

Civil Society and the Globalisation of Locality between Latin America and Europe: Integration as a Case of Agonistic Cosmopolitics

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Abstract

Two aspects are addressed here of a critical perspective on issues of integration, in which the EU features as a model and a counterpart to South American processes: a) representations of cosmopolitan engagement in issues of development, rights and cultural identity; b) participation in attempts to promote alternative forms of global governance. Discourses of civil society activism and its global networks and participation in international forums thereby enact an agonistic cosmopolitics where Europe appears as both model and adversary. Derrida's logic of exemplarity is introduced to illustrate this point, in contrast to intellectual responses from Latin America emphasising globally connected localities – i.e. reconstructions of traditional ideas and signs of new discourses of community, religion and cultural identity as political resources. Such globalised localisms reconfigure historically crystallised forms of “influence” of Europe on Latin America, problematise notions of cosmopolitanism, and contest representations of both identities and their historical links.

Keywords: logic of exemplarity, EU-Latin American relations, global localities, civil society

1. Introduction

Slowly and unsurely, studies of processes of regional integration move to include non-state dimensions or trace the existing experiences through which social activism gets translated into the agenda of relevant debates and forms of participation beyond mere consultative mechanisms. In 2005, Jeffrey Haynes could still complain that “[u]ntil now, studies of regional cooperation have tended to ignore or pay only scant attention to the role of agency, with little attention devoted to various domestic and transnational agents, including interest groups, such as civil society actors and business corporations” (2005, p. 120). Important limiting factors to such a realisation lie in forms of power-knowledge that privilege the state or high-level, technocratic institutional dynamics as the determining elements in international relations and processes of regionalisation. Moreover, prevailing modalities of power-knowledge are anchored in representations of historical development that both function as justifications of the asymmetric and exclusionary practices based on state-centric politics and ignore the extent to which international structures and processes lay deep roots in an ethnocentric narrative. The discourses of European integration and their relation to global realities affected by or interacting with them, particularly in the South, are a telling example. Not only they carry over forms of self-presentation of Europe as the originating point of universal history or the key to any narrative of modernity, but they also put forward the European case as a model for virtuous forms of integration and cooperation across national borders (cf. Escobar, 2004; Medeiros, 2010; Merenson, 2007; Farrell, 2007, 2009; Moravcsik, 2007; Telò, 2007; Habermas, 2009).

Whether from an intellectual or a socially-activist perspective, agency has increasingly been understood and claimed to assert alternative figurations of being-together which insist on the need for a critical, agonistic contestation of apparently well-meaning and neutral expressions of such a model. At an intellectual level, postcolonial and other critical modes of discourse have articulated compelling rejections of the exemplary logic governing European relations to new or aspiring members and to international or regional partners. At the level of social activism, networks of civil associations, gathered around the banner of the alterglobalist movement, have become active participants in debates and initiatives connected with policies and politics of integration, domestically and globally. However marginal these two modalities of “postcolonial” agency of integration

remain to certain levels of decision making, their impact can no longer be ignored. With and against existing hegemonic discourses of integration, cooperation and regionalisation, such an agency begins to find ways not only to be heard, but also to set the agenda and the deliberative tone in certain areas.

Theirs is an understanding of integration as an agonistic, locally-rooted cosmopolitics: no real progress can be made without a clear thematisation of lingering dimensions of coloniality in the European Union's universalistic discourse. The always-already implicated nature of the relations between Europe and Latin America attests both the interweaving of colonialism, imperialism, and the modern system of national states, and the impossibility of speaking to/against its subordinating forms from a pristine, purely autochthonous, or morally untainted position. It will have to be in the borders and interstices of the never-fully-accomplished project of modernity (here exemplified through the expansive, globalising dynamics of European integration) that such voices can forge alternative spaces.

I will begin with an exploration of 'the logic of the example' that broadly governs the understanding of the place and role of Europe in modern and contemporary social and political debates, through one of the most radical attempts to question the naturalised self-image of Europe. Moving on to instantiate how existing treatments of the European integration are taken for granted as models of analysis and public action, I will focus on the Latin American engagement with the European Union.

2. The Logic of the Example: Encore Une Chance Pour l'Europe?

In his most sustained effort to think the event of contemporary Europe, *The Other Heading* (1991), Derrida frames it in terms of the logic of the example. Following his reading of Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, but his analysis of iterability, Derrida sees the example both in terms of a sample and a model (particularly when referred to Europe). Typically, he problematises the frontier between the two meanings to create the space for a (self) critical affirmation of the European identity. *L'Autre Cap* starts with two axioms: a) the new Europe is also old and even exhausted in its powers of persuasion an infinite experience, tainted as it is by Eurocentrism; b) what is proper to a culture is not being identical to itself, but to be different "with itself" (*avec soi*; 1991, pp. 14-15) (Note 1). These axioms of the law of exemplarity sum up the thrust of Derrida's response to what the new European identity and role should be as it faced the "seismic change" of the late-1980s events that brought the cold war to an end. They at once allow for the movement from particularism to universalism and forever block the second from becoming truly foundational by erasing the traces of its own contingency.

