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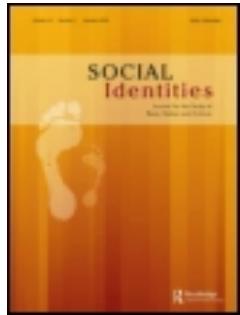
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## Latin America as political science's other

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### ABSTRACT

This article develops a decolonising critique of contemporary Latin American focused Political Science (LAPS) demonstrating the complicity of its politics of knowledge in the reproduction of the logic and rationalities of coloniality. These logics and rationalities are premised upon the dehumanisation of the raced and gendered other who is denied rationality, agency and political subjectivity. I demonstrate the monological and dehumanising epistemological consequences of this through deconstruction of the foundational myths and disciplinary boundaries of the discipline; the legitimate subject of the political; and the knowing-subject of political analysis that foreground contemporary LAPS. I end with a question and a challenge: how might we learn to create a political science otherwise?

### KEYWORDS

Decolonial critique; politics of knowledge; Latin America; political science; popular classes

In this article, I develop a decolonising critique of contemporary Latin American focused Political Science (LAPS) demonstrating the complicity of its politics of knowledge in the reproduction of the logic and rationalities of coloniality. The term 'coloniality' refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism. Thus, it survives colonialism and is maintained alive

in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday. (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

The logics and rationalities of coloniality are premised upon the dehumanisation of the raced and gendered other who is denied rationality, agency and political subjectivity. I demonstrate the monological and dehumanising epistemological consequences of this through deconstruction of the foundational myths and disciplinary boundaries of the discipline; the legitimate subject of the political; and the knowing-subject of political analysis that foreground contemporary LAPS.

The critique proceeds as follows. I first map the basic contours of the 'decolonial turn' and its self-assigned task of exposing the colonial underside constitutive of Enlightenment modernity as a violent monological project of being-knowing. I then demonstrate how these logics underpin the foundation and consolidation of political science in the US from the 1880s until the fall of the Berlin Wall. This foregrounds my critique of

contemporary post-1989 LAPS in which I demonstrate its complicity in the politics of knowledge of coloniality. I focus on three literatures: transition literature (1980s), democratisation literature (1990s) and contemporary discussions of the ‘two lefts’ (2000s). After exposing the logics of coloniality which underpin LAPS I end with a question and a challenge: how might we learn to create a political science otherwise?

## The decolonial turn

Decolonial scholars in philosophy (Dussel, 1993; Lugones, 2010; Maldonado-Torres, 2007), development studies and history (Escobar, 1995; Mignolo, 2002), Indigenous and settler-colonial studies (Grieves, 2009; Wolfe, 2006) and international relations (Agathangelou & Ling, 2004) amongst others demonstrate their disciplines’ complicity in the reproduction of the logics of coloniality. Yet little decolonial work has been carried out in relation to political science. I contribute to this task by developing a decolonial critique of the dominant articulations of LAPS which exposes the coloniality of knowledge that underpins the discipline. Such coloniality foregrounds a monological ontology of the political, political subjectivity and the knowing-subject which is constituted through denial and dehumanisation of the raced and feminised ‘other’.

Decolonial theory demonstrates that coloniality is the underside which co-created and sustains capitalism. This is manifested in relationships of power-over, hierarchy and competition in the subjective and social realms and (re)produced through a spatial logic of separation, division and dispossession (Verdesio, 2001, p. 103; Mendoza, 2013, pp. 11–12). To legitimate historically and contemporaneously these logics a particular politics of knowledge is naturalised and universalised. This coloniality of knowing is constituted through processes of subjectification which (re) produce a particular knowing-subject; the White and masculinised bourgeois subject encapsulated in René Descartes’ articulation of the *ego-cogito*; the knowing-subject of ‘I think therefore I am’. Yet Dussel (1993) demonstrates how the *ego-conquiero* (the conquering self) is the foundation upon which the conceptualisation of the *ego-cogito* was developed and justifies the dualistic exclusion of the raced and feminised less-than-human Other (Lugones, 2010; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mendoza, 2013, pp. 11–13; Motta & Esteves, 2014, pp. 1–7).

This coloniality of knowing-subjectivity is thus produced through a violent relation against the ‘other’ as it attempts to render her invisible, mute and absent (Lugones, 2010, p. 745). As Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains within these logics of raced and gendered non-being the experience of the *damné* is characterised by invisibility, the white gaze of suspicion, and denial of the capacity of gift. Invisibility is constituted through the denial of knowledges to the other; suspicion is cast as the gaze in which the question is always asked ‘are you like us’ ‘are you truly human’; and the denial of the capacity of gift legitimises the idea that there is nothing to learn from the *damné* undercutting conditions of dialogue, reciprocity and humanisation. In this the state as sovereign legitimises an anti-ethics of war and conquest over the colonised in which the exception of removal or rights, denial of humanness and logics of elimination becomes the norm which structures the reality for the majority of the world’s population (Surin, 2001, pp. 205–211; Morgensen, 2011, pp. 69–73).

