Participation and Recognition in Social Research

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Latin American participatory research and critical theory of the Frankfurt School are rarely associated with one another, and also have not had effective dialogues that would allow mutual enrichments. This article, however, highlights some elective affinities between them in order to explore new resources for research and social engagement. Its focus relies on the question of the attitude of the researcher and the languages that allow articulating perceptions of injustice. After reviewing intuitions and proposals from the foundational period in critical theory and the tradition of participatory research, the text examines within these traditions the difficult question of the origin of normative principles that can serve as immanent criteria of judgement in analyses of reality. Finally it takes the proposed renewal of critical theory through the recovery of the language of recognition, according to Honneth, to ask if it could contribute to participatory research today.

Key words: participatory research, critical theory, citizenship, emancipation

Latin American participatory research and critical theory of the Frankfurt School are rarely associated with one another, and have also not had many effective dialogues that would allow mutual enrichments. In this article I would like to highlight some elective affinities between both in order to explore new resources for social research and engagement. The emphasis is not on finding equivalence in concepts or in a theoretical framework, but on

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the question of the attitude of the researcher and the languages that allow people to articulate their perceptions of injustice.

The text consists of three parts. First, there are rescued intuitions and commitments expressed by some of the foremost exponents of the foundational period of participatory research in Latin America. Apart from their critique of pretensions of neutrality in traditional positivist research, the authors emphasise the political nature of their engagement as well as their opposition to the current structure of society.

Secondly, the discussion centres on the question about how the two theoretical traditions see the status of knowledge of the social groups living in situations of dependence or under domination. This topic seems particularly privileged to understand how seriously the democratic commitment to a relationship between equals is taken. Among the romantic enthronement of the knowledge of oppressed social groups and the vanguardist temptation of educating the masses, dialogue is highlighted as the proposal of the two theoretical schools.

Finally, two recent developments in the interface between the theoretical critical reflection and the political engagement of intellectuals are discussed. On the one hand, from critical theory the issue of recognition is maintained as a central topic. On the other, many aspirations and struggles were grouped around the idea of citizenship. Apparently both developments correspond more to languages that allow normative evaluations of concrete social situations, and to articulate perceptions of injustice than concepts that need to be thoroughly defined. The main issue is the question of the displacement of the formation of value judgements in science: from its rational-cognitive to pre-reflexive moments.

Putting research at the service of social transformation

Participatory research in Latin America arose in different contexts, and has been developed over a long period of time. In this sense it would be excessive to describe it as a monolithic unity; it never got to be a unified school. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics that make various experiments fit

without difficulty under this common name, assumed by the protagonists. Three of them are discussed here.

In the turbulent 1960s, the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Latin America, as well as an important part of youth groups linked to it, took stronger notice of existing poverty and misery in the subcontinent. Besides internal factors such as the Second Vatican Council, impulses came also from the Protestant churches, specially the World Council of Churches and a plurality of Latin American church-related movements. In 1962, for example, Protestant churches held a conference with the title *Christ and the Brazilian revolutionary process*. With this conference, Protestantism placed a milestone in the engagement of churches in social issues for the decades that would follow. Protestants and Catholics began a review of their theology, involving it in a reflection on the reality experienced by the population. And this reality was mostly characterised by hunger and poverty, by domination and exploitation. As the Roman church at the time was congregating approximately 90% of the Brazilian population and a similar proportion in other countries, the impact of its politicisation was very strong. But the radicalism of some demonstrations and the fear of communism, as a result of the propaganda machine of the Cold War, also made this engagement rise up resistance and setbacks. As a consequence, influential sectors in the hierarchy as well as many faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church supported the traditional authoritarian regimes and military coups. The Brazilian case is also an example of the extent that the military regimes became more authoritarian; this support was weakening and replaced by a renewed engagement in favour of the poorest groups in society, including housing for political activists who had no legal secular channels for their activities.

The methodology used in Catholic ecclesial base communities was often described as a combination of *seeing*, *judging* and *acting*. In the *seeing* dimension people reported their experiences, while at the moment of *judging* a combination of biblical and theological reflections with theoretical frameworks of social analysis derived from Marxism was inserted in the circle (Mueller, 1996). The *acting* that followed increasingly assumed the form of social movements that survived even the period of authoritarianism. In Brazil, social movements and a broad engagement of the churches in secular

issues peaked in the preparation of a new constitution in the second half of the 1980s (Assis, 1999).

