

## **Pedagogies of resistance and solidarity: towards revolutionary and decolonial praxis**

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### **Abstract**

*In this essay, the authors examine the theories and concepts that animate several social movements across the globe. The authors are particularly interested in linking the theoretical with the pedagogical, what they refer to as the praxis of social movements. Central to this analysis is an examination of the revolutionary struggles of Latin America and the pedagogy of buen vivir / living well. The authors utilize a decolonial framework to examine social movement pedagogy and extend their analysis of the central themes of reciprocity and solidarity in buen vivir to U.S. based social movements and the emergence of solidarity economies.*

**Keywords:** buen vivir, Latin America, neoliberal subjectivity, pedagogy, reciprocity, solidarity economy.

### **Confronting the invincibility of power: occupation and the capitalist crisis**

The global financial crisis, which began in 2007, collapsed the banking industry, generated heightened rates of unemployment (from 9% in the United States to 21% in Spain (United Nations 2011)), and increased national debts, left the most alienated sectors of society to deal with the consequences of severe austerity plans. Those who took to the streets in protest, such as the global Occupy Movements, the *Indignados* in Spain, and the resistance movement in Greece, were oftentimes met with brute forms of state-military violence. The ‘state’ was under threat of collapse following decades of neoliberal economic reforms and a deregulated banking and corporate sector. By 2012, the notion that capitalist democracies (a contradiction in itself) could secure abundance and harmony for the world’s populace was a proven falsehood. The veil of equity and justice associated with democratic nations had been stripped bare. While these social movements have left their mark on the public imaginary, the tangible and concrete effects of their sustained occupation of public spaces remain limited and frequently relegated to the level of the symbolic (Ortiz, Burke, Berrada and Cortes 2013).

Recent analyses of social protests from 2006-2013 indicate that the global community is experiencing a concentrated period of ‘high’ civil disobedience (Ortiz, Burke, Berrada and Cortes, 2013). According to a report published by the *Initiative for Policy Dialogue*, a majority of protests happen in high-income countries among varied social groups that represent both middle and lower classes and differing political sectors. This, in fact, marks a new era in social movements. No longer characterized by a unified social subject, today’s wide-

scale movements include vast numbers of people who fall under the rubric of the ‘general public.’ From 2007 onward, there has been an intensification of protest linked to the economic injustices spawned by the collapse of the global financial industry and the austerity plans that followed in its tumultuous wake.

While economic inequality, job losses, and reduction of social safety nets (among other issues) reflect the most common reasons for public outrage, a growing dissatisfaction with democracy has ushered millions into the street. The interplay between economic injustice and the failure of governments to safeguard basic needs for survival of its citizens in many so-called developed nations propelled forward new forms of protest. Civil disobedience, direct action, and the occupation of public spaces defied the state’s authoritarian power and concession to the capitalist elite. Yet, an overwhelming majority of protests (63 percent) have not achieved their intended demands or short-term grievances. This does not signal a failure in and of itself. But for the purposes of this essay, it does hint towards the need to develop other forms of assessing social protest not as an acute act defined by a concrete objective but as processes that require sustenance from alternative philosophical and social schemes altogether.

In this essay, we examine the theories and concepts that animate several social movements across the globe. We are particularly interested in linking the theoretical with the pedagogical, what we refer to as the *praxis* of social movements. Our analysis is shaped by vast expressions of resistance that emerged over the last decade, with specific consideration to the revolutionary struggles of Latin America. The correspondence between Latin American struggles and those occurring in places such as the United States oftentimes goes unrecognized. The occupy movement, as one example, has taken up Latin American notions of reciprocity, solidarity, and *horizontalidad* as referents for its own pedagogical practice. Similar associations are evident in emerging solidarity economies across the U.S. This should not come as a surprise. Latin America has experienced economic crisis since its very formation, its veins opened (to paraphrase Eduardo Galeano) to exploitation from its more dominant capitalist counterparts. The region has now opened its revolutionary spirit instead, allowing those of us in the northern hemisphere to learn from the conceptual schemes and social relations that characterize acts against colonial-neoliberal capitalist exploitation.

The overriding question we engage in this essay can be framed thusly: What forms of praxis does it take to initiate (or consider) deep social transformation? Our gaze is admittedly directed in a complex and perhaps unperceivable direction, but just as the social movements and protests over the last several years have reignited the slogan ‘another world is possible,’ our curiosities have also been cut loose. We are interested in thinking about the possibilities when discrete and organized acts of protest generate new concepts and understandings about transcending the central antagonisms of capitalist society.