This politics of knowledge constitutes a border between the White European, masculinised and individualised knowing-subject and the raced and feminised other who is to be

known, tamed and assimilated, legitimising continued logics of dehumanisation and denial. Such a process of splitting becomes internalised within the colonised constituting an internal and external exile from self and other (Mendoza, 2013, pp. 7–10; Motta, 2014). The knowing-subject of modernity is also marked by this process as he loses the capacity to listen and receive. This loss is a form of dehumanisation in which the capacity to speak and know is actually a form of muteness, for as Fanon (1968, pp. 231–232, cited in Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 260) suggests

Superiority? Inferiority?

Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?

Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You?

In sum, the Eurocentric story of modernity seeks to normalise and naturalise the border of the nation-state headed by a sovereign with the right to life and land as alienable commodities as the ontology of the political. This is premised upon the naturalisation and universalisation of a particular Europeanised, individualised, masculinised knowing-subject who has the right and duty to know the raced and feminised other. The creation of the colonised as governable subjects creates a border between the knowing-subject and the known-subject premised upon a traumatic encounter for the colonised who are subject to logics of elimination and dehumanisation. But how is this reflected in political science?

## Decolonising political science

Political science emerged in the 1880s in a period of renewed US interest in Latin America, particularly the development of capitalist mono-cultural agriculture (Manthorne, 2001, p. 328). This required the commodification of vast amounts of labour and land which necessitated the strengthening of the liberal nation-state, including its discursive legitimisation, so as to normalise and naturalise this commodification (Manthorne, 2001, p. 329). It is thus of no surprise that political science's canonical texts are bounded to a liberal political ontology (for a critique of the inherent dehumanisation within liberal political theory see amongst others, Mendoza, 2013; Parekh, 2001).

The liberal state is a foundational concept in this story, viewed as a fundamentally European creation and expression of the rational and emancipatory organisation of society (Dahl, 1971; Lipset, 1959; Schumpeter, 1943). Such a conceptualisation reproduces the teleological ahistoricism of coloniality and its linear conceptualisation of progress in which all 'other' societies and peoples are evaluated and compared to the 'European' ideal state-type. 'Other' states – in the European periphery, Global South or the Eastern bloc in the time of Cold War – are categorised as authoritarian, totalitarian, Caesarean, populist, respectively (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Accordingly, the political models developed by 'Western' political science are the only and best models to which such 'under-developed' and 'unstable' societies should aspire. This (mis)-representation invisibilises and elides the underside of the development of the liberal nation-state in the West, dependent as it is on the continued colonisation, subjugation and dehumanisation of large sections of the global South (Dussel, 1993; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). It also elides the violent

dispossession constitutive of the foundation and continued reproduction of the post-colonial nation-state in the Americas in which logics of elimination and subjugation structure the relationship with Indigenous peoples, black communities and other communities of colour (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Unsurprisingly, the ideal political actor is an elite subject that embodies the masculinised, individualised and Europeanised attributes of rule able to control and intervene into the unruly and disorderly body politics of the South (Dahl, 1971; Schumpeter, 1943; Weber, 1964). Both elites and masses of the Global South are framed as requiring the emergence of the market economy to support the development of the *right* civic culture and socio-political conditions to facilitate democratisation (Lipset, 1959; Rostow, 1960). The knowing-subject of political science is the mirror image of the knowing-subject of coloniality with the right to name, categorise and ultimately delegitimise the practices, knowledges, and rationalities of the colonised ‘other’. Such a raced, masculinised and Europeanised subject is a subject that *should* control that which threatens the borders and boundaries of the liberal polity and economy, namely the unruly ‘other’. This legitimises interventions into the unruly body of the other, premised on the exception becoming the rule for the majority of the Americas’ population, in which colonised people’s right to rights is denied (Morgensen, 2011, pp. 59–67). The history of military, financial, ideological, economic and technical interventions into the Americas which marks the US relationship to the region throughout the twentieth century is thus the logical extension of political science’s enmeshment and complicity in the geopolitics of the coloniality of knowing.

## Decolonising contemporary LAPS

How might these Eurocentric foundational categories and epistemological logics of coloniality continue to produce subaltertniy and dehumanisation in the post-89 period of LAPS? I provide initial answers to this question through a focus on three significant moments in the contemporary corpus of LAPS; the story of democratic transition in the 1980s with a focus on the Chilean ‘model’; the deepening of democracy literature of the 1990s with reference to the Argentinean crisis of 2001/2002; and the current ‘two Lefts’ debate with a particular focus on Venezuela.