It was in the Roman Church that Carlos Rodrigues Brandão developed his research and participation activities, mainly through a dialogue between anthropology and activism in youth groups. Reflecting later on this practice, that emerged provisional and still nameless at first, until it became known and articulated, the author says: Participatory research is "a collective knowledge from a job that rebuilds for these people, groups and classes, from the inside out, concrete forms of participation in the right and in the power to think, produce, and direct the uses of the knowledge about themselves" (Brandão, 1981, p. 9-10). Long before concepts such as empowerment came into fashion, the link between the generation of knowledge and the strengthening of the social group's power was a central goal: "A knowledge that, out of political practice that makes possible and profitable the commitment between popular groups and social scientists, for example, should be an additional instrument to strengthening the power of the people" (*ibid*., p. 10). To some extent, it is possible to say that Brandão's trajectory shows how *participatory research* was the name given to a synthesis between academic activism and an engagement against authoritarianism and in favour of social change when it began to be systematised by reflection.

Similarly Paulo Freire developed his methodology while being involved in social engagement. After obtaining a law degree, he worked in a social assistance program from an entity sponsored by entrepreneurs from the local industry. In this activity he could experience a typical clash in peripheral societies like Brazil: the social assistance has to survive in the tension between effecting citizenship rights and replacing them by establishing a relationship of dependence and subordination. The development of his alphabetisation methodology which he started there was later continued as an extension service of the local public university. For the regime installed after the 1964 military coup in Brazil, however, the right to literacy, which Marshall (2002) a few years earlier had described as the most elementary social right of citizenship in British society, was seen as a subversion of the social order. Consequently, Freire had to embitter long years of exile. Apparently the power of conquering literacy was an intolerable threat to the armed forces

that had taken over the power by the force of arms, claiming to be saving the country from what they considered as the communist danger.

Freire considered education as research and research as education. Research and education are then a partnership between professional researchers and educators, and the community or the social group in which they make their sharing experience. Through this partnership the fact of not knowing the letters that make up words and texts is overcome; but this partnership overcomes above all the fact of not knowing the fabric of social relations, in particular of relations of domination. Freeing oneself from this domination is the main aim of research for Freire: "In the liberation perspective where I situate myself [...], research, as a knowledge act, has as knowing subjects, on the one hand, the professional researchers, and on the other, the popular subjects, and as the objects to be unveiled, the concrete reality" (1981, p. 35). Education in research is a two-way formation process: "not only for community leaders and other interested persons, but also for researchers, teachers and external activists" (Fals Borda, 2007).

Orlando Fals Borda takes the same aspiration for liberation through the unveiling of domination in concrete existential situations as focus of his work. He developed his approach to engagement in and from the Colombian context through the methodology he called "participatory action research". Starting with an unconventional relationship with the poor peasants as a curious and dilettante employee of a multinational company (Fals Borda, 2006) he ended up at the university as an expert in sociological research. Along this way grew a working methodology as well as a lifetime commitment, which even lasted when later he occupied prominent positions in Colombian agrarian politics and at the university in his country.

In an interview reporting his life-trajectory, Fals Borda explains what he means by participatory action research: it is a research "that responds especially to the needs of populations like workers, peasants, small farmers and Indians – the poorest classes in contemporary social structures – taking into account their aspirations and potentialities of knowing and acting. It is a methodology that seeks to encourage the autonomous (self-reliant) development from the basis and a relative independence from outside" (2006, p. 43). He expresses something similar in another text stating that reducing the

distance between "scholarship" and the "popular wisdom" as well as developing more involving and more personal forms of relationship in research "we recover the popular version of history and reinforce basis people's culture and self-esteem" (Fals Borda, 2007).

With his statement, Fals Borda touches on three central themes present since the origins of the whole movement of participatory research in Latin America. Firstly, he offers a revision of a development towards a more equitable share of wealth and the cultural advances of the respective society. Secondly, he mentions the issue of autonomy and liberation of the poorest in the country from the bonds of subjugation and exploitation, and the consequent expansion of their chance to create their own life projects, individually and collectively. Finally, he points out that for the participation of intellectuals in communities the stimulus of a feeling of self-confidence and of the conviction about their own ability to do important things has always been central. Even if their performance is different from the current majority, the mode of being and doing things of these people does not have lower value than that of the economically more affluent and politically and culturally dominant social strata. Having confidence in or even being proud about what one is as a person, is a feeling that often still needs to be developed by communities and social groups as a form of resistance against domination.