If there is a law of exemplarity, then Europe would have a chance of being true to its "heritage" of harbouring difference within itself, different with itself. In doing so, a new direction (*un autre cap*) (Note 2) becomes possible: that Europe actually becomes an example of openness, overcoming the ethnocentric tradition of modernity – geopolitically and historically European – and embracing a minor tradition of hospitality and cosmopolitanism, thus cultivating its difference *to/with itself*. Not folding back on its own identity, but advancing *in an exemplary way* towards what is different from it. This would bring about another "structure of borders", delineate another margin (*rivage*) (1991, pp. 17, 33).

In "Secrets of European Responsibility" (*The Gift of Death*), Derrida analyses the work of Jan Patočka, at the centre of which is the question of the *birth of modern Europe*, and locates another form of acceptance of the other that is also a form of subjection to the other: "The subject of responsibility will be the subject that has managed to make orgiastic or demonic mystery subject to itself; and it has done that in order to freely subject itself to the wholly and infinite other that sees without being seen. Religion is responsibility or it is nothing at all. Its history derives its sense entirely from the idea of a passage to responsibility" (1995, p. 2). The question for Europe, about Europe, is "why does it suffer from ignorance of its history, from *a failure to assume its responsibility* [my emphasis, JAB], that is the memory of its history *as history of responsibility*?" (1995, p. 4). First, because Europeans find it difficult to understand their responsibility as part of a *history* of religion (in terms of both the recognition of responsibility as a response to the other, of a bind to the other, and of the Christian history that opens up modern European history). European thinking rather tries to cast responsibility in terms of a free-standing, undetermined and unconditioned will or decision (Idem, p. 5). Secondly, because responsibility as framed by and only intelligible within a history, implies an *admission* that history is not closed, unmoveable or liable to decentering, it opens onto an abyss, precisely because history is tied to responsibility, faith and the gift (1995, pp. 5-6).

The logic of the example would then guard the promise of *another destination, a new direction, a change of course, another leadership (cap de l'autre)* (1995, p. 20). A different witness to the universal of which it would be just a case, a singular incarnation (1995, pp. 71-72) (Note 3). At least he *appeals* to it, summons a host of past and present voices who would perhaps lend their support to such a project. Writing in 1990, Derrida has in mind

all the transformations brought about by the changes in Eastern Europe – exemplified, as he says, by terms like *perestroika*, democratisation, reunification, market economy, political and economic liberalism – which were reverberating across the communitarian Europe's borders or rather ignoring them (Derrida, 1991, p. 24). His is a response to the other *within* European history, to its non-essential, heterogeneous beginnings as always already absorbing, repressing and transfiguring the other and a call for an open admission of this in less traumatic a fashion: it has always been the case, so why not explicitly welcoming this other (today's immigrants, *sans papiers*, alterglobalist non-European as well as European critics)?

Yet, it is surprising how atypically Derridean his own conclusions sound in *L'Autre Cap* and other pronouncements on “today's Europe”. Though he acknowledges the *seismic* changes affecting EU-ropes in the turn of the 1990s (and their reverberation, shock waves, shaking up of the “surface” structures), he still retains the “spiritual geography” of Europe, which *is* the idea of Europe, in terms of a “responsibility” to fulfil, a duty (*devoir*) to uphold simultaneous injunctions (cf. 1991, p. 75-78). Coming from the relentless unsettling pen of this Algerian-born Jew, how disconcerting is such a call to responsibility in the name of Europe, of another Europe, surely, but still enunciated from within Europe, with a French voice, even at the heart of France (Note 4)!

On the other hand, Derrida's example of European identity as generous, hospitable, cosmopolitan and aware of its own heterogeneous origins and present condition is remarkably self-contained: he looks to Europe, in *L'Autre Cap*, as a receiving end while what lies beyond its borders – former communist countries – disintegrates and resonates across them. Surely one could find many interventions by Derrida in solidarity with alterglobalist demands that certainly have places of enunciation outside the sphere of European influence. But the simplicity of the gesture, almost forfeiting the intricate logic of Derridean arguments on behalf of a conventional, even bland affirmation of the ‘reserves’ within European identity, cannot be overlooked. Even as he articulates such a position, the logic of the example as logic of the heading/leading is very much in operation in his own discourse.

