The decolonizing future of organization studies

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abstract

In this paper, we propose that organizational studies researchers must pay attention to the contributions of decolonial epistemology, which has been developing counter-hegemonic, marginal, and subaltern organizational theories, embedded in the radicality of broken silence. The decolonizing future of research in organization studies opens up possibilities for new organizational modes of existence — from the perspective of indigenous societies and different knowledge from that of modernity. We explore main concepts related to the decolonizing movement, seeking to elucidate its main ideas and transposing them to organizational studies. We have found four main heterarchical reinterpretations provided by decolonial scholars on the field of organization studies: (a) the organization concept, (b) the history of economic development in colonized nations and management organizational knowledge, (c) consumption, technology and changes in the natural environment and (d) intersectional studies about gender, race, and social class. It is possible to anticipate that the future of organization studies may be marked either by segregation, or heterarchical thinking integration within a global agenda. The first scenario is featured by the flourishing of alternative thinking outside academia environments and valuing the great diversity of languages worldwide; the second scenario must be featured by the openness to provide a more organic and structured presence for groups of emerging countries in international science arenas. We stand that the heterarchical thinking can contribute to overcoming an increasingly polarized world, allowing the rise of several knowledge production competing arenas of, making possible a more democratic development for organizational studies.
Introduction

To study ‘coloniality’ means acknowledging contemporary ways in which indirect colonial domination is perpetuated, even after the independence of colonizing countries direct administration — mainly through the cultural and economic structures imposed by global transnational organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and World Trade Organization (WTO), among others (Arango, 2015; Bhambra, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2011).

‘Colonialism’, on the other hand, are macro level colonial situations imposed by the presence of direct colonial administration intervening over a country, as in cases of military invasions, seizures of power or coups d’état financed by exogenous interests — in disagreement to those of the people who compose a particular nation. Colonial situations can also occur at micro level, when they concern oppression or cultural, political, sexual and economic exploitation of racial groups subalternized by other racial/ethnic groups who consider themselves to be dominant (Grosfoguel, 2011).

Coloniality does not solely refer to classical or to internal colonialism, nor can it be reduced to colonial administration presence; coloniality is a power pattern that operates through the naturalization of racial hierarchies that enable the reproduction of territorial and epistemic domination relationships. That pattern does not only subordinate one man to the other through capitalist reproductions, but also marginalize knowledge, experiences and life forms of those who are exploited and placed in precarious conditions of existence (Quijano, 2007; Soler, 2009).

The ‘decoloniality’ category is useful for bringing new forms of resistance to secular denials (even extinction attempts) of local and traditional knowledge, in order to deconstruct epistemic colonialism from a hierarchical thought, based on the epistemic superiority of Western countries, and replace it with heterarchical thinking, based on the coexistence of distinct lines of thought that do not overlap each other as universal truth (Silva, Maciel and Coutinho, 2018).
Decolonizing studies can be subdivided between postcolonial and decolonial types. Postcolonial studies are part of the economic analyses proposed by the World-System analysis (Bhambra, 2014; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007) and provide a critique with emphasis on ‘colonial discourse’, emphasizing the cultural agency of individuals in the subject/structure binomial (Grosfoguel, 2011). This theoretical current is historically placed after the processes of decolonization and emancipation of the Third World, from the second half of the twentieth century. Postcolonialism can also be characterized as a set of theoretical contributions of literary and cultural studies of the 1980s in the United States and England (Ballestrin, 2013), supported by European critical authors such as Foucault, Gramsci, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida (Ballestrin, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2007a). The movement seeks to deconstruct essentialisms, to propose a critical epistemology to modernity (Bhambra, 2014) and has a strong connection with revolutionary anticolonialism, with struggles of national liberation and with African and Asian independence movements (Ballestrin, 2017). According to Bhambra (2014), postcolonial studies have been an exercise of opening and questioning the implicit assumptions of dominant discourses.

Decolonial studies, on the other hand, have emerged from the theoretical perspective developed by Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality Group and brings the notion that culture is always intertwined with political economy processes. In this sense, political economy is seen as a cultural control device, imposing discursive structures in relation to the individual (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007). Decolonial thinking is also not attached to the modern category ‘time’ as a theoretical framework and, therefore, escapes postmodernity and postcoloniality (Mignolo, 2007a).

Decolonial studies are supported by indigenous experiences and memories, as they oppose modern beliefs (Mignolo, 2007a). For MCD group, a ‘postcolonial world’ is a myth because, to this day, there is no effective liberation from the structures of contemporary coloniality (Grosfoguel, 2007). Decolonialism retrieves contributions from authors such as Mahatma Gandhi, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Fausto Reinaga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Mignolo, 2007b). It also provides new meaning to the Movimento Sem Terra (MST) in
Brazil, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, the indigenous movements in Latin America and the Social Forums of the Americas and the World (Ballestrin, 2013).