### ***Transitions to democracy: the Chilean model***

Latin American countries’ return to democracy in the 1980s confounded the structuralist understandings of the prerequisites to democracy dominant in twentieth century political science. This gave way ‘to a more process-oriented emphasis on contingent choice’ (Karl, 1990, p. 1). Accordingly, institutionalist and rational-choice frameworks became dominant (see for example amongst others, Drake, Silva, & Middlebrook, 1986; O’Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead, 1986; Wiarda, 1973; and for rational-choice institutionalism Krasner, 1988; Marsh & Olson, 1984).

### ***Foundational categories and the ontology of the political***

All these texts reproduce the foundational categories and boundaries that had structured twentieth century political science. Firstly, the liberal state is posited as the teleological

Western ideal of political development (Karl, 1990, pp. 2–5), ‘the unit of analysis is the independent, territorially consolidated nation-state’ (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 18) which builds on Weber (1964) and Tilly’s (1975) conceptualisation of the modern liberal state (Linz & Stepan, 1996, pp. 17–18). Thus, as Linz and Stepan continue (1996, p. 28) ‘there can be no complex modern democracy without voting, no voting without citizenship, and no official membership in the community of citizens without a state to certify membership’. Such a state-type, it is argued, is found in modern Western democracies and developed settler-colonial states, and based on elite-unity (Higley & Burton, 1989, pp. 20, 26; Linz & Stepan, 1996). Whilst elite-disunity (and lack of civic virtues) underlies the lack of democracy of all other European states and those of Latin America (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 27).

This particular structuring of political power is posited as a necessary prerequisite for modern democracy, and without a state structured in this way, ‘no modern democracy is possible’ (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 17). Liberal constitutionalism is posited as the universal and objective criterion against which we can analyse and evaluate democracy in other states (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 7). This limits the realm of political possibility denying and devaluing other histories, practices and understandings of democracy. Thus, the only ‘other’ conceptualisations of regime-type developed are all forms of non-democracy: totalitarianism, authoritarianism, sultanism (Linz & Stepan, 1996; O’Donnell et al., 1986).

### *Subject of the political*

The agents and crafters of democracy are powerful elite actors (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 18) who are conceptualised against those elite-subjects ‘unlikely’ to craft democratic transitions and regimes. The former is modelled on their counter-parts in ‘stable regimes that evolve into a modern democracy, as in Sweden, or Britain, or the US’ (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 18). The latter are conceptualised as two sub-types: the first modelled on the Eastern Bloc, fascist regimes and theocratic regimes in the Middle East are ‘the totalitarian or ideologically unified type’; and the second are divided and disunited elites found in states in Latin America and Africa (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 18).

The model democratic subject is characterised by their acceptance of the rules and codes of political conduct constitutive of those of political liberalism embedded within the market economy, with the liberal state as the integrated structure which limits and stabilises political conduct (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 19; Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 5; see also Di Palma, 1973; Sartori, 1987). The non-democratic elite-subject is characterised by the opposite; they often engage in political violence in the form of ‘revolts, riots, strikes, mass demonstrations’ (Higley & Burton, 1989, p. 19) and foster zero-sum ideological and political agendas.

Such a model of elite subjectivity represents the liberal state and market as the foundational, dehistoricised and universally desirable forms of organising social life. Any desire and subjectivity outside of this is presented as inherently non-democratic and violent, thus reproducing the logics of coloniality in its denial and re-presentation of all ‘others’.

However, each sub-type of elite-subject shares a common subjectivity; the utility-maximising rational actor who depending on institutional context has different ‘preferences, calculations, resources and time-horizon’ (O’Donnell and Schmitter cited in Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 5). The ontological assumptions about the human agent thus ahistoricises and naturalises individual, capitalist man who bargains, is self-contained in the definition and enactment of their interests, and whose freedom is realised in the development of the

liberal market which reinforces and is reinforced by the liberal polity (Mendoza, 2013). Descartes *ego-cogito* founded in relation to the *ego-conquiro* reappears as the universal subject of democracy.

### ***Knowing-subject of the political***

The political scientists who develop models of regime-type, state-type, democratic/non-democratic elite-agents and steps of regime-change are paradigmatic of the knowing-subject of modernity. This *ego-cogito* separates their mind from body, reason from emotion and assumes the position of the objective rational subject able to evaluate, analyse and intervene in the politics of all those deemed 'other'. Their perspective presents itself as a view from no-where, eliding its embeddedness in a particular spatio-temporality which tells a particular story about the history of democracy, the limits of democratic possibility and the capacity for modernity to produce processes of humanisation. They reproduce classic narratives of Eurocentric progress, which silence and dehumanise Southern others and elide European colonial violence.

The logic of exclusion underlies the foundational categories of transition literature in its model of the European rational subject against which the irrationalities of Latin American elites can be compared and redeemed through elimination so as to 'become like us'. They also deeply mark the relationship with the popular; the mestizos, blacks and Indigenous of Latin American society who are never considered agents or crafters of democracy, but rather are led and moulded by elites who must contain, control and intervene in their lands, lives and subjectivities to create the model liberal-democratic society and subject. Yet this model reproduces in ever more pernicious ways the inhumanity and violences upon which the liberal project of modernity is premised as we shall see from analysis of the 'Chilean model'.