In some quotations the author above mentioned another central feature of participatory research: the place of the intellectual approaching a social group to carry out research and to engage in their struggles. He shares with his partners the condition of a co-subject in the generation of knowledge. Brandão (1981, p. 11) expresses it in a even more radical way: "Having in the search *agent* a kind of *people* that serves". In this understanding, the intellectual has not only to let the others be the subject of their life projects; he has to put himself in their service. There is an ethical expectation in relation to the researchers that permeates the whole activity: to engage in solidarity and even selflessly with the group. Or as Fals Borda expresses it: "[...] in popular struggles there is always a space for intellectuals, technicians and scientists as such [...]. They just have to honestly demonstrate their commitment to the popular cause pursued through the specific contribution of their own discipline, without completely denying these disciplines" (1981, p. 49-50). Ac-

cording to this author, that expectation "motivated a change in the orientation of the personal conduct of the activists and the addition of new social values such as simplicity, democratic and direct participation in the daily working routine of the community" (*ibid*.).

This politicised practice of generating knowledge through a sympathetic and even empathetic encounter with those to whom the research is referred turns explicitly against claims of neutrality of traditional science. More than that: the participating researchers developed a deep distrust of a hidden agenda in much traditional research. "The apparently neutral expression on the idea of a research object often subsumes the idea and the intention those groups whose life and reality finally will be known, may also be recognised as *objects* of History" (Brandão, 1981, p. 10).

Instead of sticking to the issues prioritised by the internal logic of science, the claim becomes to make "questions of real people [...] who seem to discover through their own practice the need to conquer the power to become, after all, *the subject*, of the *act of knowing* from which they have been the *object*, as well as of the *work of transforming* the knowledge and the world that turned them into an object" (*ibid*. p. 11). Fals Borda distances himself even from authors such as Kurt Lewin, considering their methodology still insufficiently engaged in the struggles of their research partners.

Paulo Freire is in a certain sense even more explicit in advocating on behalf of a movement in which objectivity and subjectivity do not exclude one another. Instead, for him the only way to apprehend reality is in the tension between these two poles. "For me, the concrete reality is something more than facts or data taken roughly by themselves. It is all these things and all these data plus the perception people involved in it are having from it. Consequently, the concrete reality is given to me in the dialectical relationship between objectivity and subjectivity" (Freire, 1981, p. 35).

The authors-researchers mentioned here (Brandão, Freire and Fals Borda) refer to traditional science as a form of knowledge too often linked to the dominant groups of society at a given period. This link, they say, prevents the knowledge thus generated to have an absolute, universal character; on the contrary, it fulfils certain functions: maintaining and strengthening domination, creating dependent workers and demands for increased productivity.

Furthermore, the very "individuals called scientists" have "motivations, interests, beliefs and superstitions, emotions and interpretations of their social development" (Fals Borda, 1981, p. 44) that directly interfere with their activity. Therefore, according to Fals Borda, rather than focusing on the analysis of the results of that way of doing science, for a critique it is necessary and most promising to examine the "production process of scientific knowledge" (*ibid*.). That's why these authors developed practices today known as *participatory research* or *participatory action research*.

When the authors claim that the vocation of participatory research is to help pushing social transformation processes, it is necessary to clarify a bit more how this vocation is understood. Although it is true that participatory research was born in contexts where sometimes projects of "social action", "rural development" or "community development" were being implemented by governments or international organisations, this research usually was implemented as a resistance against them, as an attempt to overcome the developmental orientation that prevailed in international co-operation at this time.

Since its origin, the participation did not intend only winning the co-operation of the "target groups" of any policy, so that its effectiveness could be increased. On the contrary, from the very beginning it was conceived as a political formation of all those involved. Brandão (2006) distances himself emphatically from the participationist discourse of official agencies. For this pioneer in participatory research, the research and the researchers participate in the life and struggle of groups they are engaged with, and not vice versa. The participatory research reveals its value through its contribution in collective seeking of knowledge to help make social relations fairer, freer and solidary. This would be its emancipatory tribute: "Research is 'participatory' not only because an increasing proportion of popular subjects are participating in its process. Research is 'participatory' because, as a solidary alternative in creating social knowledge, it enrols itself and participates in relevant processes of transformative social actions with an emancipatory and popular vocation" (2006, p. 32).