As stated earlier, decolonial episteme is open to the coexistence of distinct thoughts, without hierarchies among themselves, constituting an heterarchical pluriverse (Reyes and Beltrán, 2014; Soler, 2009). Decoloniality preaches altruism insofar as it seeks to give others time and space to be heard, affirming the ‘other’ position — refraining from condemning and prejudging, and trying to understand circumstances and experiences in different points of view (Vélez, Grisales, Gil and Botero, 2017). Decoloniality goes beyond, because it seeks not only to overcome colonial episteme, but to propose new parallel and alternative views (Ballestrin, 2017).

As Brazilian authors, we have witnessed in recent years the development of a growing set of decolonial approaches in organizational studies. Several lines of interest have been explored by researchers, regarding (a) the conceptual bases of decoloniality and the disruption with hegemonic thoughts inherited from Western nations (Abdalla and Faria, 2017; Carrieri and Correia, 2020; Szlechter, et al., 2020); (b) the reinterpretation of organizational phenomena from decolonial philosophers bias (Couto and Carrieri, 2018; Couto, Palhares, and Carrieri, 2020; Misoczky and Camara, 2015); and (c) the challenges of transposing theoretical and methodological foundations from decolonial movement into empirical research (Couto, Honorato, and Silva, 2019; Misoczky and Camara, 2020; Wanderley and Bauer, 2020).

The challenge for decolonial researchers is to rescue knowledge produced by hidden voices and epistemologies born from alternative realities, contraposing them to the hegemonic Westernism that was constituted in Europe and in North America. Rewriting this history based on silenced thinkers and recovering South theories is an urgent task. In this scenario, we position the central argument of this article: Latin American organizational studies must pay attention to the contributions of decolonial epistemology to develop other, counter-hegemonic, marginal and subaltern organizational theories, embedded in the radicality of broken silence; only this way, we can create an inclusive future for research in organization studies, considering for
new organizational modes of existence from the perspective of indigenous peoples and different knowledge from that of the modernity.

In this paper, therefore, we explore the main concepts related to the decolonial movement, seeking to elucidate its main ideas and transposing them to organizational studies. In addition to exploring the categories ‘coloniality’ and ‘colonialism’, we approach historical origins of its constitution in Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality Group (MCD), as well as other categories that permeate this increasingly popular field among Latin-American scholars. Throughout this work, we establish, in a didactic and non-exhaustive way, distinctive milestones between the concepts, facilitating the operationalization of future research that adopt, as an epistemic basis for guidance, the critical orientation towards modernity.

This paper is organized as follows. First, this introduction, which posits the theme and explores some initial definitions regarding decolonial epistemology. Second, we analyze the construction of modernity and the *hybris del punto cero*, which constitutes contemporary ‘hierarchical thought’. Third, we advance in two fundamental concepts to understand the possible decolonial concepts transposition to organizational studies: *Imperiality* and *Heterarchical Thinking*. We will analyze the ways in which heterarchical thinking has manifested itself in the field of organizational studies in recent years. Finally, the final remarks, in which we consolidate the knowledge obtained throughout this paper to reflect on the decolonizing future of organizational studies.

**Modernity and the *hybris del punto cero***

For Mignolo (Mignolo, 2007b; 2007a; 2011) and Dunford (2017), the values of enlightenment that inform cosmopolitan thinking and the ‘modern’ institutions that protect these values emerged endogenously in Europe and were expanded to the rest of humanity as a form of global knowledge. Modernity and enlightenment, therefore, constitute what is called the *hybris del punto cero*, or the emergence of rational thought, in which science and method have become the ontology of legitimate knowledge, that is, the only way to effective discovery of the real (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007).
In this line of thought, God is replaced by a concept of ‘rational self’, a knowing subject capable of bringing the answers to man’s most fundamental questions.

The construction of the notion of *hybris del punto cero* of knowledge starts from the critique of ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ methods from Western historiography to rescue the voices of societies that, over the years, had their stories erased and silenced. This challenge arises through the contemporary need to ‘retell the stories’, resuming records of traditional knowledge and oral histories — documenting what was not previously recorded — in order to allow the democratization of ideologies, knowledge and ways of interpreting human existence before nature, society and the supernatural (Chakrabarty, 2011). The ‘conflict of histories’ is something desirable by the decolonial movement, since it constitutes criticism about the interpretation of human actions and, consequently, political disputes that can balance power asymmetries in the discussions that are currently sedimented by Western thought.

Dominated peoples are the victims of a rational science that produces a myth of a man ‘free from natural limitations’. The decolonial movement aims to release us from the ‘progress discourse’, which had been strategically used to impose a single way of life and a single system of world thought (Mignolo, 2007b; Dussel, 1977). Here, the term ‘emancipation’ is no longer used, for its European connotation, but rather ‘liberation’, which would be the notion of getting rid of imposed forms of thought that constitute the universality of European values — and of the thought hierarchies among peoples, thus, eliminating the diversity of ideas (Pinto and Mignolo, 2015).

