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Art as Field of Local Re-Appropriation and Epistemological Dialogue in Times of Collapse

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Abstract

What can we do in the field of knowledge to face the current ecosocial crisis? To understand the Collapse of the current system, we need to reflect about how globalized capitalism involves irresponsible activity towards the sustainability of both nature and society. We argue how this irresponsibility has much to do with modern culture itself, the worship of Progress and the systematic eradication and invisibilization of any other worldview. We argue that, if we are to deal with ecosocial crisis in a fair way, Hegemonic Modernity needs to abandon its arrogance and enter in a dialogue with those worldviews so that we can: a) consider their holders bearers of rights and b) construct knowledge and ethics that are able to develop a better human-nature relationship. We present and discuss three elements to articulate that epistemological dialogue: a) focus in rural sustainable development and local action; b) integration of education/science in social action; c) use of arts in knowledge creation.

Keywords: *Collapse, a/r/t/ography, sustainable rural development, democratization of knowledge, epistemicide*

Introduction:

The ecologic and social crisis is certain, thus we cannot continue with a “business as usual” approach. But, what does this mean? It is difficult to know and even more difficult to act. In part, because the very institutions and social actors charged with the function of knowledge creation and socialization (Science and Education) are indeed continuing with their “business as usual”, with a mechanical inertia based on productivity, meritocracy and the Work Market (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011). If we are to understand how to face the ecosocial crisis, change in Science and Education is fundamental.

It's evident that we need to develop the ability to address social problems at the same time that we learn from them. That means Science and Education must turn present-oriented. Not just because of the urgency to adapt to the fast changes of an uncertain future, but because orientation towards the present entails orientation towards reality, instead of following the educational and scientific inertia of just producing for their own standards Matusov, Smith, Soslau, Marjanovic-Shane & von Duyke (2016).

But it is not enough to do research and educate for sustainability, as the crisis is also social (Prats, Herrero y Torrego, 2016). To face the ecosocial crisis without compromising social justice, it is necessary to work on a radical perspective of equality. We need to address the deconstruction of the epistemological and ethical basis of the systems of dominance and oppression, questioning the epistemological hierarchy that puts modern western science at the top, stigmatizing other ways of knowing and the people that practice them (Paraskeva, 2020). The current crisis pushes us towards a need for an epistemic dialogue. Therefore, we need to conduct an effort for democratizing the processes of knowledge creation, sharing directions of research and education with different social actors (Matusov et al, 2016). It is necessary to deconstruct hierarchies in science and legitimate different worldviews and ways of knowing (Muñoz and Grisales, 2014).

Through this work, we (this "we" will always mean the dyad: author+reader) will share a reflection about the times of Collapse (Taibo, 2020). We are looking at the relationship that the epistemological bases of First World culture and the epistemicide of "the others" (Muñoz and Grisales, 2014) have with the ecosocial crises. Furthermore, we will try to elucidate how to elaborate an authentic dialogue that serves us to deal with the Collapse with justice.

1. BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

COLLAPSE: KILLING FOR PROGRESS, DYING BY PROGRESS

The relationship between the over-production that humanity has imposed on Earth and the ecologic crisis where we find ourselves in has been broadly studied (Valladares, Peñuelas & Clabaig, 2005). It also has been amply researched, but less evident for the public opinion in the First World, the relationship between ecological crisis and colonialism (Prats, Herrero y Torrego, 2016; Muñoz y Grisales, 2014). Both are key for the matters that we are going to discuss.

We usually point towards the opulence of the First World to explain the excesses of production, extractivism and aggression to Nature. If every person in the First World has the economic right to have a car, to fly to several places in one year, to waste electricity..., the alteration of the

ecosystems exceeds the capacity of regeneration of the Earth (Valladares, Peñuelas y Calabuig, 2005; Sempere, 2009). Indeed, this way of understanding quality of life is connected to the fetish of Progress and the worship of technology and consumerism.

But actually, the problem is structural to the system (Taibo, 2020). Growth itself is the key of the capitalist social order, and it clashes with sustainability (Paraskeva, 2020; Herrero, 2013). Progress, and the extractivism that comes with it, is a perversion that breaks natural balance.

Nevertheless, the damage to ecosystems made by extractivism is not totally invisible, and there have always been voices clamoring for governments and elites to prevent it (Valladares et al, 2005). Here is where we find a contradiction inside the modern idea of Progress, between two of its elements: growth/production and democracy (Riechmann, 2019).

Democracy demands that sovereignty is in every citizen of the nation-estate, thus, their voice must be heard, and if public opinion is committed with sustainability, there are things that can't be allowed to happen. But growth mandates production, that is linked to the enrichment of those that hold the means of production. To ensure a level of wealth in a broad middle class and at the same time continue with the enrichment of the elites, those things that "couldn't be allowed to happen" in the nation-state, but needed to happen anyways, were done in the land of "others" (Herrero, 2013: 302). That is why colonization and neo-colonialism play a key role (Paraskeva, 2020).

Capitalism is always more cruel on the peripheries (Garcés,2020:.1), the greatest exploitation and extractivism was done "somewhere else" to "someone else", away from the scope of the holders of sovereignty in "full democracies" (Muñoz y Grisales,2014: 160). Mega mining, deforestation, expropriation of land and rivers, water contamination, the biggest landfills... . In that sense, liberal democracies and the Welfare State are in clear debt with colonized countries.