The protagonists of Latin American struggles are mixed-bloods, *mestizos*, female, male, indigenous, rural, urban, cultural and linguistic hybrids, workers and peasants. They represent polymorphous subjects, motivated by an

interrelated set of historical and economic relations that impact self and collective identities. Their struggles are important, not least in part because of their tenacity and resolve to confront overwhelming domination that has attacked their very core of being. Local and autonomous resistance (such as the Zapatistas) have harnessed the world's attention and inspired global movements that challenge the authority of world economic power. In other instances, Latin American mobilizations have accomplished the rewriting of constitutions to disrupt colonial-capitalist hegemony. In Bolivia and Ecuador, prolonged social struggles anchored in the philosophy of *buen vivir*/living well achieved constitutional reform to include economic, cultural, historical, transnational, intergenerational, and gendered justice (see Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo 2009). As we chart a revolutionary and decolonial praxis of social movements, we give close attention to the following interrelated issues:

1. The relationship between neoliberal capitalism and subjectivity as it pertains to the emergence of new social actors in revolutionary movements and its influence on the emergence of a pedagogy of *buen vivir*.
2. The ways in which concepts such as *buen vivir* offer alternative readings of reciprocity and solidarity and its relation to social movement pedagogy.

Our essay concludes with an in-depth examination of solidarity economies in the U.S., as they illustrate one of the more concrete outgrowths of organized resistance. In the context of the U.S., solidarity economies represent a massive undertaking to break free from capitalism's stronghold. Solidarity economies also provide a common reference point for social movement pedagogies, as organized resistance against neoliberal capitalism increasingly advocates an ethos of solidarity to establish new economies and forms of governance based on direct participation and collective struggle.

### **Latin American social movements**

Latin American social movements represent some of the most varied and complex efforts currently underway to demand reparations from the injustices periled against a continent under the historical ruse of economic development. The impact that neoliberal economic policy had on the region from the 1980s onward not only lent itself to gaping income inequalities between the wealthy oligarchy and all 'others.' It had additional enduring effects. The cultural apparatus of neoliberal doctrine extended the colonial legacy of conquest and exploitation that shaped the tragic founding of the Americas and gave rise to continued forms of racial, sexual, epistemological and gendered hierarchies, or in the words of Ramon Grosfoguel (2009), heterarchies. Put simply, neoliberal capitalism (and capitalism in its entirety) patterns the way we think, communicate, and relate to one another and our environment.

Neoliberal capitalism is the outgrowth of a historical system of economic exploitation and alienation that is entangled with relations of social stratification. In the Latin American context, wide-scale social movements are supported by popular education methods that create the conditions for participants to critique and act upon relations of dispossession. Dispossession is about the effects of capitalism on a people's economic livelihood, but it extends into other realms of sociability. The exclusion of non-Western and non-Eurocentric knowledge, human and natural relations, and cosmovisions, form part of an overarching system of dispossession that social movements contest simultaneously. Conceptually, pedagogical efforts to undo the legacy of colonial-capitalism demonstrate a pronounced attempt to delink from the conceptual apparatus of neoliberal subjectivity altogether.

### **Challenging neoliberal subjectivity and the coloniality of power**

Neoliberal subjectivity depends upon a view of the self-directing individual as the heart of decision-making (Bondi 2005). Liz Bondi (2005), in her study of psychotherapeutic practice (though she is also an academic geographer), examines the contradictions of working within "neoliberal governmentality." Psychotherapeutic practice, according to Bondi, is critiqued as overwhelmingly individualizing and de-politicized. Many of its advocates, however, see their work as empowering and politically subversive. A point shared by political activists as well.

Bondi does not assume an either/or position. She does, however, shed light on the paradox of neoliberal governmentality that "obliges us to be free" (2005, 512). On this point, she is worth quoting in extenso

The model of human subjectivity associated with neoliberal governmentality is deeply problematic...neoliberal subjectivity does not inevitably generate subjects oriented solely to the narcissistic gratification of individual desires via market opportunities. Indeed aspects of neoliberal subjectivity hold attractions for political activists because activism depends, at least to some extent, on belief in the existence of forms of subjectivity that enable people to make choices about their lives. (499)

Within neoliberal subjectivity, the individual, considered a rational being capable of seeing through the fallacy of market principles rooted in freedom of choice, becomes the central figure to contest capitalist exploitation. This, in fact, has been the cornerstone of theories of resistance. We can trace this inception to anti-capitalist provocateurs Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848/2014), who advocated for a conception of the individual and working classes as the 'engine' of history. Through negation of the capital-labor relation, workers were conceived as subjects with the ultimate capacity (power) to transform society from one based upon human alienation to human development. Or as Marx

would say, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (1875). Marx defined revolutionary practice as “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change” (Cited in Lebowitz 2007). In other words, we develop our capacities and capabilities through our activity, and as a consequence of self-change we change the circumstances in which we live and labor. That is, we change ourselves through our activity (Jaramillo 2012).

When we consider the recuperation of factories in Argentina following the economic collapse of the country in 2002, or the establishment of worker-run cooperatives during the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela (see Lebowitz 2010), we take notice of the primacy of place given to workers’ developing skills and habits of mind to subvert the capital-labor relation. Recruiting the historically dispossessed into active self-management builds upon neoliberal conceptions of individual freedom. Bondi refers to this as “neoliberal left ideology” (2005, p. 504). Empowerment as the practice of self-governance is seen as a way for subjects to work for themselves, to make them *free*.