From the brief exposition made here it should not be inferred that participatory research in Latin America has an unified orientation. Rather, it was

constituted historically as a range of contextualised experiences, marked by the reality of each place where it was practiced. It also was not always a successful experience; but "on repeated occasions, practical experiences ended up being reduced to only a visit, focused on partial aspects of social life" (Brandão, 2006, p. 33). It was born and continues till today being an open and plural collective project of social transformation in a context perceived as unfair, exclusionary and oppressive.

Overcoming distorted knowledge together

One question that arises in the tradition of Marxist thought concerns the status of knowledge of those people living under domination. In line with the Marxist thesis that "the concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of multiple determinations" (Marx, 1859), authors like Horkheimer (1992) argue that neither the intellectual nor the working class alone by itself can reach a non-distorted knowledge of their reality, although the inhuman organisation of society makes this inhumanity manifest itself in everything that happens in society. Other authors emphasise the Marxist conception according to which the thoughts of the ruling class, as an ideal expression of material relations, impose themselves as dominant thoughts to those who are deprived of the means of production, and thus reinforce the domination (Marx, 1987, p. 155; Löwy, 2000). This second perspective focuses more on the distorted and even ideological perception of reality due to the imposition of the particular perspective of the dominant class as universal knowledge. Fals Borda (1981, p. 51), in accordance with this second view, refers to negative elements present in popular culture as alienation resulting from the spread of bourgeois values.

The more the centrality of social groups as subjects of knowledge and social change is highlighted, the more necessary is an appropriate response to this question of an undistorted knowledge of reality. If the whole social life is permeated by the effects of domination and if cultural life is affected by an alienation that results from the expropriation of the means of production, may it then be possible to obtain a political consciousness that is appropriate to the class, a not alienated knowledge capable of guiding a new social praxis?

Although historically some advocates of the need of a revolutionary vanguard to lead the working class to overcome the epistemological impasse have appeared: sometimes with tragic historical consequences, or defenders of a hope of a romantic self-transforming authenticity of the oppressed people, several authors have advocated the presence of intellectuals as catalysts in the practical overcoming of that dilemma. As examples two authors and their proposals can be mentioned here. On one hand, Horkheimer, a representative of a more authentically intellectual, academic tradition, the Frankfurt School; on another, Fals Borda, who lived as few other intellectuals as an organic intellectual among farmers, Indians and Mestizos in Latin America, and reflected on it.

Horkheimer refers to a human sceptical position regarding naturalised evaluative categories that guide traditional science. The motivation of this position is to transcend the limits of social normality. This critical thinking, however, is not an isolated act, "but has consciously as subject a determined individual, within his real relationships with individual actors and groups, in his debate with a certain social class, and finally in the mediated entanglement with the social totality and with nature" (1992, p. 227). One can say that the author thinks in circles of relationships that extend more and more to reach nature itself. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Horkheimer is referring to a position that leaves behind an understanding of truth which wants to establish an objective correspondence with phenomena in the world, in order to be primarily oriented to a social praxis. In constant interaction with those circles, the activity of doing science and developing theory finds its orientation. Thus, neither solipsistic reflection nor utopian fantasies can be a guide for intellectual activity; its orientation comes from the experience of concrete and contradictory reality: seen in its diversity and in the perspective of the concrete social groups.

Horkheimer sees the pursuit for the best praxis as a dispute that takes place first among the most progressive groups in the class and intellectuals, and then among them and the whole working class. The author is convinced that through this interaction social contradictions will become transparent and raising consciousness of the participants becomes a stimulus in conceiving the strategy for their liberation. As a result, the design of a concrete form for

the new social formation is certainly likely to be subject to trials, errors and successes. Even without venturing himself to outline the possible contours of the future, for Horkheimer the Marxist idea of the future society as a community of free people with a standard of living as high as possible with the available technical resources should be preserved as its core guiding force (Horkheimer, 1992, p. 234). So for this author, the interactive process between intellectual and working class, conceived as a struggle within a given totality in which the given contradictions become gradually more visible and the contours of a future social formation gradually gain way into the consciousness of the participants, would be the way to overcome the distortions of knowledge imposed by capitalist domination to all the participants in a given social formation. The consequence would be a process of raising consciousness resulting from the exchange of knowledge between different dominated groups.

