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Karl Marx in the Key of Actuality Resignifications, Decentering and Resistances from the Global South*

[English Version]

Karl Marx en clave de actualidad
Resignificaciones, descentramientos y resistencias desde el Sur Global

Karl Marx na chave atual
Resignificações, descentralização e resistência do Sul Global

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Abstract

Objective: this article aims to respond to resignifications, decentering and resistances experienced in the Global South, and their interrelation with anti-systemic movements as expressions of a growing social nonconformism.

Methodology: the writings of theorists such as

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Marx, Wallerstein, and Hobsbawm have been analyzed with the purpose of discovering new explanations regarding current latent political and socioeconomic problems that have been aggravated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. **Results:** the existence of expressions of rebellion, in general, constitute anti-systemic movements with the purpose of overthrowing everything that exists and promoting a new historical system different from everything that has been lived. Within the new anti-systemic movements, with a starting timeline that could be set from 2011 in Latin America and the world, there is evidence of a change both in the way of conceiving protest and in the relationship established with other subjects, and with cybernetic technology, or increasingly sophisticated electronic and mechanical communication systems. **Conclusions:** each social science theorist responds to his time and to the problems of the society of which he is a part. The current era is no exception and aspects of other past actualities are taken up again to understand this increasingly convulsive present with unresolved, long-standing problems, among them, the enormous differences and inequalities between the so-called First World countries and the Global South.

Keywords: Latin America; communism; marxism; social movement; resistance.

Resumen

Objetivo: en este artículo se pretende dar respuesta a resignificaciones, descentramientos y resistencias vividas en el Sur Global, y su interrelación con los movimientos antisistémicos como expresiones de un creciente inconformismo social. **Metodología:** teóricos como Marx, Wallerstein y Hobsbawm han sido analizados desde sus escritos con el propósito de descubrir nuevas explicaciones con respecto a problemas políticos y socioeconómicos latentes en el momento actual, los cuales se han visto agravados con la actual pandemia de la COVID-19. **Resultados:** la existencia de expresiones de rebeldía, en general, se constituyen en movimientos antisistémicos con propósitos de derrumbar todo lo existente y promover un nuevo sistema histórico diferente de todo lo vivido. Dentro de los nuevos movimientos antisistémicos, con una línea temporal de comienzo que se podría fijar desde el año 2011 en América Latina y el mundo, se evidencia un cambio tanto en la forma de concebir la protesta como en la relación que se instaura con los demás sujetos, y con la tecnología cibernética o de sistemas de comunicación electrónicos y mecánicos cada vez más sofisticados. **Conclusiones:** cada teórico de las ciencias sociales responde a su época y a los problemas propios de la sociedad de la que es parte. La época actual no es la excepción y se retoman aspectos de otras actualidades pasadas para comprender

este presente cada vez más convulso y con problemas no resueltos de vieja data, entre ellos, las enormes diferencias y desigualdades entre los denominados países del Primer Mundo y el Sur Global.

Palabras clave: América Latina; comunismo; marxismo; movimiento social; resistencia.

Resumo

Objetivo: este artigo visa responder às resignações, descentralização e resistências experimentadas no Sul Global, e suas inter-relações com movimentos anti-sistêmicos como expressões de um crescente não-conformismo social.

Metodologia: teóricos como Marx, Wallerstein e Hobsbawm foram analisados a partir de seus escritos com o objetivo de descobrir novas explicações sobre os atuais problemas políticos e sócio-econômicos latentes, que foram agravados pela atual pandemia da COVID-19. **Resultados:** a existência de expressões de rebelião, em geral, constituem movimentos anti-sistêmicos com o propósito de derrubar tudo o que existe e promover um novo sistema histórico que seja diferente de tudo o que foi vivenciado. Dentro dos novos movimentos anti-sistêmicos, com uma cronologia que poderia ser definida a partir de 2011 na América Latina e no mundo, há evidências de uma mudança tanto na forma de conceber o protesto quanto na relação que se estabelece com outros sujeitos, e com a tecnologia cibernética ou sistemas de comunicação eletrônica e mecânica cada vez mais sofisticados. **Conclusões:** cada teórico das ciências sociais responde a sua própria época e aos problemas da sociedade da qual ele faz parte. A era atual não é exceção, e aspectos de outras realidades do passado são retomados a fim de compreender este presente cada vez mais convulso com seus problemas há muito pendentes, incluindo as enormes diferenças e desigualdades entre os chamados países do Primeiro Mundo e o Sul Global.

Palavras-chave: América Latina; comunismo; marxismo; movimento social; resistência.