The gesture and the discursive strategy is familiar to the critical tradition of European radical political discourse: it starts with a recognition of colonialism at the heart of the idea of modern Europe but proceeds to identify those strands within the major discourses of Europe as a civilisational force which hint at or explicitly develop universalistic, cosmopolitan figures of Europe's encounters with otherness. Derrida is quite comfortable with this. It is his language as well: “The idea of an advanced post of exemplarity is the idea of the European idea, its eidos, at once as *arkhè* – idea of beginning but also command (the cape as the head, place of capitalising memory and of decision, even the captain) – and as *telos* – idea of the end, of a limit that accomplishes or brings to completion, at the end of the work, at the point of success” (1991, p. 29).

In 2003, as the EU moved to adopt a common foreign policy, philosophical adversaries Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida co-signed a plea for such an institution, on the basis of the mass demonstrations that had happened early that year in several European cities against the invasion of Iraq. They call for a “transformative politics” that must be grounded on the “motives” and “attitudes” of European citizens, responsive to their majoritarian voice, but also assuming “solidarity with the outnumbered minorities” (Habermas and Derrida, 2003, p. 293). Theirs is an endorsement of the European example, albeit in a certain guise and within a divided Europe (Note 5), which, however, is in keeping to the law of exemplarity:

We welcome the Europe that found exemplary solutions for two problems during the second half of the twentieth century. The EU already offers itself as a form of “governance beyond the nation-state”, which could set a precedent in the postnational constellation. And for decades the European social welfare system served as a model. Certainly, they have now been thrown on the defensive at the level of the national state. Yet future political efforts at the domestication of global capitalism must not fall below the standards of social justice that they established. If Europe has solved two problems of this magnitude, why shouldn't it issue a further challenge: to defend and promote a cosmopolitan order on the basis of international law against competing visions? (Idem, p. 294)

The remaining narrative resumes most of the age-old threads connecting Europe to secularisation (and the suspicion against ‘transgressions of the border between politics and religion’), pacification of class conflicts through the welfare system, belief in the capacity of the state to coordinate social life and scepticism towards the market, acceptance of cultural diversity, awareness of the dark side of the Enlightenment and of technoscientific fascination. Though they claim that such developments are no longer prerogatives of Europe, their ‘West’ does not stretch further than the United States, Canada and Australia! Though they call for a *constructed* identity of Europe *from a citizens' perspective*, based in “self-conscious appropriation” of past experiences, what Europe

should offer is the *canonical picture of modernity*: privatisation (or depoliticisation) of faith; trust in the “civilising power of the state”; party politics which, through an adversarial relation between conservatism, liberalism and socialism, “fosters *sensitivity of citizens to the paradoxes of progress*”; collective action for social justice as an ethical commitment to solidarity and equality for all; and anti-totalitarian sensitivity to “*injuries to personal and bodily integrity*” (Idem, p. 295-296).

This analysis offered by Habermas and Derrida is a plea, a summon, a rallying cry awaiting a response. As with all projects, it must bring to life the very beings its interpellation is supposed to represent. Although its analytical mode seems to point to a description, the authors are very aware that it is a question of inventing a cohesive progressive European identity in the face of so many indications to the contrary; that a work of conjuring up past experiences as ‘candidates’ to act as determining features of this rather volatile tradition is in order. An external observer, looking from afar, cannot help see in such strenuous endeavours clear signs of *auto-affection*: Europe speaks of/to itself, claims to draw from itself all the required energies and symbols of its new apparition as an encompassing Union, and projects itself outward in search of echoes of its former and current institutional forms, as if nothing in this move at least resembled the “originary” colonial moment of its inception (Note 6).

It is easy to show how such constructions of the European example can be recurrently found in the literature (Camargo, 2008; Malmoud and Schmitter, 2006). To illustrate the operation of the logic, let us briefly consider two examples. One of them ponders on the place and role of European integration as an element of comparative politics in a globalising context; the other explores perceptions of the EU/Latin American relations.

2.1 First Example: European Integration and Comparative Politics

Jeffrey Haynes begins an overview of the European Union in the context of regionalism by referring to Europe's singularity: “What uniquely characterizes the EU is its ‘mature set of institutions’ that make it – ‘by some distance’ – the most developed project of regional integration in the world’. The current advanced stage of EU development represents a complex process of five decades” (Haynes, 2005, p. 121). In comparison with other regional experiences, particularly in the Americas – NAFTA, Mercosul – the record of achievement is said to be incomparable (Note 7).