The Welfare state seems to be in danger by the rise of neoliberalism, as the impact on nature has been increasing with the liberalization of the global market (Taibo, 2020). Even when the message is clear "we cannot continue with business as usual if we are to lessen the impact of the ecological crisis" the elites do continue without major changes, which tells us that they might not have much interest in preventing the doom of the world, but just to have enough resources to prevent their own and their families' fall (Riechmann, 2019).

In between those that try to face the ecological crisis, two strategies are paramount: Green Capitalism and Degrowth (Braña-Montaña, 2017; Le Quang 2015). Those that defend Green Capitalism point towards an ecological transition, using more renewable energy, more

recyclable materials and stressing policies of redistribution of labor, work less and work all, without losing economic capacity (González and Suárez, 2017, p.34). They advocate for an economic and technological transformation of which the Green New Deal would be the most clear example (Riechmann, 2019).

The defenders of Degrowth argue that continuing capitalism is just impossible, because capitalism is self-predatory in its basis (Tanuro, 2011). The strategies of Green Capitalism are not enough considering the damage that has already been done, they are too soft and will lead us anyways towards the Collapse of the system. They also argue that the extraction of materials needed for the ecologic transition entails continuing with extractivism in neo-colonized territories and increases violence and oppression over their inhabitants (Herrero, 2013). For those reasons, those that stand in this position, argue that the only way to avoid or (more likely) manage the Collapse is to voluntarily reduce our materialism as individuals and societies: better with less, they say: use less energy, produce less (Sempere, 2009).

As we see, in the challenge of Collapse ecological and social crises are interconnected (Acciardi, 2020), from now on, we will talk about ecosocial crisis (Paraskeva, 2020). Some of the solutions that are argued are based in authoritarian measures and strong leaders, what has been called ecofascism (Taibo, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic can serve as an example, as we see how many states rely on nationalism and deploy the army and police to control the population (Chuang, 2020). The moments of crisis can recall myths of discipline, sacrifice and strong leaders, which would lead towards an intensification of the systems of domination and inequity. Following that logic, most surely many would die in benefit of others (Riechmann, 2019).

There is of course, certain danger of ecofascism in the advocacy for Degrowth, for it can easily recall the idea of sacrifice for a greater good, which has always being one of the hooks of fascism (Medeiros Morais, 2020), and this is something we need to keep in mind. But if our concern is social injustice, we actually don't need to look towards the future at all. As I argued before, the processes of neo-colonialism create a clear inequity in what it comes to distributing the damages of extractivism (Paraskeva, 2020). Many are migrating because of droughts and ecological disasters, and they are being received with fences and guns (Taibo, 2020). If Green Capitalism will intensify the need for new resources, without addressing the conditions of native populations, the oppression and domination of many workers would be necessary for an ecological transition that would benefit others (Herrero, 2013). That is already a form of ecofascism at an international level.

The fact here is that Green Capitalism, even when it is conscient of social injustice and ecological danger, is following the logic of Progress. Getting out of that logic is not that easy, as it is rooted not only in the economic system, but is also ideologically hegemonic around the world. We will need to understand this relationship between ideology and the ecosocial crisis to illuminate some new paths.

RELATIONS BETWEEN COLLAPSE AND EPISTEMICIDE

Progress entails technologic and economic growth: industrialization forced the movement of more people towards the cities, increasing the production of energy and goods. Yet another key element of Progress is also scientific endeavor, that actually allows for technologic and, consequently, economic growth (Taibo, 2020). The paradigm of modern western science, based in the ethics of patriarchy, creates the conditions for the lack of responsibility of humanity towards nature, fundamentally because of two principles:

- it is conformed from top to bottom: positivist science creates a dominance of the subject that studies over the object that is studied, and consequently a moral superiority of the researcher over the researched (Matusov, 2018), of humanity over nature (Acciardi 2020);
- it legitimizes one correct way of producing knowledge, despising all the others as religious, superstitious, not objective or just ignorant. Science and the knowledge it produces is universal, must work everywhere to everyone, allows no dialogue with other ways of knowing (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011). Thus, following the worldview of positivist science, for a person to be considered knowledgeable has to follow the scientific method and all the philosophy and ethics that support it, which are culturally developed in the west (Moghaddam, 2003).

Needless to say, the Illustration, following those principles, emancipated many people from the authority of religious and royal clutches, that supposed the previous sources of hegemonic power (Matusov, 2018). Also, there have always been critical voices with this dominant way of understanding knowledge (Puleo, 2008). Nevertheless, the positivist paradigm succeeded in becoming hegemonic, and those principles that I have presented before sewed an alliance between knowledge and power (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011). That conformed ideological and institutional structures of dominance, based in the hierarchic values of Patriarchy, that we will address from now on as Hegemonic Science. The concrete articulation follows several elements:

First, many fields of science have specialized in the prediction and control of human and natural behaviour, known as the nano-techno-cogno sciences. Concrete branches of quantitative sciences that focus on the analysis and reproduction of current patterns, leading naturally to the reproduction of the status quo (Paraskeva, 2020).