Fals Borda, in turn, emphasises the process of overcoming the common sense, distorted by alienation, through raising political consciousness, and less the crystallisation of internal normative principles. This gives the researcher a different responsibility from that conceived by the Frankfurt School: rather than participating in a dispute for the best interpretations, his task is to apprehend, systematise and then return to the social group their own knowledge which he helped to create. Fals Borda insists that it is a *systematised devolution* of knowledge intuitively already present. The systematization allows the social group to rediscover its own reality, but now viewed in an unalienated and politicised perspective. It also allows the groups knowledge to resonate beyond its social boundaries and be heard as a legitimate contribution to the whole society. In this way the social group also qualifies to expand its alliances with other movements of resistance and struggle against domination.

One could argue, and not without reason, that the historical differences between the social contexts determine the difference between the two proposals. In industrial society, the workers are generally organised in autonomous unions and the citizenship in their countries includes the right to political participation through various channels. On the other hand, a colonised, predominantly agrarian, stratified and dependent society often does not even

include universal primary education as an effective citizen's right. So while in the first, even in unequal conditions, there is a possibility of political dispute in the public sphere about the future of society, in the latter it is often necessary to first retrieve literacy skills and political empowerment that has historically been neglected or denied.

There is however something more fundamental that differentiates the critical theorists' way of doing science from that of the mentioned participatory researchers in Latin America. For the critical theorists, the subaltern social groups are a *source* of political orientation and normative criteria, maybe even interlocutors in the public sphere; but a social distance and a clear notion of division of labour is preserved with respect to them. Making social theory is considered the specific task of the intellectuals. In participatory research, knowledge generation is seen as a collective activity, done by *living together* and *sharing* the pains and the concrete struggles. This is the sense of Fals Borda's insistence on breaking the asymmetry between researchers and researched as well as on the incorporation of "grassroots people as individuals and as thinkers in research efforts" (1981, p. 55) and on "enabling them to break their dependence on the intellectuals and to conduct their own research" (*ibid*., p. 53). This breaks the traditional subject-object relationship and establishes a research methodology which is based on subject-subject relations. This sense of seeking for autonomy even in doing science goes well beyond the conception of a social division of labour, *in which specialised disciplines: and the social distance between them, remains unsurpassed.*

Recognition and citizenship as languages of encounter

By reconstructing the beginnings of these two important traditions: of participatory research in Latin America and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, it is possible to ask if and how they can inspire and contribute to a research practice committed to both the clarification of the problems and expectations of marginalised social groups, and the engagement for the social transformation. It seems to be possible to learn some important lessons from them, but it is also hard to avoid questioning some issues.

From the vast legacy that Horkheimer and his colleagues and collaborators left to those who are willing to do research and social theory there are two contributions that can be emphasised here. The first, and probably most important, is that above and beyond the choice of methodologies and research techniques there is an ethical attitude with which the intellectual stands in face of social reality, confronting the way opportunities for the individuals and social groups to become autonomous subjects and to have part on the material and immaterial socially produced wealth are established. His proposal to oppose a critical mode of doing social theory to the traditional and dominant one expresses an invitation to make a lifelong choice, to assume a specific praxis, and not to just choose fortuitously a technical tool. The second contribution of Horkheimer has to do with the recognition that the proletariat can no longer be considered the predestined historical collective subject to make the urgent social change, and that neither is there a setting of determined and necessary features for the future society. He transformed this recognition into a methodology of science as a dialogue between disciplines, and especially as a dialogue with those social groups to whom the knowledge refers to. Even with the above mentioned limitations, from this dialogue should result a better understanding of reality, but it may also result in a better understanding of the normative ethical criteria that allow a well-founded judgement on the given reality and support the delineation of the ongoing social transformations. This is his way of continuing the Marxist tradition on a renewed basis.

The pioneers of participatory research in Latin America assumed sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly this Marxist tradition. The decision to make the act of researching a participation in the political struggles of the respective social groups can be considered the core of their academic-political position. Researcher and research are involved as participants in the social struggle. It is not the social group that adheres to a research project. This is the foundational step of the transformation of former research *objects* into research *subjects*. To the professional researcher this implies relativising priorities and the internal logic of science; for the involved groups, usually this presence is a cornerstone in building their self-esteem. The ultimate goal

of this joint venture was synthesised by several decades in Latin America through an expression: liberation.