### ***'The Chilean model'***

The Chilean democratic transition is represented as a constrained transition because of the institutional power of the outgoing military-regime (Linz & Stepan, 1996). However, the democratic elites of the Concertación are represented as paradigmatic of ideal-democratic agents, who working within institutional and structural constraints, went through a process of ideological renovation to embrace liberal democracy and elite unification so as to stabilise the rules of the game, avoiding the instability which led to the 1973 coup (Oxhorn, 1995; Silva, 2002). Hard-liners/ideologically rigid groups (in both the opposition and military) were successfully contained through their own intransigence and lack of political learning and so became politically irrelevant in the transition and proceeding democratic period. This according to transitionists created the conditions for stability, governability and economic growth which in turn prevented the unravelling of the democratic transition and return to dictatorship. Such a re-presentation legitimises the assumptions, models and historiography of the political scientists of transition. Their claims of objectivity, rationality and assumption of the right to model, evaluate and intervene in democratisation processes appear legitimate and facilitative of progress and development.

However, the situation looks different from the standpoints of the popular of *damné*. From these perspectives, the transition reproduced the *ego-conquiro* of coloniality, continuing logics and rationalities of dehumanisation inherent in the Chilean dictatorship

within the liberal-democratic state, and revealing a dark side to the politics of knowledge of the democratic transition. If we speak from the experiences of these 'losers' in this democratic transition we see how democratic elites united with the outgoing regime and key international actors from the US and Europe to delegitimise, silence and misname those sectors of the Movimiento Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Movement, MDP) who did not accept the terms of a pacted-transition which guaranteed liberal politics and economics (Moulian, 2002; Motta, 2008). The mechanisms used in this process included the socialisation and propagation (not only by regime actors) but renovated democratic political elites of a discourse of 'othering' in which the popular democratic coalition, the MDP, were presented as terrorists and accordingly denied material, institutional or political support and protection (Vallejos, 2003). The demonisation of such popular subjects was marked by a process in which they became the subjects 'who are not like us', pathologised as the outsiders and subversives opposed to democracy and stability (for an analysis in relation to *poblador* and Indigenous actors see Richards, 2005). The transitology literature that constructs the Chilean transition as the outcome of political learning and model of pacted-transition reproduces the invisibilisation of the *damné*, their denial as knowers and rational political subjects, legitimising the boundaries of the political in a way which reproduces the exclusion and dehumanisation of the popular.

This dark underside of transitology (as theoretical representation) and transition (as political practice) continues into the period of democracy (for more general analysis see Mansell & Motta, 2013; Moulian, 2002) in which those who contest the liberal consensus are re-presented as undemocratic and unruly and subject to processes of disarticulation and exclusion. However, the literature that builds upon transitology continues the narrative of the Concertación as ideal-democratic elites fostering 'the' regional model of political and economic reform (Castañeda, 2006, p. 56; Panizza, 2005). The dark underside of this narrative is clearly illustrated in relation to the Mapuche indigenous struggles for self-determination where the violences that are reproduced in the naturalisation and ahistoricism of the liberal state, polity and economy become visible.

The region of the Mapuche is rich in minerals and forest land, fundamental to the development of an extractive economy based on low-value added products. Thus, the government has worked with transnational companies to open the area up Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and intensify commodification of land and resources. Mapuche communities have resisted by struggling for the right to self-determination over their lands including resource-management and political autonomy. The government has developed a two-pronged strategy based around the representation of the 'Indio permitido' (authorised Indian) and the 'Indio subversivo' (insurrectionary Indian) (Kowalczyk, 2013; Richards, 2010). The first accepts the limits of liberal multicultural policies, a continuation of the logic of elimination of coloniality which as Hale argues (cited in Richards, 2010, pp. 71–72) seeks 'the creation of subjects who govern themselves in accordance with the logic of globalised capitalism'. The second is met with condemnation as Hale continues, as an 'Other to the spaces of poverty and social exclusion'. The discourse has been combined since 9/11 with the discourse of terrorism which not only legitimises condemnation to marginalisation but also legitimisation of state violence and other forms of intervention onto the body of the 'irrational' Indian (Motta, 2008; Richards, 2010).

The naturalisation and ahistorisisation of the Chilean nation-state as the only and essential institutional enabler of democracy, liberal democracy as the only form of democracy and liberal-democratic elites as the ideal subjects able to foster democracy and development invisibilises the continuing processes of material, discursive, ontological and epistemological violence through which this regional model of modernity is reproduced. As Surin (2001, p. 208) argues in relation to the liberal nation-state and imminently applicable here

This ‘contrived illusionism’ is able to serve the state-machine because it effaces the noncontractual elements that underpin the workings of the social contract... The terms of the social contract are already the state’s terms, even if it has to purvey the illusion that they arise from a pristine and fully transparent situation in which subjects negotiate with the state as its equals.