Second, it's not enough to follow the scientific method to be a legitimate voice in science, but it is needed to be acknowledged by the people that already sits in academia, mostly members of the First World, urban, male and economically privileged (Acciardi, 2020). This creates a separation between who are culturally and ideologically at the center and who are culturally and ideologically at the periphery. Those who are not already elite, are epistemologically second class, as they need to prove valuable in order to be considered knowledgeable subjects (Acciardi, 2020).

Third, this separation between knowledgeable subjects in the center and the "others" in the periphery, legitimizes the first to take the second as "objects" of study, contributing to their dehumanization (Paraskeva, 2020). This dehumanization is also increased for those that are outside of the paradigm of Hegemonic Science and/or of Progress, as modernity has constructed an equivalence between Science-Progress-Democracy (Acciardi, 2020). The outsiders are delegitimized for the democratic dialogue. This center-periphery effect ideologically justifies oppression, genocide and the invisibilization of knowledge/worldviews outside of the Hegemony (Garcés, 2020).

Therefore, the damage of Hegemony is not only about what it worships, but about what it negates. This paradigm of Progress aligns with Patriarchy and the triple fallacy of emancipation that it constructs, as ecofeminism explains (Herrero, 2013):

- a) The emancipation of human from nature, since the second is domesticated and managed by technology;
- b) the emancipation of the individual from the group: worshipping the idea of self-sufficient and self-made man.
- c) the emancipation of mind from body: the body is not a problem anymore, health is more or less secure.

This triple fallacy of the Patriarchy invisibilizes the complex networks of interdependence between humans and between humanity and Nature. It invisibilizes the fact that everything that is consumed is produced by another human being, it invisibilizes neo-colonialism and its function on capitalism, it invisibilized the work needed for caregiving and it invisibilizes that our actions have an impact in nature (Puleo, 2008; Ibarlucea, 2020).

From a decolonial perspective, it has been argued the positive interrelation between delegitimization of non-modern cultures and genocides and oppressions in the colonies (Buraschi & Aguilar-Idáñez, 2017; Walsh, 2012; Muñoz & Grisales, 2014). As the indigenous were eradicated and unheard there were no opportunities to understand the value of their worldview and knowledge (Acciardi, 2020); as the indigenous worldview is seen as superstitious and ignorant, they were dehumanized and more easily exploited and killed. This positive interrelation is known as epistemicide (Arcadi, 2020; Paraskeva, 2020; Muñoz & Grisales, 2014). Modernity appropriated and developed this epistemicide that was started by religious reasons, and supported it both in Hegemonic Science and history, as the latter is written by the winners, those defeated worldviews and their knowledge hardly survived in time (Muñoz & Morales, 2014; Robinson, 1983).

The epistemicide of the pre-colonial societies, is related to the lack of responsibility of human beings towards nature (Muñoz & Grisales, 2014), as well as with the invisibilization of the knowledge held by collectives of women, who often performed the social functions of caring and, therefore, developed knowledge for sustainability (acciardi, 2020). From what has survived, we found evidence of several worldviews centered in the interdependence of whole nature, including humanity as one element. There is evidence that many knowledge created following those worldviews were not superstitious or religiously imposed, but empirically based (Paraskeva, 2020). The wisdom of indigenous peoples repeatedly refers to how to get from nature what is needed for human life without damaging the cycles of the concrete ecosystem where they inhabit. Some worldviews, such as the one of the Nahua, made no distinction or hierarchy between rights (Muñoz & Grisales, 2014). The rights of the individual were those of the collective, and the rights of nature were those of humanity, as they were combined in a moral code based on caring, a moral order that enters in clear contradiction with Patriarchy and Progress (Muñoz & Grisales, 2014).

That shows the value that these worldviews that have been eradicated and invisibilized have, even more in the threshold of the ecosocial crisis (Muñoz & Grisales, 2014; Herrero, 2013). Moreover, the underestimation of local and communal knowledge is not only circumscribed to colonialism. The periphery of capitalism also includes many collectives that didn't fit the modern paradigm of Progress (Balboa, Castellero y Durán, 2019; Spector, 2014). The knowledge of the impoverished in capitalism (lower classes, excluded ethnics like Roma, jews, of collectives of women and of rural areas), have also been underestimated and silenced (Garcés, 2020; Spector, 2014). They were not acknowledged by History, that is frequently (almost always) the story of the elites (Robinson, 1984). The impoverished collectives in the peripheries are linked to

practical sustainability simply because they have less economic resources (Ibarlucea, 2020). They spend less, reuse more, even though they don't necessarily pollute less... Concretely, as far as sustainability and ecosocial crisis are concerned, traditional knowledge of rural communities also focused on the relationship between humanity and Nature. (Calle Collado, 2019). The common place between those worldviews and knowledges is that they are local and in contact with the environment (Herrero, 2013). They are interested in sustainability because the sustainability of the concrete ecosystem where they live is the sustainability of the individual and communal life (Acciardi, 2020). There is, thus, a loop of feedback between human action, natural sustainability and care for the community. Hegemonic Science, from its universal top-down point of view (Matusov, 2018), might miss that loop, simply because it's far, and often ignores the historical accumulation of knowledge that the traditions supply (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011).

This ignorance is imposed by the paradigm of Progress over these worldviews, knowledges, voices... fostered by the lack of responsibility that took capitalism towards the way of extractivism, self-depredation and Collapse (Paraskeva, 2020; Puleo, 2008). Following the same logic, therefore, won't seem to serve us to prevent the worst damages of Collapse.