From a decolonial perspective, no one has access to a final truth, and consequently, no person can offer one solution for the entire population of the planet. For this reason, abstract universals such as Christianity, liberalism, Marxism and Islam are left without logic when they lose their temporal and spatial character. In this sense, decolonial task is to denounce the processes of universalization and all hierarchization of thought, valuing intellectual production beyond modernity, considering the particularities of each context (Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 2011).
According to Grosfoguel (2011), many paradigmatic hierarchies constituted through coloniality still exist (Table 1) and need to be broken. This implies a change in the geopolitics of knowledge, which provincializes values and beliefs produced in the center. The challenge of decolonial scholars is to overcome each of the divisions proposed in the complex chain of paradigms naturalized in the sciences through the intersections between political, economic, cultural, racial, gender, among others. Hierarchies, in this sense, are the darker side of modernity, which has eliminated distinct cosmovisions (ways of seeing existence) in various parts of the world. The decolonial movement isolates such cosmopolitan Eurocentric hierarchies as strictly localized visions, incomplete and limited (Dunford, 2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Paradigm</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy between classes that constitutes diversity of oppressive forms of work, such as slavery, servitude, wage labor and the production of small products. Relationships governed by Capital Gains in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Labor Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy between nations that concentrates extractivism in the South and aggregate production in the North.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political-Military Organization</td>
<td>Hierarchy of governments and political-military structures controlled/financed by European men or from European origin/matrix to intervene in countries characterized by ‘fragile’ democracies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Races</td>
<td>Global racial/ethnic hierarchy that favors Europeans over non-Europeans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Division</td>
<td>Gender hierarchy that privileges men over women/feminism, making predominant the European Jewish-Christian patriarchy over other forms of gender relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Division</td>
<td>Sexual hierarchy that privileges heterosexuals over homosexuals, bisexuals and lesbians — in this sense, it is important to consider that the majority of indigenous peoples in the Americas did not consider sexuality among men a pathological behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy that privileges Christians over non-Christian or non-Western spiritualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic Division</td>
<td>Epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western (scientific) knowledge and cosmology over non-Western (traditional) knowledge and cosmologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic Division</td>
<td>Linguistic hierarchy between European and non-European languages that subordinate local languages and cultures as folklore products, but not knowledge/communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Division</td>
<td>Aesthetic hierarchy of 'high art' versus 'naïve or primitive art'. Diminishing of the local forms of artistic production originating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Division</td>
<td>Pedagogical hierarchy that privileges Cartesian Western forms of pedagogy considered superior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy of media and information — to which the West holds control over the means of global media production, information technology and discourse production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Division</td>
<td>Age hierarchy in which the Western conception of productive living makes people disposable over 65 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy that constitutes superiority of western conceptions of nature as a means of production, and not as a living entity that constitutes a bilateral relationship of synergy with the human species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Division</td>
<td>Hierarchy that constitutes the superiority of the urban over the rural, with the consequent destruction of rural communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Hierarchical paradigms of modernity. Source: Grosfoguel (2011: 8-10)

Taking distance from Western knowledge is the initial assumption for the decolonial alternative, which does not tolerate the waste of experiences and seeks to rescue hope by recognizing the validity of other perspectives on the present and the future. It is about the 'rescue of voices silenced and oppressed by the Eurocentric narrative of history and knowledge, affirming their place of equality in the dialogue with Western scientific knowledge in an ecology of knowledge and in an intense work of intercultural translation’ (Ribeiro, 2018: 1067). In this sense, the decolonial turn is a proposal that does not aim to eliminate the uncertainties of contemporaneity, but to fully assume and use them, transforming into opportunities, freeing societies and peoples from the domination of unique, hierarchical and racialized thought, aiming at a fairer society project.

Such constructions so far bring an important premise to this work: that there is no correct nor last formula on a particular concept, but rather multiple
formulas and systems of thoughts, cultures and contingent values for different groups. Each nation can and must decide on its own, which value systems and paradigms govern that form of social (co)existence. In this sense, establishing a hierarchy of concepts or committing epistemic racisms, which are the delegitimization of alternative thought systems to modern science, are completely unreasonable actions for decolonial endeavors (Pinto and Mignolo, 2015; Vélez, Grisales, Gil and Botero, 2017). Therefore, we seek distinct visions and alternative theories for different realities — without supremacy of one over the other. Comparison, denunciation, criticism and liberation are latent objectives for decolonial research.

Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality Group

In the 20th century, since the end of the 1960s, the socioeconomic, environmental and cultural Latin America realities have been undergoing important changes (Soler, 2009). In the socioeconomic sense, initiatives have been taken to reorganize, restructure and reconfigure the world standard of power and capitalism. The post-war period, as signaled by Abdalla and Faria (2017), driven by the trauma of atomic bombs and followed by American benevolences in helping countries in need, contributed to the shift of the hegemonic axis of capitalism from Europe to the USA.