From wide scale social movements in Latin America such as Bolivia, Ecuador and the autonomous communities of southern Mexico, neoliberal subjectivity is challenged on multiple dimensions. Social subjects have emerged that extend our understanding of neoliberal subjectivity through the lens of coloniality. Comprised of multi-ethnic, multi-vocal, peasant and indigenous peoples, social struggle is characterized by conceptual frameworks that uphold collective wellbeing (as opposed to individual rationality) as the centerpiece to transcending capitalist relations. In the context of Ecuador and Bolivia, such efforts stem from the indigenous concepts Sumak Qamaña and Sumak Kawsay, Kichwa and Aymara terms respectively. Loosely translated as *buen vivir* or living well, Sumak Qamaña and Sumak Kawsay propel a new social subject forward and redefine the very meaning of freedom.

Both Sumak Qamaña and Sumak Kawsay establish collective wellbeing as a centerpiece to social transformation. The focus is on understanding the interconnectedness of subjectivity, linking “economics with the political, socio-cultural, and environmental spheres, as well as in the necessities, capacities, and potentialities of human beings” (Walsh 2010, 16). In recognizing the relationship between the economic structure of society and all other forms of human sociability, indigenous epistemologies disrupt conventional theoretical dichotomies (i.e. class struggle versus ethnic, gendered, sexual, racial or environmental struggle) and advance a holistic rendering of social life. Self-change, in this instance, is about self-recuperation. The recuperation of sociability that has been rendered nearly obsolete through conquest, militarism, exploitation, and the alienation of subaltern knowledge(s).

### **Against neoliberal subjectivity: pedagogy of *buen vivir***

The *pedagogy of buen vivir* emerged following decades of social struggle against colonial-capitalist domination. In Bolivia, it began in the 1960s through

wide-scale literacy campaigns that addressed the lack of formal education among the indigent underclass. Literacy campaigns are a common practice for political empowerment among Latin American social movements altogether. We recall that a community's need for historical literacy is what brought Subcomandante Marcos to the Lancandon jungle in the early 1980s in the role of teacher to instruct a cadre of six indigenous leaders. The people had requested teachings in literacy and Mexican history to develop what they called *la palabra politica*, the political word (Higgins 2004). Yet, as the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire made clear, literacy as a transformative praxis requires a reading of the word through a reading of the world (Freire 1972). In the context of popular indigenous uprisings, the reading of the world was based on an embodied recollection of the sensations, affect, spirit, and oral traditions that communicate historical memory embedded in land-based traditions. This was a lesson that Marcos quickly learned among the Zapatistas, compelling him to reorient his conceptual understanding and pedagogical practice. It so follows, the initial efforts in popular education to teach people 'how-to-read' across Latin America had to move from a linear and uni-directional act of teaching into educative spaces of dialogue. Here, the role of listening as a pedagogical act becomes central.

The onset of military dictatorships in Bolivia and the Latin American region in the 1970s brought a wave of repression that systematically eradicated the potential of opposition movements that had organized against capitalist exploitation. The bloodied attacks against all forms of leftist ideas and influence forcibly silenced many worker-based movements, and gave license to the Chicago Boys of the Friedman ilk to experiment with neoliberal economic policy, ultimately transforming the state into an apparatus for transnational capital. Neoliberalism's impact on human subjectivity proved difficult to break in the years that followed, as the tropes of individualism, greed, and consumption became part of the nation's collective consciousness. Social antagonisms regenerate and gain power within the death-world of neoliberal capital, as the politics of life hinges on either being an asset or casualty to the logic of economic power. Popular education would undergo another transition, as the discourse of worker's organization and rights (largely attributed to Soviet traditions) had been systematically torn down.

From the 1980s forward, popular education was characterized by deep dialogue that allowed for the visions and narratives of subaltern groups to emerge as organizing principles of resistance. This took place in an era of "cultural expressionism" that followed the end of military dictatorships (Terrazas 2011). Pedagogically, popular education was driven by the needs of communities. The need to restore sustainable ways of life was steered by the humility required of educators to listen to the other and accept that it was possible for many worlds to fit in this one (Terrazas 2011). It is not sufficient simply to listen to the other as an act of recognition. Dialogic listening is about accepting different rationalities in the construction of knowledge. In the act of listening, *buen vivir* emerges as a central paradigm shift that implies a deep criticism of neoliberal subjectivity.

Constructing collective knowledge relies upon the strengthening of class-consciousness that reinforces the class character of social actors. This is often understood as the language of critique in critical pedagogical practice. Developing the analytical categories that allow for a critique of capitalist exploitation and alienation is important, but in *buen vivir*, critique is accompanied by a radical questioning outside of developmentalist paradigms. As noted by Eduardo Gudynas, radical questioning within the indigenous traditions of *buen vivir* was made possible by a culture that lacked concepts like development or progress (2011). The pedagogy of *buen vivir* ultimately strives for a post-capitalist alternative, and this is made possible by two interrelated constructs. On the one hand, dialogue ushers a critique of neoliberal capitalism and subjectivity. And on the other axis of dialogue, an emancipatory politics emerges from the ethical-moral commitments of indigenous, non-developmental epistemology. Constructing collective knowledge through dialogue strengthens political identities and sets forward a liberatory practice based upon the rubric of living well as opposed to living better at the expense of others and nature. The vision is transcendental. In negating the logic of growth as development, individualism as freedom, and self-activity as the organizing principle of change, the pedagogy of *buen vivir* prioritizes life. As stated by Catherine Walsh, in the pedagogy of *buen vivir*, “Principles and base of struggle and transformation are no longer simply about identity, access, recognition or rights, but about perspectives of knowledge that have to do with the model and logic of LIFE itself” (Walsh 2011, 51).