LAPS transitology thus helps construct the theoretical grounding and discursive representations that underpins the reproduction of dehumanisation in the name of modernisation in contemporary Chile.

### **Democratisation literature: the Argentinean crisis**

In the 1990s LAPS shifted focus to the deepening and quality of democracy and developed new conceptualisations to explain recurrent and seemingly intractable bottlenecks in democratisation. These built on the foundational assumptions, framings of the ideal-democratic subject and assumptions of the knowing-subject of analysis found in the transitions literature.

#### *Foundational categories and the ontology of the political*

As Latin American democracies were not functioning as the ideal type Western liberal democracies posited in the transitology literature, LAPS comparativists developed new categories to explain this deviation. For instance, O’Donnell (1994, p. 56) argues that Latin American countries ‘do not seem to be on the path toward becoming representative democracy’ but rather to a new kind of ‘not consolidated’ but ‘enduring’ democracy called Delegative Democracy. Zakaria similarly contrasts Latin America with the Western model ‘best symbolised not by the mass plebiscite but the impartial judge’, and characterised by ‘capitalism, a bourgeoisie, and a high per capita GNP’ (Zakaria, 1997, p. 27). Democratic regimes which do not meet these criteria are deemed ‘inefficient, corrupt ... dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good’ (Zakaria, 1997, pp. 24–25; O’Donnell, 1994, p. 57). They are thus taken to be illiberal democracies deviant from the western model (Zakaria, 1997, p. 23).

Such approaches reproduce the Eurocentric narrative of democratisation and the position of the West as the ideal for others. They elide both the history of coloniality as the underside of Western development and twentieth century forms of coloniality and dependency. The treatment of the free market as container and facilitator of democracy deflects critical analysis of the free market’s inequalities, dependencies and dispossessions thereby masking the ways neoliberal economics relies on illiberalism (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 2003). Instead, economic problems are blamed on institutional deficiencies, making the South responsible for the effects of coloniality. This institutionalist narrative, as we will

see, is one of the dominant narratives that frame the Argentinean economic and political crisis of 2001/2002.

### ***Subject of the political***

As in the transitology literature, the subject of politics is a utility-maximising individual whose preferences are shaped by institutional structures, culture and practices. Liberal democracy is taken to stabilise relations among such rational elite actors, constraining ‘behaviours within a relatively narrow range of possibilities’ (O’Donnell, 1994, p. 58). Conversely, Southern leaders are taken to put themselves ‘above both political parties and organised interests’ and to treat institutional accountability as a ‘mere impediment’. In the worst cases, democratisation without liberalism causes ‘hyper-nationalism and war-mongering’ (Zakaria, 1997, p. 38), or hypercentralisation and gross policy-mistakes (O’Donnell, 1994, pp. 60–64).

Despite these negative dynamics there is, as O’Donnell (representative of this literature) (1994, p. 69) suggests, ‘a decisive segment of the political leadership [that] recognise the self-destructive quality of those cycles, and agree to change the terms on which they compete and govern’. This is compatible with the analyses and policy of the World Bank’s ‘good governance’ agenda in which failures in neoliberal reform are explained by weakness in liberal institutionalism (Doornbos, 2003; Kiely, 1998). The resulting policies include training and intervention from Western or Western-educated experts in the policy-making process and institutional design of second-generation reforms. Paradigmatic of this narrative is the conclusion of a speech given by Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre in Washington in which he declared ‘the principle mechanisms of a free market are a bill of rights, enforced by an impartial judiciary’ (cited Zakaria, 1997, p. 34).

### ***Knowing-subject of the political***

The knowing-subject of deepening democratisation literature thus claims to produce an objective viewpoint from a displaced standpoint from which to intervene in the lives, lands and bodies of ‘others’ (Zakaria, 1997, p. 39). This other is to be assimilated and moulded to become ‘like us’, despite the reality that the liberal paradigm produces dislocation, dispossession, ecological degradation and a monological materialist unsustainable way of life as demonstrated in the Argentinean case.

### ***Argentinean crisis***

Within the institutional literature the analysis developed of the Argentinean economic and political crisis of 2001/2002 provides a paradigmatic example to illustrate the complicities of coloniality underlying its logics. The crisis is accordingly understood as the result of the absence of liberal constitutionalism (Levitsky & Murillo, 2008, pp. 24–26; Schamis, 2006, pp. 26–28) and is represented as having had ‘both its start and end points in the erosion of the rule of law’ (Escudé, 2002, p. 354). Argentine political elites were therefore measured in relation to the ideal-democratic elite and found to be illiberal and clientelist such that they had ‘built an unsustainable state’ (Schamis, 2006, p. 28). Argentina was represented as the ‘paradise of informality’ with a ‘dark side of power’ which ‘establishes a major task in securing and consolidating democracy itself’ (Thiery, 2011, pp. 2, 10). If the popular classes are included as subjects in the analysis there is a clear demarcation

between a citizen-subject that accepts the liberal rules of the game and an unacceptable subject who is either naïve, uncivil or a dangerous contributor to instability (Grugel & Riggiorzi, 2007, p. 9; Norden, 2011, pp. 83–84; Thiery, 2011, pp. 18–19).