2. LOOKING TOWARDS DIALOGUE

First disclaimer: No simple solutions

I am neither meaning to romanticize or idealize all traditional and indigenous knowledge, not refusing every input of Hegemonic Science. This is not a fairytale of Good against Evil.

In fact, the God-eye of Hegemonic Science is needed to construct sustainability, as natural changes are slower than human action and very difficult or impossible to perceive within the means of local context (Manzano-Arrondo, 2011; Puleo, 2008). It is because of the endeavor of Hegemonic Science that we can see the big picture (Extinction, 2019; Braña-Montaña, 2017). Also, I'm not arguing that there is something intrinsically good in traditional and pre-colonial cultures that will lead us towards an harmonious way of managing the Collapse. Communal values can also be oppressive and unfair (Matusov, 2018; González, 2017).

What I argue here is the eminent necessity for Hegemonic Science to abandon its arrogance (Paraskeva, 2020) and enter in an epistemological dialogue (Puleo, 2008). Sustainability needs both inputs from universal and local points of view. And more importantly, I argue that without that epistemological dialogue, without legitimizing "the others" as knowledgeable subjects,

there is no possible social justice as hierarchisation of knowledge is unavoidable (Bajtín, 2000). If this persists, it is not possible to pursue social justice (Taibo, 2020).

Second disclaimer: We ARE on collapse

This process of constructing alternatives, as I put it here, must not be understood as “ways of stopping ecosocial crisis”. We are already in this reality. As we have seen, some manifestations of this phenomena are already on their way, such as migrations for water (Paraskeva, 2020).

Lets face it, the alternatives don't lead to any kind of utopia, not even to avoid the demand of reducing our materialism. To be able to deal with this, we must assume that bad times are coming (Rebellion, 2019). Worse than the ones that most of us (in the First World) have lived. The crash is unavoidable, and to deal with it with responsibility requires the authentic involvement of people (Taibo, 2020).

In the scenery of Collapse, sustainability and social justice depends on the responsibility of every community towards its own power relationships and its impact on Nature (Riechmann, 2019). That includes different phenomena, from civil disobedience to the development of alternative means of production and the recuperation of networks of collective transport. But even to imagine this, we need to consider ourselves bearers of legitimate knowledge and action.

The participation in epistemological and ethical dialogue is key to the legitimation of different worldviews and the authentic sovereignty of their communities, their authorship (Matusov et al, 2016). At the same time, that dialogue would allow us to deconstruct modern values and realise that quality of life is not necessarily linked to materialism (García, 2020; Prats, Herrero y Torrego, 2014).

Two warnings about dialogue

When it comes to the efforts to encourage dialogue there are two recurrent perversions that we need to keep in mind so we don't fall on them. One is related with the alliance of power with knowledge (their institutions, more concretely) and the other with cultural relativism.

The topic of dialogue and hybridization of cultures has been approached from the theories and policies of interculturality (Walsh, 2012). In a lucid movement, the defenders of interculturality pointed towards the need of including and legitimizing the knowledge and practice of different cultures in the institutions of knowledge (education and science) (Lalueza, 2012). Unfortunately, intercultural projects have practical problems to break the progressive inertia of institutions and

individuals (Zhang-Yu, García-Díaz, Lalueza & García-Romero, 2020). Often, the attempts to legitimize practices and knowledge from the periphery of the system are assimilated by the paradigm of Progress. Interculturality then becomes aesthetic or functional to the system (Walsh, 2012), as the worldview of the periphery is legitimized as long as it's useful, but not when it challenges the establishment itself. Hybridation is then reduced to add some "ethnic flavour" to the status quo, a way to keep "the others" in their place in the periphery (Buraschi y Aguilar-Idáñez, 2017).

The other recurrent perversion is negating the possibility of it. Postmodernism has built a legitimization of other worldviews based on the creation of their own narrative, contesting the official version about history, society and the world of Hegemonic Science (Arcdi, 2020; Matusov, 2018; Muñoz & Grisales, 2014). Those perspectives had success in empowering people and visualizing systemic violence against minoritized groups, were useful deconstructing power and opening trails for community authorship and emancipation (Paraskeva, 2019; Matusov, 2018).

The focus on the creation of the narrative usually evolved into a complete negation of previous ideologies for being part of the machine of power, and promoted a plurality of voices isolated between themselves (Matusov, 2018). That opened a door to closeness of discourse, as well as romantization and idealization of each one's culture and ancestors. Unfortunately, power also knew how to play the game of "my own narrative", which nowadays is the fundament of many supremacist discourses that try to legitimize far right postures all around the world, including both negationists and ecofascists (Taibo, 2020; Balboa et al, 2019).

Modernity has created big monsters, but it doesn't mean that they are the only ones. To abandon skepticism won't serve social justice and equity (Puleo, 2008), as authoritarian discourse lives within mysticism and dogma even better than in Hegemonic Science (Pereira, 2019).

To prevent both dangers, epistemological dialogue must be taken seriously, not just as a means for something else like empowering or useful ideas, but as a direct manifestation of social justice. In dialogue two voices recognize each other in equal rights to speak and know, both of them as potential holders of truth (Bajtín, 2000). Any kind of "dialogue" that falls far from this principle can easily turn into an unfair negotiation or an instrumentalization of people and communities.