However, even in the face of these contributions and inspirations, some strangeness in relation to both traditions can be highlighted. Horkheimer and his colleagues of the first generation of Frankfurtians still echo the conviction of a society in which the class struggle is defined around the means of production, and the intellectual is installed in a university chair. They may build dialogue channels and through the public sphere make pressure together for social changes within the framework of a formal-democratic society. But at the centre of that universe is still the work as an activity that transforms nature into useful things and socialises people. Around the world of work and workers are formed the expectations about the new that should be built in society. And the intellectual's job is to analyse and somehow systematise the knowledge about this situation.

The founding fathers of participatory research worked in a different context. Most of their countries had restricted democracies or even authoritarian regimes. Together with international agencies and following the developmentalist ideology of the 1960s and 1970s, the rulers promoted reforms that radically changed the life of local people, generally without consulting the affected groups or public discussion. In the end, most projects actually resulted in promoting a dependent development: the development of underdevelopment (Gunder Frank, 1967). Even after those efforts, capitalist economy involves only a small part of the economically active population, and the division of society into groups occurs only partly through the formal market of workforce. Many other cleavages, such as being Indian or Creole, living in the countryside or in the city, dominating the official language or not, and other similar factors were decisive for social *integration: or for social marginalisation.* Participating in daily life with these groups for researchers often implied surpassing strict geographic, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and cognitive barriers.

For participating intellectuals it was not always easy to find legitimate sources from which to extract the organising core of the normative expectations that could give the contours of the future society. At this point it seems

that the thematisation of recognition made by Honneth can contribute to the current Latin American participatory research in a very sensitive issue.

In order to reflect upon possibilities of reciprocal inspiration and intending to continue the original goals of these two traditions within today's profoundly changed contexts, some recent developments are briefly examined here. In critical theory, the novelty is the discussion of the issue of recognition (Van den Brink & Owen, 2007; Sobottka & Saavedra, 2009), and in the tradition of participatory research a discursive presence of the issue of citizenship in the academic and in everyday life in Latin America opens new perspectives. Both recognition and citizenship could be described as proposals for a social theory or at least as central theoretical concepts of theoretical approaches. But following this path would situate any discussion around them in a predominantly academic environment.

Another possibility, which is adopted here, is to take these expressions as *languages*. Viewed as such, recognition and citizenship are core generators of languages that express social agreements and, as a consequence, also articulate normative expectations that members of a given society or community legitimately can have in their relationships with the other members. And to the extent that they express social arrangements and articulate legitimate normative expectations, they are also sensors for the early perception of potential frustrations of these expectations, which are generally perceived as injustices. The possibility of this perspective is explained by Honneth when he says that the question that moves him in his theoretical enterprise is to know "which of the theoretical languages [...] is best suited for a consistent reconstruction and justification of current political demands within the framework of a critical theory of society" (Honneth, 2003). Today, claims and protests are articulated in other ways than in past decades. But more important than this is that perceptions of injustice and humiliation are subject to numerous barriers and filters, and the more language to express them cognitively comes close to the life world of people, the more perceptions have chances to become a public issue.

Before looking at these two languages, it is necessary to anticipate a possible misunderstanding. Social agreements expressed in the form of normative expectations do not refer to real or fictitious contracts made between

individuals that float freely in a social vacuum, nor are they necessary derivations of some specific ontology of the human kind. They are reflections of historical practices carried out in concrete societies, inherited and also reformulated by succeeding generations. Precisely for that continuous repossession they generate mutually legitimate normative expectations.

Although he is not the first author to put recognition as a pillar of intersubjective social relations, it was Axel Honneth who more widely formulated this proposal. Professor in Frankfurt in line of succession to Horkheimer, Honneth explains that in Western capitalist societies a differentiation of three spheres of recognition occurs. Each of these spheres institutionalises a specific form of social relations that allows members of these societies to expect to be recognised by others, according to the principle prevailing in that sphere of action.