Introduction

The transition to the first year of the 2020s was dramatic for a planetary society that was unprepared to deal with a pandemic on a global scale at all levels of prevention. For Harari, an inevitable change in nation states and economic systems is looming in the coming years, particularly due to the worsening of poverty and the increase of ideological controls in the scenarios of private life (2020). The populations of Latin America and the Caribbean have been living in fear since the first outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic became known. In the middle of the year 2021, the fear continued with collapsed health systems and millions of people living in fear of the dilemma of going out to work and becoming infected or staying at home with no chance of survival.

Today Marxism, with its resignifications and decentering, continues to be fundamental to respond to the great challenges of explaining society, not only at this juncture but also in the face of extremely serious processes of conflict that were already evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, in what has been called the crisis of the great paradigms driving society and the structural crisis of capitalism in its oligopolistic and neoliberal phase. Thus, resorting to Marxism, in its conceptual and methodological resignifications and decentering, can contribute to finding new explanations and solutions to the world's current problems (Fontana, 1992, p. 9).

The line of argument proposed by Žižek (2014) contends that an event can recode the social world and even promote greater uncertainty for the future, to the point that there will be a before and after in all social dynamics. This was the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially due to the increase in virtuality and the use of emergency remote education (Acevedo *et al.*, 2021). But perhaps the greatest impact has been felt in the economic sphere, because not since World War II has there been such an accelerated decline in per capita GDP, with devastating effects for vulnerable countries and social sectors. These effects showed the deep economic inequalities in the world and the inability of the neoliberal capitalist system to respond to the crisis. This does not discount the expansive waves of disinformation and fake news through the Internet and *apps* to the point of becoming "ideological viruses" (Žižek, 2020).

The analysis of the effects of COVID-19 have also been added to by Han (2020, p. 22), arguing that, under the principle of globalization, whose ultimate goal is to maximize profits, protective masks and medicines were produced exponentially all over the world, in such a way that they were no longer produced for people but for a capitalistic purpose. As Marx once put it, this reduces man to his sexual organ for the sole purpose of giving birth to children. Today society

exploit itself under the assumption of an inalienable individual freedom, but it does so under a neoliberal regime that makes one believe that one is self-exploiting on one's own account and desire, even though in reality one has become a servant of the excessive importance of capital.

In a very short and widely distributed text by Wallerstein, entitled "Uncertainty and Creativity," it is warned that the first half of the 21st century will be difficult and disturbing. This premise is confirmed when studying the past and recognizing that historical systems have finite lives. So, all historical systems have a beginning, long periods of development and death when they move away from the fragile equilibrium that sustains them. A second premise, Wallerstein also warns, is given by *inputs* and *outputs*, which are related. According to Wallerstein, small *inputs* provoke large *outputs* and vice versa; their outcome is indeterminate (2021).

A third premise is that the modern world-system, as a historical system, has entered a terminal crisis – as have all historical systems – and most likely will not exist as such in fifty years or more. It is obvious that it is also impossible to determine whether the resulting system will be better or worse than the current one, but like all transitions, Wallerstein points out that it will be a confusing stage with uncertain results (Wallerstein, 2021).

This phenomenon, in a way, began to be experienced after 1989, when the so-called communist countries collapsed and the world, in general, entered a stage of neoliberal policies, as opposed to State social policies. This neoliberal phase, however, also carries the weight of its crisis, because even liberalism in its early stages promised reforms to improve the inequalities of the world-system and reduce polarization; however, its purpose would not only be a failed illusion but also a disillusionment, as change did not come and even a widening gap between wealth and poverty, and a continuously growing polarization increased. Under these circumstances, as Wallerstein points out, there will surely be "considerable turmoil, of the same kind as that which occurred during the 1990s, spreading from the Bosnias and Rwandas of this world to the richer (and considered more stable) regions of the planet, such as the United States" (2021).

Wallerstein also considers the cultural revolution of 1968 and the planetary economic crisis of 1972-1973 as the point of no return of American hegemony in the twentieth century (Acevedo, 2017, p. 23). Precisely, and just to point out a few examples, the anti-systemic outbursts experienced since 2011 with the Indignados movement in Spain, or with the social outburst in Chile, or in 2019 in Colombia – with a clear accent from April 28, 2021, the date of protest after a probable tax reform in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic – showed a nonconformism at local and global level, especially in the Global South, as a

result of political polarization and an innumerable list of social nonconformisms suffered.