This hegemonic transition instituted dynamics in which the colonies would become the Third World, as well as the emerging powers would be contained. This restraint of powers would occur by means of developmental projects that would transfer technology and knowledge through a system financed by ‘modern’ countries themselves, in order to prevent the emergence of divergent systems (Abdalla and Faria, 2017). With the collapse of the truly existing socialisms and with the implementation of neoliberal system, the deepening of market relations was allowed on a wider socio territorial extension, as well as the reconfiguration of the contemporary capitalist system — which now not only concerns exchange relations, but also the capitalization of nature, people and cultures — increasingly marked by ecological crises, exploitation and massive exclusion (Soler, 2009).
In this context, a group of scholars emerged, in the late 1980s, who would be responsible for expanding the ‘decoloniality’ category. In 1998, important authors of the decolonial movement organized independent meetings and workshops to debate issues related to contemporary colonialism, and their findings pointed in similar directions (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007). With the support of Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), that year, a meeting held at the Central University of Venezuela, in Caracas, brought together, for the first time, Edgardo Lander, Arturo Escobar, Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano and Fernando Coronil. In the United States, Ramón Grosfoguel and Agustín Lao-Montes reunited authors such as Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein for an international conference at the University of Binghamton, in New York.

These events, seminars, parallel dialogues and publications (joint or not) constituted a milestone that would start the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality Group (MCD), which would be responsible for the theoretical development, in the following years, of decolonial studies (Ballestrin 2013; 2017; Soler, 2009). The Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality Group, therefore, was constituted in the late 1990s and was formed by Latin American intellectuals. Some of them were already recognized, such as the case of Dussel, Quijano and Wallerstein for their role in the development of relevant works such as the Philosophy of Liberation, Theory of Dependency and World-System Theory. Researchers of the MCD Group were located in different institutions around the world and carried out a fundamental epistemological movement for the renewal of criticism in the social sciences of Latin America in the 21st century (Abdalla and Faria, 2017; Ballestrin, 2013; 2017; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007).

The group’s proposal was to address the epistemic, theoretical, methodological and practical problems associated with modernity/coloniality. The group sought to rescue, problematize and update Latin American theories and challenge social science mainstream with the argument that globalization means global neoimperialism (Abdalla and Faria, 2017). Assuming a wide variety of theoretical influences, the group was responsible for critical reinterpretations of traditional theories, challenging the persisten global coloniality, both at an individual and collective level. In
this sense, the group defended the ‘decolonial option’ as a critical Latin bias. In the 2000s, seven group events took place (Ballestrin, 2013). According to Soler (2009), the decolonial perspective, still under construction, is a Latin American epistemic, theoretical and methodological proposal to understand power relations and domain over identity, knowledge, space, time, race, sexuality, among other forms of production of subjectivities; its final goal is to overcome the historical-colonial matrix of power, liberating subjects from this matrix. Mignolo (2007a), in this sense, affirms that decolonial thinking emerged based on modernity/coloniality as its counterpart.

The decolonial movement defies the foundations of knowledge production and the ways of reproducing coloniality of knowledge through modern methods and categories — which, in replicating Western European traditions, ignore, make invisible and subordinate other epistemes, meanings and modes of knowledge (Silva, Maciel and Coutinho, 2018; Soler, 2009). For the past 20 years, the decolonial perspective has promoted its own genealogy. According to Ballestrin (2013), among the MCD Group’s consistent contributions are attempts to resume: (a) the original narrative that rescues and inserts Latin America as the founding continent of colonialism and modernity; (b) the importance of Latin America as a testing laboratory for racism in the service of colonialism; (c) the recognition of colonial difference, since it predates other differences and underlies it (e.g., the relationship of racism and the colonization of sexual practices); (d) the verification of the oppressive structure of the coloniality of power, knowledge and being as a way to denounce the continuity of the colonizing processes; and, finally, (e) the decolonial perspective, which provides original background for independent thinking.

Decolonial studies go beyond the economicism and dependentist view of the Southern Countries to enlighten issues related to culture and to the symbolic role of social relations that constitute hierarchies (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007). With this, the decolonial movement manages to overcome the Marxist reductionism that focuses on economic relations and the exploitation of work to pay attention to the symbolic/ideological structures that constituted the production of knowledge in the 19th and 20th centuries. The goal is to remove opacities of the developmental discourses to which
Latin American countries were submitted. Thus, decolonial researchers (a) suggest that economic structures are intertwined with cultural structures to subvert the conceptions of center and periphery, and (b) affirm the bases of the periphery as central elements, thus provincializing other cultures (Soler, 2009).

In the field of organizational studies, as noted by Abdalla and Faria (2017), a growing number of authors have been criticizing the colonial character of Administration. The basis of the criticism stems from the great American effort to export and impose its management and administration models to the rest of the world as the only and legitimate way of organizing social structures, which has not only expanded the financial management agenda, but has also increased the number of neoliberalism victims on a global scale (Abdalla and Faria, 2017; Dussel, 2013; Ibarra-Colado, 2006). Resistance movements or manifestations of the effects of an increasingly exclusionary economy have been treated as barbaric and irrational, which has ultimately fueled the conservative movement and its universal solution discourse.

Management organizational knowledge (MOK) field, in this sense, is complicit in a colonial system when producing developmentalist discourses to organizations that, uncritically, reproduce neoliberal ideological foundations on local cultures and create a unipolar and totalizing scenario — in which divergence becomes a threat in several senses (Abdalla and Faria, 2017). It is noticeable that, in recent years, pro-market movements have been associated with Christian matrices that tout Western sexual practices, as well as legitimate the weakening of historical compensation policies to certain racial/ethnic groups under the motto that there is no character of truth in the differentiation between agents — in this perspective, everything happens according to the market, and the historical views diverging from those who have suffered the negative effects of the colonial process over the decades are completely forgotten.