Purpose:

If a conscience of the value of our own voice is the base of authorship and sovereignty, and in dialogue is when we find that value (Matusov, 2018; García-Romero, 2018), then the democratization of knowledge, is a difficult but necessary endeavor to undertake.

As means to make it possible, we will explore three elements:

- a) The integration of knowledge production (science) and knowledge socialization (education) in social action (García-Romero & Lalueza, 2019);
- b) Rural Sustainable Development as the field of social action for different epistemologies to meet and construct mutuality (Ibarlucea, 2020);
- c) the exploration of artistic creation in science to explore languages that overcome the epistemological barriers of scientific language (Strigl, 2019).

CONSIDERING PURPOSES: PRAXIS, FIELD OF ACTION AND LANGUAGE**PRAXIS: INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL ACTION**

Education is usually conceptualized as a future-oriented practice, but it doesn't make sense if we don't know how the future is going to be (Matusov, Smith, Marjanovic-Shane, Soslau & Von Duyke, 2016). In a changing world, both in Nature and society, we cannot just teach students as if the future would be a continuation of the past. We need, therefore, to teach for the now. Education needs to be reoriented and turned into a present-oriented practice, so we can address the challenges of the current times and be ready for a changing future (Matusov et al, 2016, Manzano-Arrondo, 2011).

Those ideas lead us to the concept of Praxis, understood as the unity of learning and action (Matusov et al, 2016). The industrial model of education and science, that institutionalizes the banking model of learning, concentrates students and builds schools resembling factories, and universities as massive producers of science far from the objects of study (García-Romero, 2018). In opposition, to construct an educational and scientific praxis would entail integrating organically the production of knowledge within other social activities.

But praxis is more than just learning by doing, it entails a commitment to the exploration of new ideas (Matusov et al, 2016). Traditional practices of labor, that integrated newcomers (usually children) in community practice in order to help with labor tasks, don't guarantee praxis because they are primarily oriented towards the reproduction of the task (from fishing to tailoring) (García-Romero, 2018).

Besides the integration of action and learning, praxis has an element of inquiry, of keeping the exploration for something new, which keeps the conscience of the person implicated towards the whole process (Matusov et al, 2019). Without that idea of inquiry, exploration and self-

exploration, action and learning in labor can become a-critical and mechanic, “just learn how to do the job, and do it”. Thus, the unity in praxis of action-learning-exploration is fundamental to take responsibility both in communities and individuals and, hence, to develop authorship and take sovereignty.

But the fundamental challenge is to elaborate some kind of systemic practice, that is able to affect communities and institutions. A practice that would alter in a sensible way the management of ecologic and social crises, promoting sustainability in small scale, but beyond token goodwill actions. We can recall the ideas of expansive learning, that express the idea that, when two systems (understood as organizations that pursue an end, like a school, a hospital, a company...) need to collaborate to achieve a common goal, they find contradictions in their different elements, such as rules, distribution of labor and values. To overcome those contradictions, they develop a new system that reconfigurates both of them, entailing structural changes. Janice McMillan, among others, have studied the effects of expansive learning between educational institutions and institutions of social action, and describes a kind of cyclic systemic change, with the challenges of overcoming the resistances of power (McMillan, Goldman & Schmid, 2016). Nevertheless, praxis in the systemic field, requires the hybridization of diverse systems.

For what education concerns, this is the fieldwork of Service-Learning (Deeley, 2016) and, most concretely, Community Engaged Learning (García-Romero and Lalueza, 2019). These methodologies focus on the idea of experiential learning and the development of civic attitudes that foster the responsibility of the students (Deeley, 2016). Their means are to integrate students in a community or social action, where they are supposed to address curricular learning. Nevertheless, the usefulness of this methodologies for systemic change is a matter of discussion, especially in the case of Service-Learning (García-Romero and Lalueza, 2019).

Some of the critics concentrate in the fact that in Service-Learning, the educational institution takes a position of dominance, such as in charity of altruism, promoting at the same time the ideas of superiority in the students towards “the others” they are serving (García-Romero, 2019; Tapia, 2018). This perspective doesn't allow for epistemological dialogue, since the educational institution is the one knowledgeable.

Other critics focus on the nature of reciprocity of Service-Learning, highly valued by its followers. It is argued that, through the idea of reciprocity, Service-Learning enters in a dynamic of market, interchanging specialized knowledge for experience (Clifford, 2017). In this way of working, students are objectified by the community as labourers, and educationally as material to teach,

not equal bearers of knowledge. This reality shows that, even when Service-Learning theoretically can promote systemic change and epistemological dialogue (with the students as double-agent between community and education), (McMillan et al, 2016; Deeley, 2016) this is not possible if there is an epistemological hierarchy of voices, with educators on the top (García-Romero & Lalueza, 2019).

If we are to avoid this perversion and danger, it is fundamental to concentrate on mutuality between education and action. The whole system must be oriented to both objectives, instead of to the educational institution being oriented towards learning and the community charged with social action. The idea of mutuality between agents is a fundamental factor to use those methodologies for praxis and epistemological dialogue (García-Romero, 2018; Clifford, 2017). Community Engaged Learning theoretically focuses on that, even though it is sometimes used as a more modern label than Service-Learning, but for the same reality (Haddix, 2015). Dialogic Education, with the focus on the equality between voices, can give us some guidance not to fall in those fallacies (Matusov et al, 2016).