*Buen Vivir* is a multilayered approach to recognize and address the entanglement of social realities. It represents a way of understanding the world as the configuration of an array of relationships, a way of life, and addresses the capacity we have to participate and alter the course of history (Macas 2010). *Buen vivir* transcends the ontological split of the ‘subject’ of Western rationality, with a focus on complementarity and the convergence of strengths between women and men (Macas 2010). In doing so, indigenous led struggles are simultaneously acts for direct restitution from colonial capitalism, but they also represent efforts to contest the coloniality of power (see Quijano 2000) that has shaped racial, epistemic, cultural, sexual, gendered, anthropocentric relations within the onset of capitalism as a colonizing process. Within the coloniality of power asymmetrical relations of power are recognized as byproducts and the active constitution of a global capitalist society that began with the 15<sup>th</sup> century conquest of the Americas. Proponents of decolonial thought emphasize the geopolitics of knowledge and a body politics of knowledge in their production of systems of intelligibility. As such, the decolonial school supports the production of knowledges from below, that is, knowledges produced by subalternized and inferiorized subjects (Jaramillo, McLaren and Lazaro 2011).

Methodologically, *buen vivir* translates to an array of practices based in communities, and allows for the visions, values and traditions of subaltern groups to shape the aims of the social movement. Based upon this alternative way of conceptualizing social life and relations, the pedagogy of *buen vivir* has resulted in two major frameworks. First, there is the framework of justice,

where the concept of ‘rights’ undergirds the objectives of social movement practice. The aim here is to transform dominant institutional arrangements by incorporating the rights of indigenous knowledge (Walsh 2010). Justice is thus amplified to include the rights of nature, culture, autonomy, and equity among men and women. The other framework has to do with the ethical commitments of *buen vivir* that opens the space for pluriversal conceptions of knowledge and ways of life (Gudynas 2011). In this sense, the struggle for autonomy and creating the conditions for localized formations of sustainable living take precedence. On this note we are reminded of what John Holloway (2010) refers to as the “cracks” of capitalism.

Social movements that work within neoliberal subjectivity and those that spring from the periphery of developmentalist paradigms provide us with an opportunity to interrogate the conditions that foster the emergence of new social practices. Our aim is to bring these forms in conversation with one another as they reveal the complexity of profound transformation within existing economic structures. While impossible to examine in great lengths the multiple and overlapping practices that characterize new social movements, our attention is directed to the tropes of reciprocity and solidarity that figure centrally in this potentially revolutionary conjecture.

### **Reciprocity and solidarity: widening the scope of social movement pedagogy**

The pedagogical model of *buen vivir* derives from a concept of reciprocity that precedes capitalist formations. It was key to social organization pre-conquest, connected to an ethical value system based on giving and receiving. Reciprocity is a socio-cultural form of praxis and an ideological construction evidenced in the mantra “dar, recibir y devolver” (give, return, and give back) (Quispe 2012, 161). The social movements of Bolivia and Ecuador recuperate reciprocity from the legacy of colonial exploitation by demanding that the state redistribute goods based on necessity (Quispe 2012). Within these movements heterarchies are contested as a more complete view of life is moved forward through decolonial conceptual terms. Reciprocity underscores a set of practices that requires the other or others to make an equivalent response and it is meant to be a permanent relation inclusive of all members of the community (Myer, Kirwin and Toober, 2010, 389). Reciprocity is a “model constructed from below and is based on territorial and educational control, self-sustainable development, care of the environment, reciprocity and solidarity, and the strengthening of communal organizations, languages, and cultures” (Meyer, Kirwin and Toober, 2010, p. 393). Here, we are reminded that “our activism must be embedded within, and never separate itself from, the multivoiced hemispheric conversation on resistance, hope, and renewal” (Ibid., 397).

As communitarian praxis, reciprocity considers woman and man not solely as a work force, but principally as being with knowledge, beliefs, and thinking. Put plainly, reciprocity advances an integral subject (Quispe 2012, 169). Notions of



individual freedom, will, and choice are replaced by a holistic rendering of social life that emphasizes interdependence and interconnectedness. Reciprocity within this decolonial frame is an important counterpoint to the Western subject that equates reciprocity with social cooperation. Proponents of reciprocity as cooperation rely on notions of fairness that are presumably secured by property-dependent democracy. Within western epistemological frameworks, reciprocity is understood as a necessary component to a well-ordered society (Brooks 2012). As a form of political justice, reciprocity depends upon citizens who can build towards a common political identity. This is most evident in Rawlsian notions of justice that undergird “property-owning democracies” (Brooks 2012, 21).