Since 2004, the EU would have moved beyond an “artificial division” towards a “pan-European Union”, preceded by a complex process that was prepared for at least a decade (Idem, p. 122). Political pressure to adopt liberal democratic and economic structures as a condition for full membership would, however, not be the only incentive. According to Haynes (2005, p. 123), it is also a question of identity:

[I]t is also seen as emblematic of a rediscovered, shared ‘European-ness’. For Hettne, the ‘question “what is Europe?” (...) is a social construct ... an idea, rather than a territory’. It implies that ‘the content of “European” can be defined normatively by: a strong role for civil society, various institutionalized forms such as parliamentary decision making, and a democratic culture stressing above all individualism and human rights inherent in the individual human being’ (Hettne 2001, p. 38-9). For our concerns, the issue and application of ‘European-ness’ is important as it sheds light on the question of the ‘de-easternization’ of former Eastern Europe – or, as spokesmen for civil society in those countries called it, ‘a return to Europe’ (Bogdanor 2003).

In this reading, there is a clear attraction that ‘European-ness’ exerts on the newly joined members, which would operate through internalisation of the normative content of ‘European’. Haynes’s perception of the ‘de-Easternization’ effect produced by this move prompts me to see in this broader identification a reinforcement of the normative ‘core’, as Habermas and Derrida would call it, rather than a decentering of Europe that Derrida’s other gesture tends to favour. Haynes comments that “when transitional democracies seek to join developed regional organizations, such as the EU and NAFTA, then the norms of political and economic behaviour that the existing members ... already exemplify become a condition of membership” (2005, p. 117). He argues for the increasing role of non-state actors alongside the politico-cultural dimension of belonging to the EU as part of the normative content of ‘European-ness’. He notes the many forms of participation of social (and business) actors built into the institutions of the EU. But he is also aware of the relative weight of such spaces for social agency and of the structurally limited, consultative nature of the roles performed through those spaces (2005, p. 96, 126). He seems to locate the productivity of agency in the emergence of a new approach to regionalism in the post-cold war period, which seeks to take into due consideration the increasing role of non-state actors as a *legitimate* and *necessary* force of regionalisation (2005, p. 119-120) (Note 8).

2.2. Second Example: European Perceptions of EU-Latin America Relations

The second reference I would like to highlight explicitly addresses the mutual perceptions of EU and Latin American leaders. In a study of European Union/Latin American (EU/LA) relations, based on empirical research among diplomats, political, social and business leaders in both regions, Christian Freres and José Antonio Sanahuja (2005) explore in detail a number of problems which would stem from ‘mutual misunderstandings’. Despite the much repeated rhetoric of shared views and values regarding democracy, the international system, the role of the state and of regionalism in development and peace among leaders, the authors start with the recognition that “[n]either of these regions appear to have convergent interests, and their lines of action often cross over without actually meeting which makes dialogue difficult” (2005, p. vii). Contrasting perceptions of the responsibilities and achievements of each party and a failure to adjust to changed conditions have led to stagnation and frustration. Freres and Sanahuja argue for crucial improvement in bi-regional relations in four areas, having to do with aid, autonomy, increased presence and development of a bi-regional strategic alliance (2005, p. 5-6), and for mutual understanding of the transformation each region has undergone more recently (2005, p. 44-45). Those areas are clearly enunciated from Europe’s perspective, even though the authors are genuinely sympathetic towards Latin America and keen to devise proposals that could strengthen effective cooperation between the two regions (Note 9).

Ironically, the very enlargement of the European Union is said to have produced an increased heterogeneity that is conducive to an inward-looking moment (Note 10) in the former’s concerns and politics (2005, p. 14-15). Such heterogeneity could even lead to deep divisions affecting the global role of the Union as a leading actor, shrinking the reach of its positive impact, focusing it on managing regional conflicts, favouring protectionism, and failing to exert influence more broadly or to seek reforms to the multilateral system (2005, p. 17). According to Freres and Sanahuja, “This *panorama does not seem to be the best one to create a Union which pays more attention to the South*, except for those bordering areas where there is a mixture of post-colonial paternalism and security fears predominate” (Ibidem; authors’ emphasis). Such a situation represents a major disincentive for Europe to play its preferred game in global politics, which would be a foreign policy based on ‘soft power’ (2005, p. 17-18) – the power of *example*.