For Asher (2013), Latin America has long been a poster child of resistance and revolution against the hegemonic neoliberal models advocated in Northern countries. In this sense, the studies of alternative experiences (indigenous communities, alternative experiences to traditional social and organizational
models) as well as openness to cultural diversity leads to decolonial politics. In other words, this means giving voice, through otherness, to the community of victims, enabling the production of previously ignored knowledge, overcoming the massified, unified and standardized reality of individuals and worldviews (Asher, 2013; Silva, Maciel and Coutinho, 2018).

Specifically, in the Brazilian case, the conversion of the underdeveloped country from Third World to the status of emerging economy/power helped to marginalize its Latin American identity and weakened its identification with continental agendas due to its modernization and to the mitigation of its relationship with colonizing countries (Abdalla and Faria, 2017). Only recently, some researchers within the field of Brazilian organization studies have awakened to the possibility of conducting research from decolonial bias. It is still necessary for scholars to be aware of the potential in the country for producing relevant knowledge to the field (Ibarra-Colado, 2012).

For Harding (2019), the decolonial movement can shed light on discussions about critical realism, opening a gap to an ‘ontological turn’ of the sciences. From the decolonial movement, it is not only possible to think about ‘doing’ management, but also to reflect on what management is, what are its different interpretations, purposes, as well as rethinking organizations (what they are, what their purposes are) in a wide range of virtual possibilities — thus, allowing plurality of mental models about the world. It is possible, according to this view, to conceive another management theory (indigenous, feminist, community-driven, among many other existing options).

Hence, there is a need for openness to other ways of thinking, to conceive socio-political models of society based on the valorization of interculturality, which means highlighting the most distinct realities and seeking the ideal of unity in diversity, in order to recognize each one of the characteristics of each community, valuing the various dimensions existing in each cosmology (Silva, Maciel and Coutinho, 2018). As Abdalla and Faria (2017) argue, the decolonial perspective is not an imposed truth, but, on the contrary, it is an option that can become universal through the engagement for victims of colonial systems, allowing other ways to build a political economy located and directed towards Latin America.
Throughout history, many non-Western countries have produced reliable knowledge without modernity. However, the positivist label of ‘scientific’ has attributed a certain elitism and oppression to the ontology of knowledge, making valid and legitimate only the knowledge produced under the aegis of the Eurocentric and Western method. This ideological device was the cause of losses for humanity over the centuries. Overcoming it has been one of the challenges of contemporaneity (Mignolo 2007b; Pinto and Mignolo 2015). It is on this historical challenge that decolonial research must focus, especially in organizational studies, overcoming epistemic imperialism and making room for heterarchical thinking.

Imperiality and heterarchical thinking

Once we have understood historical domination carried out by Europe and the United States over the colonies, it remains to be understood what the future of decolonialism over Latin American organization studies is. This is because Latin America is historically labeled as periphery, as a premodern and underdeveloped society (Quijano, 2007). Resisting the advances of a globalizing and totalizing agenda on the modern academy is an ethical researcher option, who now has the challenge of incorporating subaltern knowledge into the processes of academic production (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007).

To understand this movement within the Academy, we will use Ballestrin’s (2017) concept of imperiality. According to the author, the notion of imperiality resembles Dussel’s ego conquiro (Dussel, 1977; 2012), insofar as it refers to a right, privilege and feeling of being superior (imperial) or the defense of a way of life in which the geopolitical invasion of Western power is not only legitimized, but desirable. In other words, it means that the act of ‘modernizing’ is a desirable action of ‘bringing progress and democracy’ to other societies with some gratitude or consent (Ballestrin, 2017).

Such actions are carried out, nowadays, by the control of scientific, economic and political organizational means around the world. The control of the means for scientific publication, the existing Manichaeism in the mass media and social networks, the opening of dependent economies and the forced free
market for the countries of the South, as well as military interventions, the penetration of capital and the creation of military bases, are some of the imperial policies that differ from traditional colonial forms and perpetuate the exercise of colonial power (Ballestrin, 2017; Maldonado-Torres, 2007b).

Contemporary imperialism was due to the architecture of the post-1989 international system, after the fall of the Soviet Union and its resistance to the hegemonic Eurocentric capitalist model (Quijano, 2007). It is built on the profound deregulation of markets with the complicity of States of Third World countries to neoliberalism and to the untying between productive and financial capital (Ballestrin, 2017).

Operating for what Quijano (2007) called coloniality of power, Western modes of foreign relations continue to function, imposing ‘civilized conditions’ on countries to perform government and trade. The contemporary power network has become a space and a tangle of social relations of exploitation, domination and conflicts articulated due to international treaties, restrictions on trade, trade blockades, media control and cultural production (Quijano, 2007). Contemporary neoliberal discourse imposes the hegemony of individualism and the loss of identity in favor of Westernism and the supremacy of economic relations in society (Mignolo, 2007b).