When the fundamental relations of capital are neither contested nor condemned, reciprocity emerges as a form of “mutual recognition.” Within this societal framework, it is understood that economic inequality subverts democracy altogether given that citizens who do not have basic needs met are unable to be seen or heard on equal terms. Economic inequality is seen as a threat to political bonds that limits the possibility of achieving consensus through public reason (Brooks 2012). The need to establish acceptance and respect for others thus depends upon a basic measure of equality where the other is recognized for having a voice worthy of being heard.

If we extend this understanding of reciprocity (as mutual recognition) to the practice of sustained protest as evidenced in the Occupy Movement in the US, then a more critical view of the emphasis placed on horizontal spaces of freedom is disclosed. The occupation movement set forward a range of social practices that include recovery of public space, the implementation of human microphones, decision-making via consensus, and the organization of social practices to ensure that its participants’ basic needs are met. Philosophically, occupy pedagogy is oriented towards *horizontalidad*, a concept inspired by workers who engaged in long-term political protest following the economic collapse of Argentina in 2002 (Sitrin 2011).

Horizontalidad forms a new kind of ideological framework that emphasizes social and individual autonomy, the use of direct democracy and the application of processes “in which everyone is heard and new relationships are created” (Sitrin as cited in Marcus 2012, 4). Marina Sitrin conceives of horizontalidad as a “living word” that foments social relationships based upon a flat plane upon which to communicate (Sitrin 2006). The practice of self-management and autonomous organization fulfills a horizontalist ethos. This ethos “believes that revolution will begin by transforming our everyday lives” (Marcus 2012, 5). Local debates, decentralized circuits of exchange and deliberation, voluntary association, and loose networks of affinity groups propose a way of acting and thinking as if one is already free. Here, individual agency is stressed in the pursuit of freedom, dignity and political voice. Connected to a new experience in which cooperation and mutual recognition is upheld, the social subjects of occupy movements pursue self-management on the premise that autonomous

social organizations function best when the state is absent from everyday decisions.

Horizontalidad as the exercise of free will and self-management is intrinsically connected to neoliberal subjectivity. It could be argued that horizontalidad, a deeply anti-institutional framework, approaches a type of free-market leftism. Our intent here is not to place Western notions of horizontalidad and reciprocity in opposition to pedagogies of *buen vivir* that advocate for reciprocal practices based on holistic, historical, and decolonial renderings of social life. We focus on the epistemological particularities of these frameworks as they indicate the complexity of detaching from the conceptual apparatus of neoliberal capitalism in the pursuit of alternative social and institutional formations. The point here is to underscore the intimate relationship between productive economic relations and epistemological frameworks that guide social practice. Here we are reminded by a question posed by critical educator John Holst who asks, “How do we understand pedagogically the objectively revolutionary demands that are not always understood subjectively as revolutionary?” (2011, 125).

Bridging the subjective and objective dimensions of revolutionary efforts is multilayered and difficult to ascertain. Pedagogy is a generalized term that covers the roles of social movement participants, their aims, ideas, and the philosophies that undergird everyday practice. It is easier – to some extent – to quantify objective revolutionary demands. Organizing to meet participants’ basic needs or strategizing to achieve political demands, for example, reflect tangible and concrete efforts. It is more difficult to ascertain the subjective conditions that reflect profound shifts towards revolutionary consciousness. Granted, a movement’s participants define the terms of revolution. Yet we need to remain aware that actions do not precede subjectivity. They are dialectically intertwined, embedded within larger social and historical apparatuses that guide the very ideas and acts that we in turn label transformative.

The movements that we have discussed thus far are relatively new, experimental, and replete with hope and possibility. The concepts that animate their social practice, aims, and visions differ in significant ways but also reflect a shared pedagogy of refusal. Across northern and southern continents, the protagonists of today’s social movements refuse to accept gaping inequality and alienating economic, cultural, and political relations. They also do not stand in isolation. Efforts to develop social relations predicated on solidarity, mutualism, reciprocity and cooperation have been underway since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is perhaps best evidenced by solidarity economies; forms of economic and political organization that attempt to create communal economic and social practices outside of capitalism’s value form.

### **Solidarity economy: origins and definitions**

The *solidarity economy*, at its core, is rooted in principles that prioritize life forms over profit within economic structures (i.e., production, exchange, and consumption). Principles of a solidarity economy include: solidarity, mutualism,

cooperation, reciprocity, sustainability, an emphasis on human dignity and the environment, and democratic forms of decision-making. While one or many of these principles connect the various initiatives that fall under the umbrella of a “solidarity economy”, the complexities of this framework are visible in both the multiple origins of these practices and the diverse definitions practitioners and scholars assign to the concept.

