilco-Terracota.

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México

Dr. Gerardo Ávalos Tenorio is the most outstanding Mexican political philosopher of modern times. His extensive work includes multiple articles, lectures, conferences and seminars, as well as the authorship and edition of several books on different moments, dimensions and levels of politics.<sup>2</sup> At times, Dr. Avalos' frenetic productivity is such that he keeps his readers on their toes. At the time of this review, what is now his most recent book (*La Filosofía Política de Marx* (2022)) had

just been published.

We find ourselves, before the *almost most recent work* of a specialist in philosophy and political theory who has devoted several decades of intense work to investigating the universals of the political: power, politics, domination, and authority. In *Ética y Política en Karl Marx*, the author shows that these political universals acquire a new significance in the Modern Era given the contradictory relationship between capital and the State.

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2. El monarca, el ciudadano y el excluido: hacia una crítica de lo político (2020; 2006); Hegel actual: La paciencia de lo negativo (2018); Ética y política para tiempos violentos (2016a); La política transfigurada: Estado, ciudadanía y violencia (Coord.) (2016b); La estatalidad en transformación (2015); Breve introducción al estudio de Hegel (2011); El Estado mexicano: historia, estructura y actualidad de una forma política en transformación (Coord.) (2008); La política del capital (en coautoría con Joachim Hirsch) (2007); Redefinir lo político (Coord.) (2002); Política y Estado en el pensamiento moderno (en coordinación con Dolores París) (2001b; 1996b); Leviatán y Behemoth: Figuras de la idea del Estado (2001a; 1996a).

Like his previous books, *Ética y Política en Karl Marx* stands out for its clarity, fluency, and didactics; but, above all, for its original, profound, and novel reading of the political thought of the philosopher from Trier.

Throughout the eight chapters of *Ética y política en Karl Marx*, Gerardo Ávalos presents different, interesting, and fundamental facets, little highlighted by the stale economistic Marxism, which show that the reflection on the political and, particularly, on the State, were always present in Marx's thought.

Faced with the justified question: Why one more book on Marx? The Mexican philosopher answers: because if we refrain from a deep and disciplined analysis of this author's thought, we run the risk of lacking the inescapable conceptual elements to defend freedom. Because without their guidance, we will be vulnerable to the most entrenched authoritarianisms that are present in our days under the guise of supposedly critical, disruptive, and liberating discourses. Because without resorting to the methodology of the German philosopher, understanding by this term, the logic of his argument, we will continue to think that the anxiety, fear, apprehension and hopelessness that overwhelm us, are the exclusive product of the dysfunction of our neurotransmitters, or else, which are mere psychological or psychiatric pathologies and not, as Marx reveals, of global relational processes that configure each and every one of the human facets in the era of the value form.

Like a modern Virgilio, Gerardo Ávalos leads us through each of the moments that constitute the complex thought of Karl Marx, exposing the foundations and the sequence of fragments that, as the author warns, have been used over the decades to defend or attack various ethical-political positions that have distorted the full understanding of fruitful, interesting, and hopeful thought.

This is particularly important at a time when critical thinking, particularly with Marxist roots, is being reviled. Gerardo Ávalos shows us that Marx's thought is not only interesting in itself, but that it is one of the unavoidable keys to scientifically understanding, from a speculative point of view, the excluding, unjust, and violent spirit of our time.

If the foregoing were not enough to urge the reader to study this book, it should be added that this hermeneutical proposal on the work of Marx is, at the same time, an interpretation of our modern condition of existence.

Ours are violent times, no doubt; but also, and above all, these are times of despair. Fraud and force are cardinal virtues that seem to prove political realism right as a primary analytical perspective; however, the author's analysis of ethics and politics in Marx shows the need, ethics, and politics, of a transcendental horizon that allows criticism of a world that could be otherwise.

Thus, this text demolishes naive, superficial, and dogmatic interpretations; while it also provides us with the foundations to develop scientific research based

on the regulative ideal of freedom and the end of exploitation and domination. This does not mean, however, that the author repeats the errors of certain political and ideological interpretations that unfolded in concrete reality as the terrible and irrefutable contradiction of that ethical principle.

Gerardo Ávalos demonstrates that Marx is not an ember of that flame that inflamed the 19th and 20th centuries; conversely, it shows us that Marx's thought is that uncomfortable absence that reveals the obscene foundation of modern postmodernity.

If we must be sure of something, it is that not everything has been said about the philosopher from Trier, and that this is not a book that is limited to making a scholastic interpretation, covered with all the paraphernalia of the publishing industry and a strong dose of snobbery, like those that abound so much in the academic world, to present careless and unnecessary analyzes as unavoidable theoretical watersheds.

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