This representation of the Argentine crisis reproduces the epistemological logics of coloniality in which Argentina is interpolated into the international political economy as an underdeveloped and illiberal nation in need of the expertise, knowledge and investment of the ‘developed’ North. This works to mask the continued violences enacted through free-market economics which reproduce accumulation by dispossession (for socio-economic indicators see Castorina, 2009, pp. 12–13). It also masks, as Morgensen (2011) argues, the realities of death and elimination at the heart of capitalist coloniality. In Argentina, as in Chile, as a result of an alliance between state-elites, multinational economic and political agents and private security forces, lands are commodified for export oriented mono-crop cultivation such as soy. Such processes of accumulation are premised upon the transformation of the landscape through its marking of private boundaries with the ‘liberal laws’ of the sovereign state which necessitates and results in the elimination of ways of life and subjects such as Mapuche peoples and other local communities. The resultant disciplinary neoliberal states are marked by their elitist and de-democratising dynamics of rule, in which power tends to be concentrated in the hands of the executive, unelected actors such as technocrat ‘experts’ and transnational economic elites (Teivainen, 2002; Bruff, 2014).

The reproduction of the ‘modern’ state and market economy in Argentina is thus premised upon the increasing hollowing out of any meaningful form of citizen participation. In such conditions in which the majority of society become the losers and ‘others’ of capitalist coloniality it is unsurprising that

the increasing reliance on these nonliberal informal practices [are] not ... an anomaly or a deviation from an ideal type of democracy, but rather a condition for market discipline and therefore a constitutive aspect of the political feasibility of capitalist development in a periphery country like Argentina. (Castorina, 2009, p. 1)

The dark underside of modernity and its logics of death, denial and dehumanisation become starkly visible when telling the story from the perspective of the ‘others’.

The popular are often absent in these analyses or included in a way that removes their political agency, rationality or knowledge. Accordingly, they are represented as victims of illiberal manipulation and complicit in the reproduction of an illiberal society (Escudé, 2002, pp. 460–465; Levitsky & Murillo, 2008, pp. 24–28), or as political agents who act naively and reinforce instability. This is particularly the case if they do not channel mobilisation into liberal institutions of political society and the state (Grugel & Riggiorzi, 2012, p. 9). Those outside the boundaries of the legitimate liberal subjects thus come to be represented as pathological others. This can take two forms. The first reinforces the idea that civil society has a delimited role in democracy because of its lack of expertise reinforcing the Eurocentric story that the masses (in the developing world) are ‘not like us’ and lack civic norms (Salvochea, 2008, p. 1). The second focuses on a dangerous other for whom coercive tactics are (sometimes) necessary to ensure stability and governability. These ‘other’ subjects are often the *piqueteros* who do not accept the limits of the liberal consensus and instead seek to develop alternatives either of the democratic socialist kind or horizontal, autonomous kind. These subjects are of the shanty town and peripheral regions of

Argentina, poor men and women, mestizos with some indigenous descent. They are presented as 'a new form of violent threat ... linked to clientelism' (Escudé, 2002, pp. 18–19; Norden, 2011, pp. 83–86, 107–108).

Thus, subjects and communities who resist accumulation by dispossession, refuse assimilation and seek to co-create other ways of life and organising their communities are presented as 'not like us' and thus legitimately subject to exception from the liberal limits of the law. As decolonial critique demonstrates such exception and violence are constitutive of life under 'democratic' capitalism for the majority of the colonised. Yet as Surin (2001, p. 208) argues such popular politics also,

unmask [the] face of the state-machine ... [and] the[ir] face previously unmasked by the state in order to maintain the status quo is refaced in order to perturb the status quo and usher in the new, in the form of a revived mystery bringing with it allegorizing propensities that cannot be contained by the state-machine.

### ***The discourse of the two lefts: Venezuela as pariah***

By the late 1990s in Latin America the failures of the liberal consensus led to a turn to the left in governments known as the Pink Tide, and the growth of a plethora of social movements. These new subjects undermine the Eurocentric narrative of institutionalist and rational-choice LAPS because they develop living alternatives which confound the assumption that anything outside of the liberal constitutionalist framework is inevitably illiberal, authoritarian and uncivil and that the only way of organising democracy is through a representative state. They thus present a direct challenge to the logics of coloniality which underpin the politics of knowledge of mainstream political science. How has liberal LAPS responded to this challenge?

Jorge Castañeda recognises this threat in his paradigmatic article 'Latin America's Left Turn'. Yet he recognises the threat in a way that seeks to re-legitimise the liberal consensus through the discourse of the 'two lefts'. This discourse is used to evaluate and distinguish different regimes and governments within the Pink Tide along two axes, those 'like us' and pathologised 'others'. This discourse mirrors similar dualisms noted in the cases discussed above.