The current outbursts are the effects of a crisis of capitalism as the prevailing world-system, with anti-systemic movements that have been expressed since 1968 and with small *inputs* that would become large *inputs*, understood as inputs or resources in processes with a certain impulse and that are transformed into raw material for new mobilizations and new social outbursts. In this sense, Immanuel Wallerstein reiterates conclusions exposed by Marx in his time, who in his works presents an acute analysis of the social development of his contemporaneity. If Marx was concerned about anything, it was the latent problems of his time. This is how Marx and Engels explored historical unfolding in openness to a new world. Precisely, *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 2014), in the item called "History," argues that this march takes place in conditions completely different from previous circumstances through new activities that cannot be ordered in a purpose or teleology but in the very productive forms that arise as a result of new forms of social domination; in such a way that in the prevailing social formation, in order to carry forward the ends it pursues, the ruling class is obliged to present its own interest as the common interest, call it, in this case, a capitalist social formation.

In the *General Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (2006), Marx recognizes that in the economy the population is the basis of production of a social formation. But this population is not considered in an abstract and empty way that leaves out work, the division of labor and all the components of a social economic formation. Production, the means of production, the production relations, traffic and property relations, forms of state and political systems converge into the social economic formation. These are Interactions in which civil society can emerge and in which even war can develop before peace and be conditioned by armies or armed forces. Under these considerations, Marx warns that in a social State, the time will come when the productive material forces of society will collide with the existing means of production, especially with legal relationships concerning property. Thus, for Arendt (2013), revolutions have always been present in history and not necessarily as the abrupt change from one social state to another, but also as the emergence of new forces in history.

Even the texts of the so-called young Marx respond to specific problems of his society and constitute a stinging critique of a capitalist mode of production that demands political commitments and struggle from the subjugated social classes, especially from the working class, to fight it. If Marx is concerned about something, it is with uncovering the annoyance and even the pathos with which the institutions have brought the new economic system to its knees, putting freedoms in check and leading the contradictions to an immoral relativism that

protects private property from theft, but ignores that private property is the first of the great robberies (Marx, 1983). Of course, it was impossible for Marx to even glimpse all the subsequent dynamics of the phases of capitalism, but even today it can be considered that part of his approaches to the relationship between labor and capital have an influence on the notions of human capital (suitability-machine) of Michel Foucault and of immaterial labor of Mauricio Lazzarato and Antonio Negri (Del Valle, 2015).

Some time later and with greater maturity, Marx will find himself committed to a far-reaching political process explaining the course of capitalism; the fight for freedoms has only brought Marx problems from the *establishment*, from the workers' parties and even from the anarchists. To establish peace once and for all, Marx writes the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, a work that is inscribed as a negative history with a political purpose, an applied historical materialism to the goal of a class struggle. In this way, for Marx, the recognition of communism is proof of the construction of a negative history, that is, from the recognition of antagonistic parties that produce debate and conflict at the same time that they lead to changes; in other words, history is negative and converges in the class struggle. The third stop in the historical explanatory construction of Marx is evidenced in the *18 Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte*, a much more descriptive text of social processes with the recognition of the events that condition history and the writing of the same, and, of course, also show the class struggle and the impulse that they give to history.

In this way, Marx searches both in long-term processes and in historical events for lights that elucidate the explanation of change. In his dialectical analysis, it is possible that the change is there and that the only thing missing is the social explosion, the revolution against the socio-economic formations adopted by capitalism. Becoming, under this perspective, is no longer something completely predictable but is explainable in its general tendencies; nor does it imply the interrelation of antagonistic forces that transform historical reality in a unique way in each context. Similarly, the State is also constituted in a correlation of antagonistic forces that define the contradictions between the struggle of classes in a particular way. Therefore, Marx proposes to find a sense of history, even of the event, of eventuality as a causal measure of change with its contradictions.

This is how this article questions the resignifications, decenterings and resistances experienced in the Global South at the present time, based on the historical approach proposed by Marx to explain the course of history. A purpose that has new routes of explanation in the stature of Marxist intellectuals such as Wallerstein and Hobsbawm, for pointing them out as some of the best analysts and critics of Marxism, with an explanatory view of historical processes. In this

sense, Hobsbawm warns, the strength of the approaches of Marx and Engels can be seen in *The Communist Manifesto*, a text that, of course, was made for very particular conditions of the first phases of capitalism, but that in its lines it already indicates that this mode of production is not triumphant or stable, but that it is a temporary phase of the history of humanity, at the same time that the historical trends of its development will be long-term (Hobsbawm, 1998a, p. 8).