The first sphere of recognition described by Honneth is love. Both childhood and marriage are seen by the author as part of an institutionalisation of a recognition that has its expression in affection. Childhood is seen as a period particularly needy of protection to which society assigns to parents a special responsibility to care for the child to develop self-confidence. Similarly the relationships between man and woman are released gradually from economic and social obligations and opened in relation to affective reciprocity. These two developments allow the affection and care to become a specific form of recognition that is socially considered a mutual duty of benefit to the welfare of the other.

The second sphere of recognition described by Honneth is the law. While in traditional hierarchical societies the rights of members depended on their honour or their status in the prestige scale, the bourgeois-capitalist social order has separated these two dimensions. At least in principle, all members of society since then are considered legally as equals. They are rights holding subjects and can legitimately expect to be recognised as equals by all other members of society.

The remaining dimension after separation of the sphere of legal egalitarian recognition is described by Honneth as the sphere of social esteem. The recognition in it remains hierarchical, but the base of the hierarchy has changed: an understanding of the social value of individual *achievement* was

developed. Initially Honneth (1996) put *solidarity* as the normative principle of this sphere, but apparently he had difficulty in justifying it as an immanent value predominant in a specific area of the capitalist bourgeois society, and able to structure an ethical sphere. If this were the logic, the enhancement of individual social contribution would correspond more effectively to a principle capable of justifiably regulating normative expectations.

In each of these spheres, according to the author, the individual learns to refer distinctly in relation to himself. In intimate relationships, he perceives himself as someone with special needs, which according to Honneth are marked by practices of mutual affection and concern. In juridical relationships, subjects learn to perceive themselves as subjects having rights and duties with the same autonomy granted to other members of society. Finally, in the sphere dominated by the principle of evaluating individual achievement in a competitive environment, he learns to perceive himself as a subject with important skills and talents in his society. To the extent that the individual can repeatedly experience these forms of recognition, he develops an awareness of himself, a self-conscience. He develops his identity and subjectivity through the acceptance by others. The recognition and the consequent development of practical positive relations to self allow the individual to reflexively become aware of his qualities and his rights. With different weights along a biographical trajectory, the practical positive relations to self in every sphere allows him to simultaneously individualise and socialise himself, thus building his autonomy (Jaeggi, 2013).

It seems undisputed that today we can no longer assume that there is a historical subject, previously determined to make the necessary social changes, as classical Marxism saw in the proletariat. As such, we need to put the question anew: what are the necessary social transformations? How are they perceived as necessary and who is the main driving force?

Equipped with the language of recognition, as briefly exposed here, Honneth advocates the possibility of doing a "phenomenology of experiences of social injustice" (2003, p. 113) as soon as the legitimate expectations of recognition are frustrated and perceived by individuals as injustices. In his words: "what is called 'injustice' in theoretical language is experienced by those affected as social injury to well-founded claims to recognition" (*ibid*.).

Many of these perceptions of injustice are publicly articulated in the form of protests and social movements. But the author draws attention to the fact that there are several filters and barriers that stand between the perception and the public articulation of an injustice. The fierce competition for attention in the media is one of these. It may be also added: the social control apparatus of intimidation and repression (Raschke, 1988), and even disappointment with past experiences and discredit upon current possibilities of success often inhibit collective resistance initiatives.

Honneth's reconstruction of recognition as a language allows to express the different shapes of normative expectations, historically adopted in each society. Wherever frustration becomes recurrent, surely the social institutions responsible for recognition are failing and need to be transformed. By developing a tool that allows to anticipate, on the level of individual perception, the diagnostic of probable institutionalised injustices, Honneth updates the Frankfurt School's critical theory in a very central aspect. In societies where worldviews are plural and life projects are highly individualised, social theory itself must be able to articulate its diagnosis even at the individual level and, at the same time, detect systematic failures of institutions, to ensure the effectiveness of socially legitimated normative principles.

However, even considering this renewal of critical theory as a successful undertaking in the sense of having made available a theoretical language more suitable than the previous to the analysis of contemporary societies, it still does not answer satisfactorily the question about the actually needed changes and who can promote them. The author himself had put the response to this question as a challenge by asserting that “no definitive answer to this question of feelings of injustice is possible without first establishing the actual reactions of those affected with the tools of empirical social research” (Honneth, 2003, p. 126). Although, in one of his recent works, *The right of freedom* (Honneth, 2011), in which he proposes, following Hegel, to formulate a theory of justice through an analysis of society, the author did not take seriously enough his own demand: to substantiate the knowledge of reality in empirical research and in contact with affected people (Sobottka, 2012).