In this sense, it is important to remember that Western capitalism has arranged the worldwide distribution of labor around the coloniality of power, since ‘original’ capitalist countries finance and charge interest, while pre-capitalist countries work to produce commodities that serve economies and technologies of ‘more advanced’ capitalist countries (Ballestrin, 2013; Quijano, 2007). Likewise, the coloniality of power is present in the distribution of wages according to race and gender criteria, in which ethnicities other than white as well as women would have their jobs undervalued (Fonseca and Jerrems, 2012). For Soler (2009) and Ballestrin (2017), the coloniality of power can be seen as an overlap, or intersectionality of global, multiple and heterogeneous hierarchies in order to privilege the European in different fronts of action (Figure 1):
Figure 1: The imperialist hierarchies articulated by coloniality of Power. Source: Ballestrin (2017).

In academia, the imperialist movement takes shape by defining the most appropriate forms of scientific production (publish or perish), as well as delimiting a supremacy of neopositivist and quantitative studies supported by financial logics that naturalize capitalism as the only possible system, in a clear movement of hypermodernization of organizational studies and other areas of social sciences (Abdalla and Faria, 2017).

Subaltern groups and intellectuals felt the need for a movement of resistance to imperality as the imposition of ‘civilizing’ values as mechanisms for one nation to overcome another (Ballestrin, 2017; Mignolo, 2007b). The verb ‘to decolonize’ (in Portuguese: descolonizar)\(^1\) was attributed to anti-imperiality (Ballestrin, 2017; Bhambra, 2014). The term ‘decolonizing’ (verb) is a term that has different meanings, being commonly used as a synonym of the term ‘decolonial’ (Asher, 2013; Ballestrin, 2013). However, ‘decolonizing’ is usually portrayed as a genre referring to an attitude or ethical posture of the researcher in the sense of untying western colonialism, while postcolonialism

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\(^1\) In Portuguese, there is a difference between the terms ‘descolonial’ and ‘decolonial’. The first one refers to ‘decolonizing’ as verb, such as ‘descolonizar’, and means a genre. The latter refers to a species of decolonizing studies (decolonialism). At last, ‘decoloniality’ is a category that refers to a property/feature of decolonial studies.
and decolonialism (noun) appear to be species or theoretical currents effectively distinct from each other (Ballestrin, 2017; Soler, 2009).

In this sense, ‘to decolonize gains a sense of detachment from modernity and its rationality, rescuing the subjectivity of the misaligned Third-Worldism of capitalism and communism, of the right and the left, while not being able to escape a pre-colonial nostalgia’ (Ballestrin, 2017: 519-520). Decolonizing means, therefore, demonstrating the relations of power and conceptions of knowledge, thus creating discourses that oppose hegemonies, recognizing new ways of understanding the world — in the search for the transformation of naturalized and invisible structures (Ballestrin, 2017).

Heterarchical thinking (as opposed to hierarchical thinking) is an attempt to conceptualize social structures with a new language that still needs to be developed to account for the complex processes of the world without resorting to liberal language (Castro-Gómez, 2007). This means assuming that, in global capitalism, there are no autonomous logics, nor a single determinant logic that governs all others, since there are complex, heterogeneous and multiple processes, with different temporalities (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007).

In the field of organizational studies, we have witnessed manifestations of heterarchical thinking in at least four lines of heterarchical interest. The four lines ahead are derived from ‘Semantic Scholar’ search in which the term ‘decolonial’ was inserted with filters to show only papers from social sciences and administration. The full papers were read and analyzed, being categorized in the research lines mentioned below.

The first is composed of the reinterpretation of the organization concept. Bringing contributions from the decolonial movement, the concept of ‘organizations others’ contributes to assign meaning to organizations as organic instances of social mediation (rather than static entities governed by principles of efficiency and strategy) (Couto, Honorato and Silva, 2019). This concept understands that organizations do not follow generic, neutral, and universal models, but manifest themselves in different ways, following their own logic, considering local cultural and historical particularities (Couto and
Carrieri, 2018; Palhares, Couto and Carrieri, 2018). The power exercised over the individual in these organizations is delegated and derives directly from the legitimacy voluntarily conceived by the persons who compose the collectivity (Couto, Palhares and Carrieri, 2020).

Understanding this new frame of organizational phenomenon demands capturing them in their place of events, through their ordinary, everyday, habitual and improvised movement. ‘Organizations Others’ (such as urban resistance movements or indigenous set of practices in a given community), follow their own local logic, customs, habits and praxis (Couto, Honorato and Silva, 2019). Organizations are a legitimate locus for the exercise of recognition of the other, a space of proximity and human contact. In these contexts, the researcher’s job will never be to speak for the other (victim), but to the other; their job is to listen to the victims’ community and produce research programs that allow them to understand the causes and rationales for the exclusion/oppression of vulnerable groups. Next, their job is to universalize this knowledge so that the victim community can develop their critical thinking. Only the colonized can ponder their own happiness and liberation (Couto and Carrieri, 2018).