On the other hand, the authors are conscious of the tendency, in EU/LA relations, for Europe to ‘sell’ or ‘export’ its social model, a model which is under transformation and being questioned within Europe itself (2005, p. 32, 33). Coupled with the secondary attention given to issues of social cohesion and the specific nature of Latin American economic needs as middle-income countries, the attempt to offer the European model as a blueprint or benchmark for the cooperation can backfire and be perceived as a non-dialogical strategy. It is striking how unconcerned the authors seem to be with the clear unevenness of their use of ‘region’ or ‘regional’ when applied to Europe and Latin America. Even when they show recognition of the heterogeneous nature of Latin America (2005, p. 35-37), it continues to be treated as an *existing regional entity* – only contrastively at fault compared to the EU. Now, despite the progress made toward regionalisation in ‘Latin America’, the latter is not a union, not even a geographically discrete entity. There are serious colonial overtones to the history of such a name. Regionalisation was until recently pursued on at least two subregional fronts (the Andean Community of Nations and Mercosul), whereas the Union of South American Nations (Unasul) is only dawning, not even fully ratified by all of its members (Note 11). But *Unasul* does not encompass Central American countries, Mexico or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations. It is *South American*. In contrast, the EU is always portrayed – and presents itself – as an accomplished region, even when certain initiatives are clearly driven by only a few of its member-states.

Far from a mere definitional issue, the status of the EU’s partner in this conversation has clear political and practical implications and is symptomatic of unresolved issues that have to do with the different dynamics of integration in the two continents but ultimately date back to colonial times. It seems that more attention is still required towards the imaginary of interregional relations in this case. In particular, a) how ‘Europe’ as a signifier of civilisation and social advancement as well as of colonialism and imperialism crosses over into its current description as the ‘European Union’; and b) how ‘Latin America’ oscillates between an attributed identification, an object of self-identification and a rejection of its ‘Latin-ness’ which nonetheless enacts another form of articulated identity. This is where the identification of discourses wrestling with the logic of exemplarity needs to be brought in.

3. Latin American Discourses of Integration and the Logic of Exemplarity: Intimations of (post) Coloniality?

There is a visible gap between intellectual constructions of the historical, epistemic and ideological role of

‘Europe’ that critical discourses emphasise and the myriad forms of economic, technological and incrementally political interchanges between ‘Latin America’ and ‘Europe’. Critical discourses of ‘Europe’ and persistent attempts to reiterate the logic of exemplarity are in stark contrast. Whether academic or actor-oriented, prevailing readings of the relations between Latin America and Europe are actively comparative and contrastive; gauging differences in scale, rhythm and perspective; modelling; proposing adaptations (Rodríguez, 2005; Vasconcelos, 2007; Vigevani et al. 2008; Vigevani and Ramanzini, 2009; Rueda-Junquera, 2009; Patricio, 2011). This includes those who argue that the Latin American (diverse and even contradictory) experiences of integration only come second to Europe in their timing and complexity (Vasconcelos, 2007; Dri, 2011). Such mode of discourse hardly ever raises the epistemic status of comparison, the politics of exemplarity as a field of power relations (Moreiras, 2001; Castro-Gómez, 2003, p. 73; Escobar, 2004). They are remarkably oblivious of or indifferent towards considerations of colonialism, imperialism, and power-knowledge in making sense of processes of integration. The instrumental logic of commerce, mechanisms for efficient management of the various scales involved (local communities, national interests, sub-regional initiatives, regional and interregional relations, bilateral and multilateral commitments, global flows and activism) command all attentions.

However, there is a long standing (also diverse and contradictory) critical tradition of European-Latin American relations that could be said to constitute a belated postcolonial (Note 12) interrogation. Coming from a history of cultural and political discourses seeking to reconcile the imperatives of ‘development’ and ‘modernisation’ with popular sovereignty and political autonomy *vis-à-vis* the international powers, those critical discourses followed nationalistic or cosmopolitan lines. Sometimes these criss-crossed instrumentally or were forced into temporary coalitions, including the various forms taken by the current discourse of integration. Despite the strong impact of US-Latin American relations in the region, the long standing ties with Europe (particularly Portugal, Spain, France, Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom) have always been strong and mobilised both the imagination and constructive energies of various actors.

It is within this theoretical, political and cultural sensibility that I would like to inscribe the tension between the critical register and the iterative (Note 13) logic of exemplarity. Its most distinctive move is a certain form of particularist affirmation which seeks to find local sources of inspiration for its critical voice. It is here that nationalist modulations can build equivalences with cosmopolitan activism such as the one represented by the alterglobalist movement (epitomised in the experience of the World Social Forum). It is also through this insistence on the priority of the local as the place of constitution of the global that another discourse on integration can be inscribed, both interrupting the modelling power of exemplarity and introducing another dimension of agency to the practices of integration and interregional (EU/LA) relations. Whether one thinks of Laclau’s populist politics (2005), Mignolo’s border thinking (1999) or traditional debates on syncretism and hybridity (Canclini, 2003; Moreiras, 2001), the main strands of this postcolonial polyphony lead to an agonistic relation to the discourse of integration.