### ***Foundational categories and ontology of the political***

The discourse of the two lefts identifies a good and a bad-left with the former paradigmatically expressed in the Chilean Concertación (Panizza, 2005; Castañeda, 2006; Schamis, 2006, p. 24) and the latter a populist left that undermines representative democracy. As Castañeda (2006, p. 29) describes in Latin America there is a 'modern, open-minded, reformist, and internationalist' left, and a 'hard-core left' which is populist, 'nationalist, strident, and closed-minded'. In this discourse attempts at participatory democracy outside liberal institutions produce clientelism, personalism and disenfranchisement (Panizza, 2005, p. 230).

The good-left is seen as learning from the failure of Marxism and accepting incremental reform and liberal democracy (Castañeda, 2006, p. 32; Panizza, 2005, p. 721). This rational and mature left, so the story goes, emerged in relation to external ideological developments, particularly the political learning of the European left (Castañeda, 2006, p. 31). The bad-left, however, is 'peculiarly Latin American ... and arose out of the region's

strange contribution to political science: good old-fashioned populism'. This left is seen as authoritarian, anti-popular, unprincipled, power-greedy and hostile to institutions. In this historiography, this left 'remain [s] true to itself ... perseveres in its cult of the past'. The bad-left is non-European and historically backward. It is pathologised and denied any rational political meaning, epistemological articulation or philosophical underpinnings. Latin America is thus denied the capacity for autonomous rational political thought.

### ***Subject of the political***

The good-left is an elite subject of learning, maturity and modernity. The bad-left is a subject of ignorance, authoritarianism and the past. The former thus stresses the importance of individual rights, the rule of law, and liberal public institutions and officials. The latter conversely, adopts the form of the 'politics of antipolitics' with its key political actors the people rather than citizens, and stressing popular sovereignty over individual rights. The political consequences of the good-left are stability, poverty reduction and democratisation (Castañeda, 2006, p. 38), and of the bad-left are a continuation of illiberal and authoritarian democracies in which the people are ultimately disempowered and stability undermined (Castañeda, 2006, pp. 41–42). In this account, popular forces are denied autonomous political agency. Rather, they are either passive victims of demagogic or unruly masses causing instability. If they are recognised as valid subjects, it is only within liberal institutions, as in Panizza's (2005, p. 722) model of 'deepening of democracy'. In all cases the distinct knowledges and rationalities of the popular are denied.

### ***Knowing-subject of the political***

Writers on the two lefts adopt a standpoint as rational, de-situated evaluator, reproducing the modern elite's 'self-designation as the moral guides of modern[ity]' (de la Torre, 1997, p. 20). They set boundaries of the politically permissible and thinkable, restricting this sphere to liberalism, and to elite individuals like themselves. This reproduces the dark underside of the ego-conquiro who silences and eliminates others. This discourse, re-presented as an objective discourse able to model the ideals of democracy and development, thus plays an acutely political role in naturalising the liberal state and market, and legitimising the continued production of Latin America and its peoples as the subaltern other. In its most blatant forms this narrative is used to actively support interventions into the region's politics in continuation of the justifications of interventions in, and on, Latin America's body politic throughout the twentieth Century (Castañeda, 2006, p. 42).

### ***Venezuela as pariah***

Venezuela appears as a pariah of the bad-left in which its political process is categorised as populist authoritarian. Authors in this tradition evaluate Chavismo as a form of semi-authoritarian populism because of its lack of liberal institutionalisation. Critics remain dismissive and fearful of mass mobilisation and direct, participatory political practices assuming these reproduce clientelism and that popular actors are illiberal and authoritarian (Derham, 2002; Hawkins, 2003, p. 1137). This dismissal of popular actors and democratic legitimacy follows from the ahistoricised idealisation of liberal democracy. In common with most liberals, such scholars restrict politics to actors' ability to rule over others (Santos & Avritzer, 2005, pp. xxxiv–1). The elite-subject of modernity remains the sole

agent of progress, deemed able to detach from the irrationalities of everyday life and embody critical 'objective' distance (Canovan, 2004, p. 245).

Yet if we tell the story of Venezuelan democracy from its underside, then we find that mistrust of liberal institutionalism is widespread among the Venezuelan popular classes, due not to ignorance but experience. As María Teresa, coordinator of Mission Ribas in La Vega, put it,

We don't want to be 'politicos' in the old sense but to re-create politics from our practices and experiences, in a way that will overcome corruption and the misuse of power. We don't want political leaders or parties; we want to create our own popular power from below. (Interview, La Vega, Caracas, August 9, 2006)

For many the experience of the Punto Fijo (1958–1999) system was one of political, social and economic exclusion in the context of a party system and a representative democratic state. It is because of this experience that mistrust of political parties and political liberalism is a rational political-theoretical response. This political and theoretical response from sections of the popular classes is not equal to a pathological embrace of illiberalism. Rather it intertwines with moral economies, political struggles and subaltern knowledges to foreground the development of alternatives to the liberal consensus (Motta, 2013a, pp. 9–14).