The second line of heterarchical interest concerns the reinterpretation of the history of economic development in colonized nations and management organizational knowledge (MOK). Studies of this nature have focused on the historical turn and the reinterpretation of facts through another geopolitics of knowledge (Wanderley and Barros, 2018). The intention is to demonstrate that the Third World can appropriate Northern concepts and transform them to their own realities, without being catechized or becoming a mimicry copy of the colonizer. In Brazil, concepts from important local thinkers such as Oswald de Andrade’s Anthropophagy and Guerreiro Ramos’ Sociological Reduction acquire centrality in local studies regarding concepts related to MOK (Wanderley and Bauer, 2020).

With this exercise, Brazilian organizational studies have opposed key ideas of neoliberal thought. National studies of the Cold War and its implications for the ideological struggle for control of the world have demonstrated how capitalism was introduced directly through financing military dictatorships in
Latin America and Africa; or indirectly through the political intervention of large multinational corporations over the years (Wanderley, 2015). Scholars have retrieved dependency studies carried out by Celso Furtado and Raúl Prebisch at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (eCLAC), which aimed to analyze the center-periphery movement, and constituted a base of rebellious thinking that recentralizes the role of the State and State Enterprises in the construction of industrial structures and development Latin economy (Wanderley and Faria, 2013).

The third line of heterarchical interest concerns the reinterpretation of consumption, technology, and changes in the natural environment. Decolonial studies have questioned the sustainability of production relations both in terms of balance with the natural environment and in relation to its capacity to absorb and include all workers, especially given the context of wealth and technology accumulation in colonizing nations (Faria and Hemais, 2020). The reinterpretation of the man-nature relationship is at the heart of these studies, which seek to overcome the idea of ‘nature as a factor of production/accumulation’ in order to build a political ecology that substantively consider the natural environment as essential to life (Magalhães, Rabelo and Teixeira, 2019; Zanotti et al., 2020).

Some studies with this orientation analyzed: (a) boycotts practices for companies and conscientious consumption of products offered only by firms that demonstrate corporate citizenship (Hemais and Santos, 2021); (b) food production through regenerative systems (Dahlberg, 1994); (c) organizing indigenous knowledge about solidary production (Diniz, Fernandes and Monte-Mór, 2020); and (d) sustainable consumption (Myers, 2015). Recently, in ephemera, an article was published analyzing the relationship between big techs (such as Google and Apple) and the possibility of decolonizing production systems, making possible a movement to reverse climate change (Hogan, 2018).

The fourth (and most prominent) line of heterarchical interest is the intersectional reinterpretations about gender, race, and social class. Decolonial feminist literature has suggested the rewriting of the history of the organizational field, considering voices historically silenced by the racist and
sexist Western pattern — based on the premises of Christian patriarchy. Historically, women from Southern countries are portrayed as rural, sexualized and servile (Paludi, Mills and Mills, 2019). The modern binary pattern constitutes social representations of female and male and establishes gender roles that translate into the unfair sexual division of labor (Gomes, 2018).

Decolonial feminism expands the experience of the feminine into an Intersectionality that advances not only in terms of gender and race, but also cultures, religions (mystique), among other categories (Figueiredo, 2020; Oyhantcabal, 2021). The category ‘third world woman’ builds a representation of gender and race of women that covers many geographies, understanding the situational character of each one of them. Based especially on the works of Gayatri Spivak and María Lugones, decolonial feminists seek to break with the modern and binary conception of gender roles to reestablish the forgotten voices of women historically excluded from the ‘modern civilizing process’ (Paludi, Mills and Mills, 2019).

Important to notice that a quick survey on the Academy of Management archives (the largest world event on management sciences) indicates that the occurrence of research adopting decoloniality as an epistemological option has been more frequent since 2017 and concerns a multiplicity of themes (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dependency theory and reinterpretations on the History of Management and MOK</td>
<td>(Doucette, Gladstone and Carter, 2021; Wanderley, Alcadipani and Barros, 2021; Wanderley and Faria, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Administration from indigenous pedagogical experiences (or inspired by local authors)</td>
<td>(Cavalcanti, 2020; Faria, Filho and Ipiranga, 2017; Nkomo, 2015; Sauerbronn and Sauerbronn, 2018; Woods, Dell and Carroll, 2021; Zoogah, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis of modern diversity management in organizations</td>
<td>(Faria and Guedes, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist studies that analyze the various decolonial experiences of femininity</td>
<td>(Manning, 2018; 2019; 2020; Mathur, 2019)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the meaning regarding the term ‘organization’ and the critical decolonial praxis in organizational spaces (Cadete, Faria, Jack, Jammulamadaka and Ruggunan, 2020; Celano, Irigaray and Fontoura, 2019; Jammulamadaka, 2020)

The emergence of multinationals in former colonized countries (Wanderley, Faria and Guedes, 2018)

The construction of deliberative democracies, economic development and sustainability in consumption considering the different realities of Third World Countries (Banerjee, 2020; Banerjee et al., 2018; Faria, Hemais and Cooke, 2017; Faria and Hemais, 2018)

Table 2: Decolonial production in Academy of Management. Source: Academy of Management Archives.