4. Latin America in the Eurocentric Mirror: Coloniality and/as Exemplarity

There is no single or simple Latin American identity. Although the pressure towards claiming one grew throughout the 20th century and flowed into the regionalising initiatives of the mid-1980s, any attempt to crystallise one will clash with historical dissonances. Although far from univocal, “[i]ts origin lies in an outstanding experience of contrast and contradiction with the memory of the colonial regime, with national and liberal projects resulting from the processes of acquiring political autonomy, with mechanisms of economic and financial dependence, and, mainly, with the plurality of composition of its populations” (Martins, 2004, p. 16). In the attempt to act out that contrast/contradiction *there is a multitude of strategies towards and searches for the (proper) name*, more or less ruled by a *double bind*: rejecting various forms of stereotyping, classification and positioning *while* reasserting a commonality which is as much a future aspiration as it invokes fragments of the past (Garcia Canclini, 2003, p. 76-94; 2007, p. 163-181; Maia, 2010). In both cases, integration needs to navigate through a meandering path of minor(ity) identities, national cultures and histories, multiple scales of ‘regional’ space, and overlapping forms of domination and subordination that circulate through global capitalism.

A much sharper critical interrogation of the attachment to Europe as exemplary can be found in a number of interventions based on what Castro-Gómez (2003), following Foucault, calls “a critical ontology of the present”. They aim at showing how (a) the very birth of (European) modernity is inseparably coupled with practices of classification, institutionalisation, positioning and epistemic justification of the colonial relation between the New World and Europe, with effects extending beyond the end of colonialism; (b) the colonial difference is the space where such power constellation is confronted by *local histories* and *subaltern voices* situated at different space-times (Quijano, 2000; Moraña, Dussel and Jáuregui, 2008); (c) much of the current global situation (including, I would add, discourses of integration and EU/LA relations) evokes more than mere analogies with

contemporary movements having to struggle against elements of modern cosmopolitanism loaded with the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2000, p. 735-742); (d) attentive to the contingent nature of the present, such a discourse sees Latin America as a “tempestuous configuration in which different social practices are combined” and the colonial difference can be activated (Castro-Gómez, 2003, p. 71). Such a perspective would consider any approximation to the EU *as a model* as mere complicity with the colonial logic of Eurocentrism. The conditions for dialogue would lie in the abandonment of the logic of exemplarity as such, amounting to a “decolonial shift” which stops “seeing ‘modernity’ as a goal rather than seeing it as a European construction of history in Europe’s own interests” (Mignolo, 2005, p. xix; Maia, 2010).

“Latin” America is, in this view, originally an act of European naming (Napoleonic France) and of Creole elites traversing between the “external” colonialism of Baroque powers to the “internal colonialism” of the nation/state building projects, in the 19th century (Mignolo, 2005, p. 65, 82-89) (Note 14). The way out of internal colonialism is found in the “border” space, at once within and without modernity/Eurocentrism, of unassimilated differences and contemporary critical expressions of Indigenous and Afro-descendant movements, alterglobalism and the political left turn in South America in the early 2000s (cf. Mignolo, 2005, p. 92-93, 101-103, 135-145; 2000, p. 739-740; Escobar, 2004).

There is much value in this line of critique, but the “hybrid” gesture of enunciating the critique in-between the colonial space and its obverse – clearly a more consequential break with the logic of exemplarity than Derrida’s European reassertion – is sometimes marred by a certain reproduction of the criticised logic in its assumed “purity”. Modernity appears too much as an accomplished single path, rather than a political construction of universality that was never pure and entirely successful. The critique plays down the enmeshment of Latin American and European concepts and self-representations, and presents a rather flat and idealised picture of what is going on in Latin America, as an epochal change, a “point of no return” (Mignolo). A deeper (self-)realisation of the agonistic relationship their version of cosmopolitanism involves would really help here. It would certainly be closer in keeping with the more hybrid and ambiguous discourses of localism taking place at the level of civil society and firmly inhabiting the force fields of integration and regionalisation.

5. Civil Society Networks and Agonistic Cosmopolitics: Locality, Integration and the Counter-example

The scene of regionalisation was deepened and widened from the early 1990s, when the environmental question went truly global beyond the protocols of intergovernmental structures. As Scholte highlights, “[a]n unofficial ‘new multilateralism’ of civil society associations has arisen alongside the official multilateralism of global governance agencies” (2005, p. 218; see also Haynes, 2005, p. 105-106; Tiessen, 2011). Many of the issues that have taken global prominence were either taken up by such movements and networks from the perspective of locality (at community or national levels) or forced into the agenda by mobilisation and mobile and creative techniques of framing and exposure. They have contributed to raise high the recognition of non-state dimensions of global governance and fuelled hopes of new forms of contestation of global capitalism (cf. Scholte, 2005, p. 219-221, 241-52; Munck, 2006; Milani and Keraghel, 2005; Storey, 2005).