In the words of Ethan Miller, the origins of a “solidarity economy” as social organization date back to 1937 “when Felipe Alaiz advocated for the construction of an *economía solidaria* between worker collectives in urban and rural areas during the Spanish Civil War” (Miller 2010, 2). The Mondragon Cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain, which has its origins in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, remains one of the most well known and long lasting cooperative systems. According to George Cheney, the Mondragon system “grew out of fifteen years of small-group discussion and analysis (1941-1956), with the guidance of a Basque priest, Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, and the active involvement of five young engineers” (Cheney 1995, 187). Father Arizmendi (as he is often referred) envisioned the cooperative system as a “‘third way’ between the options of unbridled capitalism and centralized socialism that preserved individual economic incentive while emphasizing collective commitment and goals” (Cheney 1995, 187). Larraitz Altuna-Gabilondo comments on Father Arizmendi’s philosophy of solidarity economy thusly:

solidarity is characterized as a common good. A moral virtue, something on a par with equality and freedom. Solidarity is a human responsibility. The commitment to solidarity is something expansive, it has no limit and it has to proceed from the nearest to the farthest: among workers, from producers to consumers, from savers to investors, from one economic sector to another, from industry to the countryside, from one generation to another, and so on. In his view, solidarity has a strong link with its peer fraternity or brotherhood, which appeals to those who are close by and somehow connected. So, the different others are neither in conflict nor separated. They appear integrated into the same framework of understanding. (Altuna-Gabilondo 2013)

Arizmendi’s ethic of fraternity and his focus on the interconnections between social actors resonate with philosophies of liberation that emphasize ethics in paradigms for social transformation (see Maldonado-Torres 2012). The plight of industrial capitalism alters notions of solidarity as human responsibility when ownership of the means of production takes a central role. This is the case in the context of Latin America where solidarity economies emerged primarily in the 1980s as a counterpoint to the devastating effects of massive unemployment and social exclusion. Here, we begin to see a shift in the conceptualization of solidarity economies as a movement driven by the need to meet basic worker demands.

To organize and achieve worker demands, a pedagogy of empowerment was put

into place. Ana Margarida Esteves (2013), in her examination of the solidarity economy in Brazil, highlights two pedagogical dimensions in particular. Esteves discusses the work of popular educators to promote both economic and political empowerment. To achieve economic empowerment, workers were encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the creation of self-managed production units. For political empowerment, workers developed the knowledge of structural economic oppression to drive the collective action necessary for change. Together, economic and political empowerment form an overarching critical literacy that joins the construction of ‘ideas’ about social reality with ‘actions’ to undo systems of exploitation. The iteration between thought processes and social acts echoes the underlying philosophy of critical consciousness attributed to Freire. Critical consciousness is not the root or precondition of social transformation but the byproduct of living one’s commitment ethically and corporeally. The solidarity economy, with its focus on actively creating concrete practices of collaboration, reflects the principle that we educate ourselves with others.

Ethically and politically, the solidarity economy emerged from diverse enterprises that “share a common ‘economic rationality’ of cooperation and solidarity” (Miller 2010, 2). Like many of the prolonged social movements against colonial-capitalist exploitation, it also fails to fulfill a singular definition or characterization. For some, solidarity economy is a strategy of economic liberation and for others it implies other forms of sociability that broaden the scope of liberation altogether. It has emerged from a common source of struggle against economic domination and exploitation and attempts to enact values and commitments outside the logic of capital.

### **Solidarity economy in the United States**

In his 2009 report of the first national gathering of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, Carl Davidson quotes Elandria Williams, activist and staff member for the Highlander Research and Educational Center, as saying, “We’ve been engaged in the solidarity economy for our survival for a long time. We just never applied that name to it” (Davidson 2009). One can argue that, historically, there have been countless examples of initiatives forged by people who made a conscious effort to work and live based on principles of cooperation, mutualism, and sustainability.

Despite the newness of the term within the U.S., there have been expressions of ideals at the core of the solidarity economy throughout U.S. history. These expressions arise from historical moments in which people have responded to their circumstances and mobilized to change their situations by relying on specific values of cooperation. Early examples include American communal experiments during the 1800s, such as Brook Farm and Fruitlands in Massachusetts and New Harmony in Indiana. While these utopian experiments did not last, they reflect moments when people came together with the intent of living and working together based on values of cooperation and communalism.

Other examples include farmer's alliances and forms of cooperativism during the Populist movement. Worker and consumer cooperatives have arguably been around for generations.

Jessica Gordon Nembhard's and Ajowa Nzinga Ifateyo's article "African American Economic Solidarity" provides other examples that highlight the role of racial struggle in the histories of cooperativism. Nembhard and Ifateyo note, "African Americans have a strong but often hidden history of economic solidarity—of building cooperative enterprises in response to market failure, poverty and marginalization" (2006, 24). They recall moments in history when African Americans started cooperative enterprises, such as the establishment of a cooperative shipyard, the Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company, in Baltimore during the 1860s, as well as cooperative meat markets in Memphis in 1919, operated by the Citizen's Co-operative Society. Among other projects was the Young Negro Cooperative League in New York, Chicago, New Orleans, and other cities in the 1930s, as well as the Consumer's Cooperative Trading Company in Gary, Indiana during the 1930s. The authors also mention Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), a worker-owned cooperative of primarily Black and Latina women, which was established in the 1980s in the South Bronx. These are only a few examples of initiatives that sprung up over the course of history from communities of color. While these examples did not explicitly identify as "solidarity economy" practices, they do reflect values at the core of this contemporary framework and provide historical context to a growing movement in the present.

