EDITORIAL

Latin American intellectuals from different institutions, mostly from Hispanic-American countries, gathered at the end of the 1990s to form the Modernity/Coloniality group. Since the previous decades, their work had as a common point the concern to update the Latin American critical tradition, in the light of postcolonial studies. The publication "La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales", organized by Edgard Lander in 2000, by the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), presented the group’s ideas to the academic debate. The Portuguese version of this collection was made available by the CLACSO virtual library in 2005. This perhaps explains a certain mismatch in the use of “decolonial” terminology in the Brazilian academic environment, which has been observed more clearly in recent years.

It is undeniable the reach of the formulations of such intellectuals who, from their proposal for an epistemic rupture, have given rise to heated debates, either to reaffirm their assumptions or to confront them. Such reach seems to result from a militant attitude, which reaffirms the theoretical autonomy of Latin American intellectual production. Despite the interruption of its action as a group, which was more intense in the first decade of the 21st century, the current political context contributes to the pertinence of these intellectuals' reflection, opening up to a myriad of new interpretations, which proclaim themselves decolonial, or are read as such.

However, like several of the authors framed in what Nelson Maldonado Torres called the “decolonial turn”, it is understood that the effort to demarcate the intellectual autonomy of Latin America is not new.

Since the beginning of colonization, the historical processes produced a cultural complex with its own material and representative dimensions, even if the colonial differences made explicit and highlighted by the decolonial option were reserved.

However, to stay in a closer period, it is inescapable to mention the interpretations that dialogued with Marxism to discuss the condition of Latin American countries, in the consolidation of world capitalism. From authors such as Mariátegui in Peru and Caio Prado Jr. in Brazil, a more structured thought on the conditions of insertion of Latin America in the capitalist system has been theoretically reinforced in the field of human sciences. But the Latin American tradition was not restricted to Marxist thought, as demonstrated by the contributions of Raul Prebisch and Celso Furtado, representatives of the group of intellectuals who met at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), formulators of developmental thinking. The historical-structural method was created there, which sought to articulate different scales of interpretation of Latin American phenomena. From the determinations of the international system, to the micro-definitions managed by groups and specific historical subjects.

A theoretical framework confronted by Afro-Caribbean Marxism, based on the contributions of authors such as Franz Fanon and Aimè Cesaire, who raised the idea of race as the essence of the domination that made possible the world expansion of capitalism.

At the end of the 1960s, this movement would intersect in different interpretations of Latin American dependence, involving cultural and economic variables in a dense debate that had the participation of numerous Brazilian intellectuals. Among them, Ruy Mauro Marini, Teotônio dos Santos, Vania Bambirra and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. It was within...
this debate that the work of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano gained prominence, above all from his contributions to the concepts of marginality and dependent urbanization, highlighting here his dialogue with the Spaniard Manuel Castells. As is well known, Quijano would become a central figure in the decolonial debate, with formulations about the coloniality of power.

It was also in the late 1960s that the fields of architecture, urbanism, design and the arts turned to reflect on the themes of US imperialism and economic and cultural dependence in Latin America. Names such as Enrique Brownie, Jorge Henrique Hardoy and Gui Bonsiepe, in dialogue with dependency theorists, sought to articulate the historical study of the formation of the Latin American space with design practice.

At the end of the 20th century, cultural studies, postcolonial studies and world-systems theory would increase Latin American production. Thus, following the perspectives of analysis and their disciplinary intersections. The so-called decolonial option results, therefore, from this intellectual density, which at the end of the 20th century involved intellectuals, some of whom participated in the Latin American critical tradition, such as Enrique Dussel and Aníbal Quijano. To the ideas of underdevelopment and dependence were added the idea of coloniality of knowledge in the scope of the social and human sciences, which directly addresses the issue of the enunciation of places and bodies with regard to the production of knowledge. The analysis makes explicit the colonial condition, which, inaugurated in the invasion of America, lasted even after the independence of Latin American nations. The new contours of colonial difference from the 19th century on would have consolidated the modern capitalist world-system based on the racial and sexual division and exploitation of labor. The emergence of the new industrial powers, England and later the United States, was based on the reproduction of historical social and economic inequalities, long established, with the old colonial system. For decolonial theorists, this logic would have specific characteristics in Latin America, both because of its past as an Iberian colony, and because of its position in the face of the emergence of the United States as a world power after World War II.

Currently, the new geopolitical disputes and the crisis of Western democracies attest to the limits of the civilizational promise of a Eurocentric base, denounced as an ideological cover of coloniality, causing uncertainties and the search for paths by the most different areas of knowledge.

Thus, it is justified to bring together some reflections in the fields of art, architecture and the production of urban space, which dialogue with the theoretical references in question, from different points of view.

The debate here takes place from different perspectives, from researchers who have incorporated the emergence of these approaches in the formulation of their theoretical and historiographical problems. The very marked differences between the research objects and the analyses presented show that, in addition to new themes, it is knowledge about them that is renewed. The texts that follow share a certain emphasis on interpretations that want to confront the hegemonic narratives.

In the paper “Coloniality and decoloniality analytics: some basic spatial dimensions in architecture”, Leo Name starts from the theses Nelson Maldonado-Torres, but proposes to deepen the reflection on spatial analysis, rehearsing four new theses, in addition to those listed by the Puerto-Rican intellectual. In this way, he seeks to elucidate how the idea of race, on which the white and bourgeois ideal of modernity is based, crossed the conceptions of space in the urban, constructive and representational dimensions that condition architectural work. To achieve this goal, his rigorous understanding of decolonial literature makes an important contribution to researchers in the field of architecture who wish to enter this debate.