In the case of science, Democratization of knowledge has become a field of interest for many researchers and activists (McIntyre, 2007), but many times it is reduced to the participation of non-researchers in scientific production, but without altering the rules of academia, since the decisions are taken by the researchers (Matusov et al, 2019). This kind of practices can serve to recover, value and hold useful knowledge coming from outside the university and could serve to even empower rural communities, but it doesn't allow for epistemological dialogue, and therefore doesn't promote authorship or real sovereignty on the community. Again, it is fundamental to take seriously all the voices, really entering in dialogue, without hierarchy on them. If the researcher is taking the decisions, doing all the questions and choosing what to consider from the voice of "others", then it is not possible to find ways out of the researcher's previous plan (Montenegro, Pujol & Vargas Monroy, 2015; McIntyre, 2009). Two methodologies of research are representative of this concern for the equality of rights between voices: Participatory Action Research (McIntyre, 2007) and Dialogic Research (Matusov et al, 2019).

In Participatory Action Research, the whole inquiry is organized about a comunal need, objective or concern (Montenegro, Pujol & Vargas Monroy, 2015). This way, the researcher occupies an auxiliary position, helping the community to produce knowledge, as the expert on methodologies and an outside voice capable of asking questions that the community can't. This is very much focused on practice, but it still separates functions, prioritizing the researchers way of creating knowledge. Whilst, academics that engage in Participatory Action Research

acknowledge how difficult a real democratization in the production of knowledge is. In this last trend, research is not oriented towards practice at all, but it focuses on how to create means and ways for dialogue, prioritizing the equity of voices (Matusov et al, 2019).

To accept this mutuality in science and education, as well as it being present-oriented, we also need to accept knowledge being temporary and changing. This is the focus of the Itinerant Curricular Theory or Theories of the People (Paraskeva, 2020) that advocates for an open dialogue between knowledge and ethics, focusing on concretion and its pertinence to practice. Also, mutuality rarely emerges by its own sake. For two different social actors to start dialogue, they need a common place to find and value each other (García-Romero, 2018). Rural Sustainable Development can function as a relevant and urgent social concern where science, education and social action can meet and start the construction of a mutuality.

FIELD OF ACTION: SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The pertinence of the alliance with sustainable rural development (Tirziu & Vrabie, 2017) is linked to the different place that the rural world and the cities occupy in the modern system. The paradigm of Progress has consolidated the city as its locus (Lynch & Revol, 1998). The concentration of the means of production entailed the construction of big factories, that were situated inside or near the cities, which created a cycle of population growth and a rural-urban migration. In that way, the concentration of capitals naturally entails the concentration of population and the centralization of society (Spector, 2014). Meanwhile, the abandonment of rural communities, previously settled in natural areas, is very convenient for the practices of extractivism (Medeiros Morais, 2019, Herrero, 2013) and Rural-urban migration was and is often performed by force (Calle Collado, 2019).

At the same time, the city is the center of a world based in the worship of technology and comfort, that follows an humanistic philosophy: the city is a place of diversity, where culture is born and developed, full of vibrant human life (Lynch & Revol, 1998). We can see that the conformation of the city as the center of the modern (and postmodern) world is the manifestation of one of the elements of the triple fallacy: the emancipation of humanity from Nature (Herrero, 2013). The city is shown as a place ideologically far from Nature or at least not dependent on it (Lynch & Revol, 1998). Nature is something that is “somewhere else”, condemned to otherness (García, 2020). It is difficult to think of real values, and much less practices, of responsibility towards sustainability in communities that are systematically unattached to the natural environment (Ibarlucea, 2020). This distance makes it very difficult

for cities to work towards the preservation of natural resources, even with the efforts of ecologist movements and the will of many citizens (Taibo, 2020). The structure of capitalism turns cities into sewers of resources and trash generators (Prats, Herrero & Torregk, 2016).

And as the city is in the center of the world, the rural world is banished to the periphery (Calle Collado, 2019). We can take as an example that the word “citizen” is usually used to refer to the individual as the holder of Rights and sovereignty. Of course, those of us living in rural areas are legally considered “citizens”, but it is remarkable that we need to be called something we aren’t to be considered relevant to society, it shows the otherness where the paradigm of Progress puts the rural world and its inhabitants.

Rural inhabitants can feel the otherness they have been banished to, which creates a political discontent for being the losers of globalization (Calle Collado, 2019). It is necessary to note here that this otherness has its biggest manifestation in areas affected by colonialism, specially in Latin-America, Africa and South-East Asia, but it is a global effect, even if it manifests itself with less intensity (Spector, 2014). As globalization and neoliberalism continues concentrating capital, local producers have to adapt to abusive prices (Medeiro Morais, 2019). Furthermore, the people can see the effects of extractivism and mass production of monocultures, damaging the land that and, with the passing of time, making it barren (Ibarlucea, 2020).