So, with the reconstruction of the normative principles that govern interpersonal relationships and promote the development of autonomous individu-

als, Honneth develops a methodology to clarify the normative criteria which individuals use in everyday life by forming their judgements. In addition, he develops a sensitive language to the perception of injustice long before they reach the public debate. But his proposal for a renewed critical theory lacks something essential: participation in concrete social struggles, so that what in theory is presented as a good instrument can be checked as part of praxis in dialogue with concrete partners.

In Latin America, on its part, since the democratisation that followed the phase of authoritarian military regimes, the expectations of historically marginalised social groups have been mostly expressed through the condensed idea of citizenship: especially as rights of citizenship. Social movements, the constituent processes that occurred in most countries in the 1980s and 1990s and even dominant groups have taken naturally as legitimate the existence of very large sets of rights. In countries where social movements have succeeded vindicating rights, as in Brazil and Ecuador, among other countries, the new constitutional texts contain large lists of rights. Often, however, their formulations remain vague or lack the indication of who would have the duty of ensuring the right. They seem therefore more as declarations than rights, enforceable by legal claims or ethical social pressure.

Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that over the years many claims that were previously in dispute came to be treated as an entitled right: either because they are enrolled in any legal text, or because they are no longer publicly challenged or denied. Thus old normative expectations were consolidated and new ones were formed and taken as legitimate. *Citizenship* has become an unquestioned justification for a great diversity of claims of rights. Given this proliferation of the use of citizenship in public disputes, it is necessary to ask: What is citizenship? Can it be understood as a synthesis of the rights, enshrined in legal texts or tacitly assumed as such?

To address this issue it seems to be possible to establish a bridge between this proliferation in the use of the term and the classical conception of citizenship described by Thomas H. Marshall (2002), referring to Britain. Marshall states that “citizenship is a status granted to those who are full members of a community”. And follows: “all those who possess this status are equal

with respect to the rights and duties pertaining to the status". With these formulations he is arguing that citizenship is a synthetic way of expressing a social agreement, assumed as normative by the participants, i.e. an agreement that governs the expectations that each person may have in relation to other members of his community, but also his duties towards them. This interpretation is strengthened immediately by the author when he says: "There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and obligations shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which the success can be measured and to which claims can be directed" (*ibid*.).

In principle there is no numerical limit for the expansion of citizen rights or predetermined content different societies should cover when their members recognize one another as citizens. What allows to judge the validity of normative claims expressed by citizenship is the recognition that the community assumed conventionally for its members. In the words of Marshall: "The insistence on following the so determined path amounts to an insistence by an effective measure of equality, an enrichment of the raw material of this status, and an increase in the number of those to whom the status is given" (*ibid*.).

This Anglo-Saxon vision of citizenship is described by Somers (1998) as a meta-narrative that tries to legitimise the possibility of subsistence of an organized society that recognises and grants rights, and assigns duties to its members, even without the state. Or at least that it could do this without being dependent on the state. If this author is correct, all three plans: civil, political and social, in which, as described by Marshall, citizenship became a reality in Britain over three centuries express the gradual extension of the validity of normative principles that have been historically developed along with the crystallisation of modernity itself as a human project.

Marshall's description of citizenship is far from its generally disseminated understandings in the Latin American subcontinent. While these are mainly an amalgam of claims, they almost always have the state as the addressee of the claims and rarely include self-commitment to duties, Marshall's conception is grounded on a basic ethical agreement made among members of a community; as cornerstone it involves reciprocity and corresponding paired

rights and duties. If the language of citizenship wants to have some emancipatory sense here and now, probably it will be necessary to find ways for a transit in the conception from a vindicatory to an ethical understanding of citizenship. Only then can citizenship become a proper language to express commitments to principles, to articulate legitimate normative expectations that all members of society can have reciprocally, and also to help to detect as early as possible, and to verbalise perceptions of injustice.

The language of recognition is still not widespread in Latin America. But where it becomes a reference, it brings exactly this notion of reciprocity that is lacking in the traditional language of unilaterally demanding rights. Moreover, the reconstruction of the normative principles of the community, and its usage as a structuring core of social theory, like done by Honneth, can be an inspiration for participatory research in Latin America. A pedagogical challenge will be to increase collective self-reflectivity about the society, which researchers and practitioners share.

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