Latin America has been one of the most active regions in the world in terms of articulating civic critical responses to the challenges of globalisation and questions of regional and interregional integration have always loomed large in such initiatives. Themes like sustainable development resonate strongly with calls for local empowerment, recognition of ethnic, cultural, religious and social minorities and demands for the expansion of the agenda and institutions of integration to make room for social and cultural issues (Burity, 2009). The emphasis on globally connected localities has created an intricate articulation of modern discourses of social activism and reconstructions of traditional ideas of community, religion and cultural identity. Churches and faith-based organisations, social movements and a large web of small and large non-governmental organisations have been at the forefront of the alterglobalist movement.

Such globalised localisms reconfigure historically crystallised forms of “influence” of Europe on Latin America, problematise notions of cosmopolitanism which reproduce the primacy of Northern intellectual and political perspectives and set off disputes over representations of both identities and their historical links. Their emphasis on *globally connected localities* try to level the field in relation to non-Western and non-modern forms of knowledge and social organisation, which are at the same time reconstructions of traditional ideas and signs of new discourses of community, religion and cultural identity as political resources. Instead of looking towards Europe as a model, they claim a dialogical approach based on a realisation of the interstitial terrain in which integration can be constructed in terms of a “globalisation from below”. Dialogue is understood more in terms of an agonistic relation than of consensus: it demands equality, participation and solidarity rather than condescending approaches based on “lessons to learn”. Alterglobalism nicely fits such orientation whereby

“glocal” voices explore the ambiguities, margins and unevenness of the historical and contemporary exchanges between Latin America and Europe.

Being dependent on resources originating from the international cooperation but also increasingly claiming access to public funds, the most articulate organisations are thus deeply embedded in the fabric of institutional life locally and internationally. They need to constantly negotiate their views, priorities and forms of action *vis-à-vis* requirements and organisational logics related to national state, international and multilateral agencies. Though many civil organisations have been trapped by the managerial logic of neoliberal governance practices in the post-1990s, those closer to the alterglobalist movement have remained critically aware of the possibilities of self-assertion and political pressure as regards the politics of integration and interregionalism.

The discourse of civil society activism and its emerging organisational expressions, therefore, enact an agonistic cosmopolitics where Europe appears as both model and adversary. Participation in various attempts to promote alternative forms of local and global governance has proliferated and some alternative experiences and policies emerged to promote participatory budgeting, to turn consultative policy *fora* into deliberative ones with authority to monitor and influence the agenda of policy makers, and to make their respective national states accountable to supranational structures and international treaties. In areas such as environmentalism, global health, development, social and cultural rights, gender and sexual politics, the involvement of Latin American organisations and civil networks has been crucial to broaden the scope of demands and spaces for participation, despite the inchoate and incremental character of the resulting institutionalisation (Milani, 2008; Montero, Paikin and Makarz, 2009; Lima, 2010).

The combined effects of a critical discourse informed by a postcolonial approach interrogated through the specificity of Latin American social formations and incremental, but wide-ranging changes to the hitherto state-dominated spaces of regional integration and interregional cooperation are altering the logic of exemplarity that has traditionally governed relations with Europe. It puts pressure on the attempts by both national governments and European representatives to steer the process in terms of the “disinterested” offer of another Europeanisation of Latin America. And it multiplies the frontiers where the contestation of exemplarity is enacted.

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Notes

Note 1. I use the original edition of this work in French, and all quotes are my own translation.

Note 2. As is known, the title of the book in French (*L'Autre Cap*) allows for a rich sliding of distinct meanings as cap could be variously understood in context as “direction”, “route”, “cape”, “vantage point”, “limit”, “leader(ship)”, “capital”. The whole reflection explores the essentially ambiguous character of identity as each of those meanings become the (unstable) referent of the latter.

Note 3. A very sophisticated and compelling analysis of the relation between particular and universal can be found in the work of Ernesto Laclau, both approximating and diverging from Derrida's interpretation. Although I will not be able to explore it here, in order to stick to the problematisation of Europe being pursued with reference to Derrida, it forms part of my own general orientation towards this “dialectic” (cf. Laclau, 1996; 2000; 2005).

Note 4. In his address at the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of *Le Monde Diplomatique* in May 2004, in Paris, Derrida's words could not more eloquently express this “performative self-contradiction”: “I cannot imagine such a paper thriving in the same way, with the same degree of liberty and the same high standards, in a different country or a different continent. That implies that we, as Europeans, have a unique political consciousness and sense of duty. It doesn't mean the paper and the movements it champions are limited to a Eurocentric or Franco-centric perspective. Rather, it should serve as a reminder of Europe's role in the counter-globalisation movement” (Derrida, 2004).