The possibilities of heterarchical thinking are varied and are gradually being inserted in the context of academic discussion. The four lines of heterarchical interest that we have mentioned explore important research opportunities in the field, although further studies are needed to point out the authors’ ability to overcome liberal language in the ways of understanding realities and conceptualizing social structures.

When analyzing Academy of Management archives, it was possible to notice short insertion of decolonial research in international context. If we consider the global and universal character of the event, such papers express the initial insertion of heterarchical thinking in the main scientific event of Administration field, although, as can be seen in table 2, it is also clear that heterarchical thinking has only been gaining attention from Third-World researchers recently. That is, more intensely in the last five years. We believe that there is potential to deepen heterarchical discussions from beyond critical management studies (CMS), transposing decolonial findings to mainstream theories, counterposing actual meanings regarding the organization phenomena, as well as management practices.

Final remarks: The decolonizing future of organization studies

Our aim in this article was to think about possible futures for decolonial thinking in the field of organizational studies. The historical resumption of
the processes of economic, social, cultural and, above all, epistemic domination in Europe and the United States and the relegation of Latin American countries to pre-modernity and the cultural periphery poses the challenge of breaking the ties that bind us to worldviews that do not understand society in a real condition of equity. We look not only to the challenges of academic insertion from originally Latin perspectives, but also, above all, to the challenges of self-determination of peoples, cultures and subaltern practices. The complexity of decisions must respect the multiple visions and voices that echo from each world. It is about looking for a democracy of knowledge and values present in the most diverse forms of organizing. Thus, the more voices that enter the debate, the better for escaping simplification and reduction of the various peripheral interests that can and should contribute to the formation of a common world — not common in the sense of unison, but possible for all its members.

Resistance derives from epistemic decolonizing action, in which roads are opened for intercultural communication (or exchange of experiences and meanings). Decoloniality seeks to overcome Eurocentric mechanisms of dichotomization and segregation by academic, educational and social revolutions, which would take part through: (a) promoting political identities in research-teaching, and (b) rescuing, co-constructing, legitimizing and disseminating knowledge connected to multiple local realities. The decolonizing wider efforts seek to generate alternatives to modernity and build knowledge engaged with the solution of colonial problems that have been faced by academy (Abdalla and Faria, 2017).

Building a decolonial agenda demands, therefore, three actions: (a) being more concerned with reality than with theory, because reality is the source of theory production; (b) seeking daily knowledge of the latest academic literature, to the same extent that the problems of peoples, communities and nations are known; and, finally, (c) focusing more on analyzing the field work, to understand the problems where they occur — in order to facilitate possible solutions (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; 2012).

It is possible to anticipate that the future of organization studies may be marked by two possibilities: either segregation, or the integration of
heterarchical thinking within a global agenda for the knowledge production. Nowadays, decolonial production is still attached to journals from emerging countries, as well as meetings based in the same locations, as there is an invisibility (or lack of interest) on the part of the mainstream academia in relation to this type of transnational production (Ibarra-Colado, 2012). If the segregation trend is perpetuated over time, it is possible that decolonial scientific production will flourish outside the traditional circuit of scientific productions, abandoning the modern rules of science and being produced within the existing diversity of languages in the world, without the concern of necessarily be published and popularized in English language.

To build an integrative agenda for decolonial studies, it is necessary to: (a) clarify contemporary agenda of world problems, considering the complex hybridization processes that we have been experiencing for the past 500 years — the four lines of research interest presented on this paper may be helpful in this sense; (b) foster the growth of the decolonial community in each of the countries of Latin America to combat the fragmentation and isolation that makes it difficult to recognize each other; (c) encourage the use of various means of articulation that facilitate the circulation of knowledge generated in each country; (d) provide a more organic and structured presence for groups of emerging countries in international disciplinary forums; (e) put into debate the rules and forms of academic work so that they can go beyond the walls of the university, reviewing how the processes have been done in a ‘publish or perish’ way; and, finally, (f) provide a free space for ideas to flow, opening access to publications for Latin America’s dissident contributions (Ibarra-Colado, 2012).

Considering the four lines of interest in decolonial studies, future works should seek to document the stories of silenced subaltern realities, as well as to register the different currents of thought, customs, traditions and localized knowledge (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006). Specifically in relation to organizational studies, it is important to deconstruct some hegemonic ideas, such as: (a) that modern ways of organizing were invented as an indispensable device that makes different realities homogeneous; (b) modern societies are governed by the imposition of instrumental rationality, which overlap with the substantive and identity logics of the groups; (c) a rebellious behavior is
needed to provincialize Europe and USA, in order to understand the advances presented by them as spatially applied solutions (Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

At last, we can affirm that decolonial studies can bring possibilities of disruption and the emergence of heterarchical thinking that allows the denouncement of contemporary mechanisms of epistemic coloniality, especially in relation to the ways in which we interpret organizational, political and social phenomena. Its critical potency also lies in the resumption of consciousness (culturalist and valorative) of a society in relation to its own condition, allowing self-reflection about reality. We stand that heterarchical thinking can contribute to overcoming an increasingly polarized world, allowing the flourishing of several competing arenas of knowledge production, making possible an inclusive advance of science and a more democratic development for organizational studies.

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