In rural communities of Southern Europe there is a widespread feeling of abandonment, which is not being politically heard by the institutional left, which is mainly established in an urban-proletarian discourse or postmodern movements that take place in the cities and take “citizens” as political subjects. The rural world feels the weight of the stereotypes both from the left and right wings of institutional politics, being considered old-fashioned, intolerant and ignorant and alternative, or at the same time: romanticized as exoticized (Ibarlucea, 2020). This deep rooted discontent is disputing its political orientation, either towards authoritarian values (Taibo, 2020) or politics of ecosocial transition with justice (Franquesa, 2019). In many countries where the far right is gaining strength, like Brasil, Italy, France or Spain, their strategy includes the situation of the rural inhabitants in the periphery. These movements construct an identity feeling that appropriates the totalitarian ideas present in the stereotype that the city assigns to them and creates nationalist discourses against diversity as the origin of their problems (Balboa, Castellero & Durán, 2019). In some countries those movements seem to be moving towards ecofascism, in others, it is nothing less than a movement to maintain the status quo of neoliberalism (Taibo, 2020).

If the search for rural mobilization with justice towards Collapse was already urgent, this potential totalitarian wave increases its importance. In the movements for Sustainable Rural Development, social justice and Sustainability can be understood as mutual values (Ibarlucea, 2020; Acciardi, 2020). Diverse communities are mobilizing and constructing economies, organizing self-care and work trying to keep a sustainable relationship with nature (Taibo, 2020). Many of those projects have two elements in common: a) the focus on the interdependence between human and between human and nature, following ecofeminist principles that universalize the culture of caring (Ibarlucea, 2020; Puleo, 2008); b) constructing sovereignty in practice, creating platforms of self management of resources and economic initiatives aimed at food sovereignty (Franquesa, 2019).

The efforts developed under those two common elements, that we could call rural emancipatory policies (Franquesa, 2019) are clear attempts to grab the reins of their own action towards ecosocial crises. The development of this authorship, nevertheless, is not a single-time action, it is a continuous movement of praxis (Matusov et al, 2019). The practices of sustainability are not new for rural communities, used to not produce trash, reuse everything, live with austerity and take what they need from the environment without damaging it (Calle Collado, 2019). But this kind of knowledge is concrete to every environment and small society, diverse and unique ways of humanity-nature symbiosis, and right now is in danger of disappearing (Ibarlucea, 2020).

If the chain of transmission of traditional and implicit knowledge breaks, that balance and symbiosis is also broken (García, 2020). It is necessary to create knowledge that is able to include and develop those “other” initiatives. This makes Rural Sustainable Development an urgent and privileged field for the democratization of knowledge through epistemological dialogue. We need to integrate science and education (as institutions of knowledge creation and socialization) in action, coordinate the God-eye perspective with knowledge in praxis. Knowledge needs to be made in action for and from the people that are working to develop their authorship in the times of Collapse. We can use the criteria of multiple usefulness that characterizes rural economy and practice, learning and acting can share a mutual endeavor (Ibarlucea, 2020).

“It is about thinking from the small, from the particularity of every space, giving prominence to its inhabitants, attending to specific absences and fleeing from the massive extent plans that could homogenize very diverse realities” (Ibarlucea, U.D. p 10)

LANGUAGE: ARTS FOR EXPLORATION

The third key element to address epistemological dialogue is to find alternative expressions to scientific positivist language, that is completely colonized by Hegemonic Science (Moghaddam, 2003), and naturally would put the non-researchers in a non-knowledgeable position. In that sense, art and art based research present clear opportunities.

Firstly, we need to understand art not as the creation of masterpieces by geniuses, but as the endeavour of imagination and meaning making that is present in everyday-life and that can be practiced by everyone (González-Rey, 2016). Art is oriented towards meaning-making, it is an exploratory activity towards the world and the being, through psychological processes of imagination and intersubjective and intrasubjective communication processes. As Gonzalez-Rey (2016) explains, imagination is not just fictional, but a process of exploring possible worlds and possible truths. Art visibilizes what is hidden or didn't exist for the public to take it into account (Charmaine, 2019). Art based research can serve to legitimize those different ways of knowledge and even dare to make them dialogue in a common ground of creation and meaning-making between multiple voices (Charmaine, 2019).

Art is fundamentally a process of inquiry, a search for truth with all the resources possible, allowing to open some black boxes of scientific method and taking into account different subjectivities (Charmaine, 2019; González-Rey, 2016), as well as empirical resources that are underestimated in Hegemonic Science. And Unlike Hegemonic Science, art based research is open-ended (Irwin, 2013), there is no clear correct answer, and as such it can open new gates on the search for practices of sustainability as different authors (researchers, activists, students) can feel safe in their pursuit for meaning-making (Charmaine, 2019).

These emergent, enquiring and open elements of art become paramount considering that "sustainability has thousands of varieties and faces. Everyone can contribute in her and his own way" (Strigl, 2019). In fact, arts based research is already being explored for environmental education and research in sustainability as Santana and Santana (2019) and Strigl (2019) present. Precisely, art is not only about creation, but also about communication (Vygotsky, 1978). In that sense, among the different ways of arts based research, we can find special interest in a/r/t/ography, a practice that combines art, research and teaching, as well as the expression through image and word/text (Springgay et al, 2005).