The development of forms of direct democracy also stems from the popular classes' experiences of struggle throughout the 1980s and 1990s for the right to health, housing and sanitation, in which the role of local community organisation and the influence of liberation theology were marked. As Elizabeth of Las Margaritas, La Vega, recounted (workshop, La Vega, Caracas, August 9, 2006):

Francisco Wuytack, the 'Padre de la Vega,' was key in organizing the community in the late 1960s. He and other comrades began a series of bible readings and then social projects that motivated the community to organize autonomously and have faith in their capacity to lead and make decisions, to organize without leaders and without the manipulation of the 'politicos.'

Combined with liberation theology were elements of popular education and revolutionary left ideas. Out of this mixture emerged cultural projects which involved developing art, music and theatre as tools of critical praxis. These helped to construct the solidarities, structures of feeling, shared experiences and knowledges that foreground the development of radical popular democratic subjects beyond liberalism. As Roland Dennis (cited in Motta, 2013b) argues

The consciousness that came during this phase does not have anything in common with the political actors that one knows ... ; they are not parties, organisation, or unions. You have to go all the way to the communities of the towns, to find the new actors ... This is why you cannot describe the Venezuelan process using the traditional political categories.

In telling this brief historiography from the *damné* we begin to make visible the knowledges and political agency of those otherwise framed as illiberal or manipulated. Such knowledges and struggles led to a pronounced focus on direct democratic participation and collective reflection as a means of generating strategic and political knowledge. Political practices are often influenced by traditions of radical and popular education and thus political structures tend to focus on equality of participation and decision-making and on horizontal forms of organisation. As Nora Machado, community organiser from La Vega, explains,

If we want to talk about projects coming from below, then we can't take the role of leaders who come in and tell communities what, how, and why they should do things. We have to create the conditions in which communities develop, in equality and together, their understanding of their situation, their analysis, and their solutions. It is only in this way that we will break the old way of doing things.

Speaking from the experiences and knowledges of the *damné* recognises the capacity of gift of the other and opens the possibilities of a knowledge production through rehumanisation based on reciprocal listening and mutual healing of the wounds of separation of coloniality.

## Conclusion

The discourse of the two lefts, like the other institutionalist/rational-choice theories discussed above, renders invisible the underside of dispossession and dehumanisation constitutive of liberal capitalism, and the forms of democratic experimentation adopted by the *damné*. LAPS is thus complicit in the creation of a discourse that reproduces the historical exclusion of the colonised other, particularly the popular, as legitimate political actors and seeks to justify the role of elites as enlightened agents 'like us' capable of constructing a rational modernity. This enacts a continuation of the epistemological logics of coloniality in which the other is subject to the gaze of the masculinised, Europeanised, white and rational knowing-subject of modernity, a gaze which always asks the question 'are you like us?', 'are you truly human?'. In asking these questions the raced, gendered and classed line of separation is reinforced and 'others' are denied the capacity of gift whilst this knowing-subject loses the capacity to listen and receive. This denial is constitutive of the dehumanisation of coloniality reproduced through the liberal ontology of the political. As Mendoza argues, there is inhumanity at the heart of liberalism in that

egalitarian claims were made – and continue to be made today – within a closed circuit of communication, i.e. a discourse carried on exclusively among a polity of speakers that exemplified the prescribed form of subjectivity (White, European, Christian, bourgeois and male). Outside of that exclusionary 'we' (as in 'we the people') are all the purportedly defective, underdeveloped human beings and 3/5ths of citizens who must either be forcibly brought up to full maturity, or otherwise exterminated as obstacles to human progress. (Mendoza, 2013, p. 2008)

Yet through decolonising LAPS's dominant narratives in relation to Latin America and its peoples, we open our ethical, political and epistemological horizons to historiographies, experiences, knowledges and politics otherwise. Dehumanisation is responded to by the emergence of popular political subjects and rationalities which contest the borders of liberalism including the elite-subject of the political and the disembodied knowing-subject of politics. This challenges us to engage in the practical task of co-constructing knowledge from the experience of the *damné*, and of developing methodologies which dethrone the knowing-subject of modernity from its epistemological privilege and decentre the lettered city as the model of rationality against which all others are denied (Motta, 2011, 2014, 2016). Ultimately it suggests exploration of practices of rehumanisation that emerge from the experiences of the *damné* and are premised on an epistemological ethics of gift and reciprocity. This is an ethics of liberation which

thinks, as it were from the thinking of the excluded ... [which] can only be pursued as long as the theoretical revolution creates the conditions for new ways of thinking at the borders i.e. overcoming frameworks of thought structured by the coloniality of power in the making of the modern/colonial world. (Mignolo, 2002, p. 268)

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