One of the main actors of this growing national solidarity economy is the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (SEN). The SEN has its origins in the World Social Forum and specifically, its regional forums. With its connection to the global justice movement, the solidarity economy can be viewed as a "movement of movements" (Miller 2010: 1). It brings together different social movements, such as labor and environmental movements, under a unifying dedication to a more people-centered way of doing economics and creating livelihoods. Importantly, the growing solidarity economy in the U.S. emphasizes the importance of diversity in practice. According to proponents of the U.S. solidarity economy,

Yet this desire not to squelch diversity in order to achieve a comfortable and homogenous uniformity, but rather to consciously pursue a bottom-up approach, is part of the very ethic of solidarity economy. It is a framework of practices held together by values, in contrast to the abstract theoretical models of socialist alternatives to capitalism that describe egalitarian, oppression-free utopias. These utopias always seem disappointingly out of reach, but the solidarity economy framework has evolved to describe and make visible the plethora of actually existing economic alternatives that are growing up all around us, in the midst of neoliberal capitalism. The solidarity economy framework allows for and values diversity, and honors local knowledge. (Allard and Matthaei 2008, 6-7)

Through this emphasis on pluralism, there appears to be a strategic effort to allow for collaboration, dialogue, and a vision for a unifying framework that allows for economic practices that are influenced by local contexts, such as specific cultural factors and needs of local communities.

Social movements, in all their complexities, are sites of knowledge production. In order to sustain a movement, there needs to be room for self-reflection and evaluation of context. Among many elements, this involves evaluating the next steps to take based on opportunities that arise, as well as the environment within which actors are mobilizing. The solidarity economy movement is no different. In addition to public policy work and research in academic and activist circles, mapping projects, which highlight and provide geographical locations of various solidarity economy initiatives,<sup>1</sup> are effective tools in producing knowledge, increasing visibility, and helping to build a movement. These mapping projects, which include a diversity of technologies, are useful for solidarity economy practitioners (i.e., networking) and researchers (i.e., awareness and gaining support).<sup>2</sup> Such knowledge production serves other purposes beyond increasing visibility. They reveal the transformative potential of applying concepts such as solidarity and reciprocity to the technological realm, creating additional conditions for power to disperse and knowledge to develop, among a collective network.

### **The pedagogical implications of solidarity economies**

From historical and emergent solidarity economies in Latin America and the United States, a broad ethical and political foundation emerges to inform revolutionary social movement pedagogy. Euclides Mance (2011), in his discussion of solidarity economies as “well-living,” recuperates several of the commitments set forward in the pedagogy of *buen vivir*. Mance writes,

From an ethical perspective, Solidarity Economy should ensure the economic means to the ethical and ecologically sustainable fulfillment of the public and private freedoms of all the people in a way that promotes the ‘well living’ of each one of them, as well as of all humanity. From a political perspective, it should promote equality of rights and decision-making power in the economic sphere for all the people. In other words, it should effectively democratize the economic sphere, ensuring the self-management of enterprises and other economic initiatives by workers and their communities (3-4).

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of solidarity economy initiatives include cooperatives (worker, consumer, housing, etc.), fair trade, eco-villages, community supported agriculture (CSAs), participatory budgeting, bartering systems, and more. For more examples, see: <http://www.ussen.org/solidarity/what>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about mapping projects and specific web-based tools, see Emily Kawano’s essay “Mapping and Economic Integration” on SEN’s website: <http://ussen.org/mapping-economic-integration>

Mance goes on to illustrate the methods of internal democracy that rely on one member, one vote, participation in deliberative and consultative bodies, egalitarian participation of male and female associates, circulation of coordinating functions, collective property of the main means of production, practices of reciprocity and mutual help and a focus on network based flows. The collaborative, horizontal, and solidarity based processes of liberation are understood as “phenomena of inter subjectivity and of historical transformation of concrete relations” (Mance 2011, 8). In this way, solidarity economies approach the ethical commitment of living well based upon plural and historical conceptions of the social as an interrelated set of economic, political and cultural relations. Liberation is pursued for those participating in the immediate construction of an-other society but is also recognized as a permanent process for the creation of a post-capitalist alternative. As such, the pedagogical acts that generate horizontal decision-making and mutually productive economic relations are fundamentally activities rather than a contemplation of abstract concepts. In this way, they approach what Boaventura de Santos (2009) refers to as an *acto in proximis*, meaning that the pedagogy in question must have a practical effect in the world. But such acts or forms of praxis need something to give the emancipatory act not only ballast but direction. That is, it must also be implicated in an *acto in distans*, or the utopian aspect of pedagogy directed towards social transformation. An *acto in distans* is the larger movement within these forms of praxis towards a post-capitalist alternative built upon the principles of living well, solidarity, and reciprocity (see Jaramillo, Ryoo and McLaren 2012).