This methodology specially explores the capability of art to hybridate, to combine and to overcome qualities and separation. To be engaged in the practice of a/r/t/ography means to inquire in the world through a process of art making and writing. It is a process of double imaging

that includes the creation of art and words that are not separate or illustrative of each other but instead, are interconnected and woven through each other to create meaning (Springgay et al, 2005).

As art is interested in “places in-between” (Irwin, 2013), A/r/t/ography puts together the embodied knowledge with the written word, creating a third space that transcends the binarism of the Hegemonic Modernity and the colonial culture (Banerjee and Baker, 2019). A/r/t/ography relies on a multiplicity of perceptions held between and within sensual and textual ways of knowing. Knowing is situated within the midst and on the edges, in the periphery that is necessary to recall in the search of the praxis of sustainability (Paraskeva, 2020). This way of knowledge has its similarities with many pre colonial cultures that legitimized several sources of knowledge (Acciardi, 2020.)

The transdisciplinary dialogue in a/r/t/ography entails epistemological dialogue, as it goes much beyond the simple production of a piece of art (Levic & Springgay, 2008). Banerjee and Baker (2019) show us an example through the Tagore dance, how art has the capability to difuminate and move borders (in the example, between East/West) and create hybridations and mutuality in a continuous movement that emerges from the work. This way, the creation and inquiry in art is related to praxis, as it relies on its own process, and is oriented towards creation but also reflects about itself. A/r/t/ography fosters processes that allow us to rethink ethics, and let knowledge form embodiment to enter in consideration, as argued in Strigl (2019)

In the transdisciplinary dialogue between Art and Science, Economy and Politics, [...] It requires furthermore that all stakeholders engage in processes that are both rational and intuitive, solution-oriented but at the same time open-ended. (p 234)

Ethics, this way, are not just a rationally reflected and morally prescribed code, but something concrete that steams from relationships and the relation between body and meaning (Irwin, 2013) which, again, comes closer to the logic of the ethics of cultures that have been underestimated by Hegemonic Modernity (Muñoz & Grisales, 2014).

Arts based research allows for a rupture with the hierarchy of Hegemonic Science, it banishes the researcher from the throne of the “most knowledgeable”. The distance between researcher and researcher is reduced (Sara Pink, 2001 in Banerjee and Baker, 2019) and the participants are legitimized as knowledgeable. Important questions such as “who is the research for?” and “what is the research for?” are present. Also, multiplicity of roles (teacher/researcher/artist) can be occupied by people from different backgrounds (Springgay et al, 2005). In that sense, Participatory Action Research often relies on artistic expression and touches with a/r/t/ography.

Therefore art offers paths for a qualitative change in the way we look towards truth based in communication, emergency and legitimation of diversity in knowledge, that is needed to confront this historical moment, when we need to overcome Hegemonic Science. (Paraskeva, 2020).

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

I have exposed the need for epistemological dialogue in order to explore ways of confronting the ecosocial crises of the Collapse of capitalist system. First i argued the need of developing a praxis that unites social action and knowledge, and pointed towards methodologies such as Service-Learning and Participatory Action Research to do so; second, I pointed that Sustainable Rural Development is a privileged field for doing so; and third I argued how arts based research and a/r/t/ography in specific can entail a qualitative change on science to overcome the limits of Hegemonic Science. Nevertheless, the combination of all those elements is complex and can produce perversions.

We need to take into account the resistance of art to be instrumentalized for any goal. Art is a goal in itself, and it just loses its value and capability of honest meaning-making when it is instrumentalized. When that happens, the urgency of practice solutions would have priority over meaning-making, and could act as a judge of what knowledge is better or more convenient. This phenomena is even necessary to find solutions and new constructions, but it loses the sense of art and can create new hierarchies between worldviews.

For the same reason, the combination of Service-Learning with art is tricky. These two practices have two different ideas of Education: one more focused on it to be organic, combined with other social agents and functions to be practical. The other, as the honest search for truth and meaning-making with all the resources possible and without conditions. Even though they need each other to exist in praxis, there is a clear tension between practice and authenticity, between construction and deconstruction. Thus, when combined, we need to know this tension and reflect about the priority of one or other in our practice. We can create a Service-Learning or Community Educational Learning that has the mission of creating art, being this the final orientation. Or maybe art based research is one moment of the whole project of Service-Learning. There are ways how it can function and create the possibility for dialogue and action, but we need to navigate the tensions.

At the same time, this purpose might be more difficult when working with arts in natural sciences, as it is not a relationship between subjects, but a relation between subject and object,

where dialogue cannot exist (Bajtín, 2000). What can be of dialogue in natural sciences is about the legitimate sources of knowledge and ways of producing knowledge, as well as the ethics of the research. Both of them are fundamental in natural research, are a meta-science needed to give sense to science itself and to manage the relation of humanity in nature.

But, finally, the hardest tensions we would have to navigate, are those without legitimization of different ways of knowing and skepticism. Where does reasonable reivindications end and mysticism begins? Is mysticism even combinable with skepticism? What criteria would serve us to decide what to consider the truth? As Matusov (2018) argues, dialogue in equal rights can be the answer, as it is needed to take responsibility for your knowledge in front of other knowledge. But, in the hour of doubt, several forces would try to lean the balance: power and practice (what is practical in each moment) will be two of them. There cannot be universal solutions, in dialogue, justice and truth is a local matter, a matter of the concrete lifes engaging in it.

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