Note 5. Divided in its position vis-à-vis the Iraq War; divided in relation to surrendering national sovereignty to an European state (particularly in the case of the newly accepted members); divided between the “core of Europe” (France, Germany, Benelux countries?), Britain and a certain periphery of Europe (cf. Habermas and Derrida, 2003:292-293; see also Lloyd, 2005: 29-30).

Note 6. This motif has been powerfully developed by Enrique Dussel (2003) and Aníbal Quijano (2000). Although I do not share entirely their own conclusions, I recognise the productive network of inquiry their work is part of, which will be partially discussed later on.

Note 7. A few years later, Haynes assumes a sharper critical position in relation to the developmentalist role of the European Union in promoting “political globalisation” in terms of a market-centred model: “Unlike economic globalization, political globalization – typically in the form of advocacy of democratization and democracy in the developing world – is often a state-led project, coordinated by the US and/or the European Union (EU). They usually follow a standard template that emphasizes belief that the best framework for globalization to improve development outcomes in a worldwide free market (albeit under Western control, so that the latter benefits the most)” (2008:49).

Note 8. Haynes observes that the “new regionalism approach” does not fail to include the not so virtuous role of transnational corporations. He even considers the latter to be more effective in lobbying and negotiating their interests at the various instances of “civil society” consultation, contributing to muffle the voice of those who seek to act in solidarity with the “disadvantaged” (2005: 127). On Latin American new regionalism, see Sanahuja, 2007; Rueda-Junquero, 2009: 65-74.

Note 9. When calling for a new strategy towards Latin America that can move forward in relation to the existing one, first formulated in 1994 and having hardly changed in any significant way, the authors are very clear with regard to where the initiative lies: “First of all, the member States must feel that they are active subjects, so the text must be planned as a strategy of the Union as a whole. (...) Secondly, private European players must find a space that enables them to play a greater part in these ties, including the process of formulating policies. Finally, the strategy would have to look for the complicity of a variety of Latin American players, both public and private, so that they are not merely objects of the Community's policy” (Freres and Sanahuja, 2005: 26).

Note 10. This perception can also be found among Latin American analysts, for whom the very profile of the new EU members introduces competing perspectives and economic interests within the Union itself, to the

detriment of Latin American aspirations to benefit from a larger market (cf. Martins, 2004).

Note 11. Brazil, Paraguay and Colombia have yet not formally ratified the Unasul's constitutive treaty. The treaty was enforced as from March 2011, after Uruguay submitted its ratification a month earlier, fulfilling the ninth adhesion required for the treaty to come into effect.

Note 12. I am deliberately operating a torsion on the current meaning of “postcolonial” here. Postcolonialism as an intellectual discourse largely originating in the context of former British colonies, particularly India, is a rather recent phenomenon in Latin America. Many of its features are not original, though, having close correspondents in Latin American cultural and political criticism reaching back to the 1930s. The impact of Asian and African decolonisation on such forms of (re)constructing the relation to Europe (and the US) in the 1950s and 1960s provided an important connection to the experiences in and around which contemporary postcolonialism finds its place of enunciation. Several forms of articulation taking place at the intellectual level and through increasing connections among civil society actors, particularly in the context of the global justice movement have further reinforced the plausibility of a dialogue and mode of discourse that could be called postcolonial in Latin America as well (Domingues, 2010: 19; Ribeiro, 2001; Escobar, 2004).

Note 13. I use this term in its Derridean resonance, to highlight two dimensions of the sample/model bind discussed above: a) every origin is divided within itself, harbours heterogeneous sources, results of fierce battles, and unresolved tensions around the very core of its definition; b) every discourse or historical force that reaches a point in which its affirmation and reproduction imply colonising or imposing its imperial grip on other particulars must pay the price of its repetition by being altered (whether through self-adapting or being challenged, resisted). It doesn't take very long for the subjugated or subordinated forces and discourses to spot the internal differences and exploring them in any way possible that can open up possibilities of reversal, negotiation or liberation. Exemplarity can also be responded to from the underside, in terms of an agonistic relation to it (more about this shortly). Iteration, then sums up both logical and political dimensions that can fruitfully – and sometimes against the grain of Derrida's own pronouncements on European politics – to the debates at hand in this article.

Note 14. An alternative historical reconstruction of the notion of “Latin-ness” (*Latinidad[e]*) in its relational and agonistic dimensions can be found in Brandalise (2008). A similar attempt in the context of a reflection on the emergence of the South American Union of Nations, Unasul, in 2004, can be found in Parker Gumucio (2008).