From the work of popular educators in solidarity economies or those who advance the pedagogy of buen vivir throughout Latin America, we glean an understanding of the engagement among participants for social transformation. But it is impossible to discuss the pedagogy of these social movements in singular terms. There is no how-to manual. There are no set rules of engagement. Solidarity economies and the Latin American struggle for buen vivir are varied in form and content. The social actors, histories, and material conditions of each setting animate them. Our intent in this essay has been to reveal the theoretical guideposts that anchor relations among participants and the aims and objectives of each social struggle. They converge by a shared ethical commitment to individual and collective humanity, to dialogue, to reciprocity and solidarity, and to the active listening of subaltern knowledge(s). Together, they change “the terms of the conversation” (Mignolo as cited in Motta, 2013) of resistance to produce emancipatory knowledge(s). As Sara Motta writes, the production of emancipatory knowledge(s) “involves shifting our focus to the subjects of knowledge construction and reconceptualizing the nature of intellectual production in a ways that overcomes the epistemological politics of capitalist coloniality” (2013, 7). For emancipatory knowledge(s) to emerge and transformational practice to follow, educators-activists-participants need to continuously reflect upon their practice and ask the questions: what are the philosophies and knowledge(s) that provide direction for our pedagogical acts? What, in fact, is the

philosophy of praxis?

## Conclusion

In all likelihood, protests and alternative social movements will not abate in the foreseeable future. And the questions that emerge from new social protests should challenge us to consider further the relationship between the system that we oppose and the way in which it shapes our opposing acts. Transcending the enduring logic of colonial neoliberal capitalism is a dialectical, interdependent, and ongoing process. There is clearly no one-way to sustain or enact the vision of revolutionary and decolonial social movements. The vision is pluriversal. We can say, however, that the active production of solidarity and reciprocity in current social movements stems from a collective rage. It is a rage against helplessness.

The global community is coming into a new phase of neoliberal policy reform that will indefinitely alter its ability to confront injustice. Whereas neoliberal policies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century established the corporation as ‘individual’, neoliberalism as projected through free trade agreements such as Transnational Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) extend corporate rights over national rights. Recent negotiations between the European Union and the United States on TTIP signal a particularly daunting era of neoliberal reform that will most likely inform future social uprisings. Though in a nascent policy stage, TTIP, if passed, will remove regulatory differences between European nations and the US. Yet most disturbingly, TTIP establishes investor-state dispute rules that allow corporations to contest nations’ laws and policies that limit corporate rights over social welfare (Lennard 2014; Monbiot 2013). The idea of offshore tribunals, presided by the very same lawyers (turned judges) that represent corporate entities underscore an egregious assault on the notion of democracy and sovereignty. These changes will continue to shape social movements in the years ahead, and for such reasons, it becomes particularly pertinent to examine in greater depth movements that have or are in the process of articulating alternatives to the presiding social order.

Revolutionary and decolonial praxis is fomenting within communities and across nations, revealing new concepts and practices to challenge colonial-neoliberal capitalism. From Latin America we garner a sense of radical hope as we witness the *possibility* of another society in the making, predicated on collective wellbeing. In the Occupy movements, we hear the chants of members of society who challenge the death-world of exploitation in pursuit of a life-world rife with cooperation and solidarity. In solidarity economies, we see attempts to reconcile local needs and knowledge with an overarching economic structure that could be sustainable. Across these scenarios, emancipatory philosophies and subaltern epistemologies offer us opportunities for reflection and inspire our radical imaginations. Whether through the human microphone in Zucotti park, the rhythms of marching feet in the lowland provinces of Bolivia, the anger-filled mantras in Syntagma square, or the parliamentary chambers of



Ecuador, we recognize that objecting neoliberal capitalism is only one dimension to the profound processes of transformation. Our struggle is multi-pronged, and it necessitates conceptual, philosophical, and epistemological shifts to our understanding of the social.

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Critical pedagogies of place draw attention to the role that power plays in denying and creating place; and in shaping individual's statuses within spatial locations. This means that relationships of power and domination are inscribed in material spaces because places are social constructions shaped by ideologies, hierarchies and experiences. Dichotomizing resisters and dominators ignores the complexity of resistance and ignores the existence of multiple systems of hierarchy. It ignores the possibility that individuals can be simultaneously powerful/agentive, and powerless/oppressed within different systems. It fell to teachers (like Leslie and Dina) to contribute towards attempting to eradicate economic injustice. Pedagogies of resistance and solidarity: Towards revolutionary and decolonial praxis. N Jaramillo. M Carreon. Using stories of citizens' resistance to legalized authority, the authors propose that the act of storytelling extends temporally and socially what might otherwise be an individual, discrete, and ephemeral transaction. Adopting a concept of power as a contingent outcome in a social transaction, they emphasize that not only dominant, institutionalized power but also resistance to institutionalized authority draws from a common pool of sociocultural resources, including symbolic, linguistic, organizational, and material phenomena. This pedagogy seeks the twin objectives of decolonization and "rehabilitation" through synthesizing critical and place-based approaches. A critical pedagogy of place challenges all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations. "Place + people = politics."-Williams (2001, p. 3). In this article I analyze and synthesize elements of two distinct literatures, critical pedagogy and place-based education, and argue that their convergence into a critical pedagogy of