In this same perspective, Iaci d’Assunção Santos makes a spatial reading of colonization based on literature. In “Embody Moema: the female body
in the time-space of (re) production of Brazil as a colony", the epic poem by José de Santa Rita Durão, from 1781, is analyzed in the light of the production process of the time-space of Brazil Colony, to explain the brutal aspects of the occupation that subjugated the female body. The gender issue, which appeared little in the initial approaches of the theorists of the decolonial turn, was further evidenced by what is conventionally called decolonial feminism. With contributions, among others, from Maria Lugones, Rita Segato and Silvia Cusicanqui. Before them, the work of Glória Anzaldúa had been a reference for the turn. D'Assunção Santos presents here an interesting reading of the work of Italian Silvia Federici, to think about the long-term transformation of the body in literature, historical narratives, painting and sculpture. Thus, elucidating how the vestiges of Indianism, death in water, romantic death and the theme of the female nude intertwine with the most violent dimensions of the colonization process and in the transition to capitalist society.

Establishing a dialogue with these perspectives, but from a very different point of view, Ana Paula dos Santos Salvat puts in suspicion the hegemonic historiography that presented urban models in America as transfers of European models. In the paper “From America to Europe: a decolonial history of Main Square of Mexico City”, the author presents the formation of this monumental square as a cross between the permanence of elements from Mexico-Tenochtitlan with the Castilian transformations. Thus, a new perspective for urban history is launched, because, while it is indisputable that treatises bring theoretical models disseminated throughout the world, the historical experience of the Mexican square also appears as a fundamental contribution to urban transformations in Europe. Whose landmark would be the construction of the Plaza Mayor de Valladolid in the 16th century, which is posterior to the monumental Mexican space.

In a way, Ana Salvat’s approach updates and renews, in historiographic terms, a series of interpretations that questioned modernity as an exclusive product of European colonization. Thus, foreseeing, in the Latin American experience, the foundations of an art of its own that actively influenced global processes. In part, this is a motto captured by Eustaquio Ornelas Cota Jr. in the intellectual trajectories he proposes to cross. “Aiming at the North for what? Reflections by Marta Traba and Aracy Amaral on art and culture in Latin America (1970s)” shows these two women, as activists in the Latin American cultural scene. In the firm intention of overcoming what they understood as “cultural dependence”, they sought to bring together artists and institutions in the region, with a view to building autonomy on the world stage. Thus, in the 1970s, they resorted to the work of Torres García, who in the 1940s, by inverting the map of America in his paradigmatic work, called into question the very meaning of “Aiming at the North”. This reading shows that the decolonial perspectives of the 21st century in the fields of culture must consider their long-lasting foundations, so that current academic reflections do not neglect the historical contributions that were fundamental to the debate.

In the paper “Decolonial perspectives for a pluriversal design”, Viviane Nicoletti and Bruna Ferreira Montuori reveal the permanence of concerns about the colonial dimension of culture, then analyzed from the field of design. From authors identified with the decolonial option, the authors locate the concepts of intersectionality more precisely, with emphasis on the elaborations of Maria Lugones, Lélia Gonzales and Silvia Federici, and on frontier thinking, theorized by Walter Mignolo. The concern aroused by the intellectual effervescence of this debate is evident in the reflection of the authors, who start from the idea of a feedback between theoretical reflection and design practice.

Finally, the paper “The poetics and politics of Frente Três de Fevereiro collective”, by Pedro Caetano Eboli Nogueira, analyzes two actions of art-activism, presenting the aesthetic-political experience of the group in question. The analysis articulates the empirical pieces to a reflection on the notions of “sensitive” and “dissension” of the
French philosopher Rancière, articulating them to the contributions of other authors such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Silvio Almeida and Judith Butler, in addition to resorting to Michel Foucault’s concept of event. It is understood that the approach, even without referring directly to the theoretical framework of the decolonial turn, establishes a direct dialogue with the debate, especially with regard to the racial structure of the colonial condition. By emphasizing the poetics of actions, of the collective to combat structural racism, the reflection also contributes to the epistemological renewal of the view on the city. Based on an interdisciplinary vision that crosses the discussion of colonizing visual regimes with the disruptive character of ephemeral artistic actions on an urban scale. Ending the set of six papers, this perspective outlined by Nogueira finds Name’s theses that open the dossier, pointing out how the common experience of oppression is manifested in artistic practices that call into question the very structures of communication based on racialization.

There is, therefore, a diverse set of themes and approaches that cross the long period of historical processes, whose common point is the awareness of the colonial difference, which defines geopolitical hierarchies since the colonization of America.

The reference to the authors of the theoretical framework of the decolonial turn, and approaches that consider colonial and racial difference as a key element in the analysis of art, architecture and the city, is constructed in a very different way by the authors of the papers in this dossier. Reading it can lead to both agreement and divergence in relation to the proposed thematic and theoretical dimensions, contributing to advance the debate in the areas they represent or with which they dialogue. In this sense, the dossier fulfills its initial objective, to promote an expanded and qualified debate about the meanings of terms and concepts that have only recently achieved prominence in our academic environment. Despite the participation of countless Brazilian intellectuals in the Latin American tradition enunciated in this presentation.

We would like to thank the authors of the works cited in this dossier for accepting the challenge of transcending disciplinary boundaries and for sharing the manifest desire to include their research objects in this decolonial perspective.