The Methodological Approach: Marxism and Historians

The methodology used for the development of this article is qualitative and is part of the interpretive paradigm. From this perspective, the subject is an individual who shares meanings and builds action by interpreting and evaluating the social world from analysis and description (Cohen, 1990). In addition, it understands that reflection is done in and from praxis, conforming the interpretation of reality from the meanings and representations that the subject himself elaborates in the interaction with others within the particular globality of a given context. From this perspective, an attempt is also made to understand reality considering that knowledge is neither neutral nor unique. It is also understood that the interpretations of the social world are not static, but can vary due to political, social, and cultural aspects (Bolio, 2014).

For the development of this article, the concepts of resignification, decentering and resistance have been used. Based on the approaches of Hobsbawm (1998b), it also recognizes that the sense of the past and the explanation of the present is understood as a permanent dimension of human consciousness, an indissoluble component of the institutions, values and other constitutive elements of human society. In this task, the main objective of the researcher is to give a new perspective to social explanation from the concern for the existing relationships between the past, the present and the future; that is, throughout time. Hobsbawm emphasizes that belonging to any human community means adopting a sense of one's own from the past, which manifests itself in the present and projects into the future. However, the social use of the past, according to the author, has its specific problems, which are the past as genealogy and the past as chronology. As for genealogy, the deep attraction exerted by the past as continuity and tradition is understood. In other words, the foundational character of a society is what marks the relationship with its time, since every society considers it appropriate to record the passage of time and the succession of experienced events. Meaning that if history accounts for a succession of

processes and directional changes of these processes, the chronology helps to order even the events that may be scattered.

With regard to what the researcher can contribute to the explanation of contemporary society in terms of Marxist explanation, it must be said that the researcher, from this approach, does not accurately predict future events based on an analysis of the past. The researcher's task is to reveal that change and transformations, first, are not totally universal and, second, to recognize that it is not in their hands to predict the future as some societies assign it to them, but rather to identify and demonstrate the mechanisms of the historical change of human societies. This equates to giving new meaning, trying to highlight the changes that can be evidenced in societies and their possible future trends, making it clear that the changes and transformations that societies go through have not always been the same. This task, to a large extent, must recognize, likewise, that the changes in society are the effect of material transformations, and that these changes imply, then, recognizing the social formations, their contradictions and struggles, and, of course, the conditions of their material production.

Now, in these social formations of production in permanent struggle and tension, it is also possible to explain what happened from history seen from below or from the history of ordinary people, since the social mass also has an impact on the course of society. For Hobsbawm, for example, in the Old Regime, the confrontations of the masses against their leaders were almost always immediate; that is, the revolts were not against the establishment itself, but against its direct leaders. So, the history from below expresses itself with some evidence, with the history of the mass movements of the 18th century and continues to present itself today. The first big wave of such studies occurred in France before the Second World War, and in the rest of Europe and the world it appeared during the post war period, with the appearance of Marxist views, with which there was an increase in studies on the mass, especially of the workers covered by the strengthening of the labor movement. Today the social outbreaks, in some way, are mass expressions, this implies studying them from the Marxist perspective of history from below, and from the concept of resistance, that is, as the hidden discourse that "is made public or, put another way, when you go from resistance to rebellion, to open defiance of power" (Rajchenberg, 2015, p. 51). This last concept will be developed in the third section of this article.

Marxism to Understand Anti-system Movements: A Return to the sixties

Marxism, socialism, and communism were a thematic triad of the same nature that was shared and consumed by young people around the world in the 1960s and 1970s. The texts of this thematic triad express a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo of a society stagnated by consumption in the post-war period. In the social mobilization and consumption of 1968, aspirations can also be identified that incite a cultural revolution in line with political approaches that break with the democratic option and are closer to the socialist current. It should be remembered that almost a decade earlier, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution stands out, which will imply the positioning of a current socialist government in Cuba – close enough in territory to the influence of the United States and, at least, with some ideological link with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – which will have an impact in the context of the Cold War.

In 1968, social unrest is not only visible in the West. The students, mainly, rebelled against all forms of power in the United States, Latin America, and Europe, reaching Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (Bonilla, 2015).

Thus, what could have been a local or perhaps a national movement ended up linking with a movement on a planetary scale. To such an extent that the rejection and objective of the movement has not only been based on criticizing the unfulfilled promises of liberalism in the world-system, but has also been directed by a new left against the old left and its anti-system movements. Wallerstein (1989, p. 233) argues that this is precisely because the disappointed of 1968 is led by young people who, growing up in a world in which such anti-system movements have achieved state power, find it possible to judge old lefts both for what they promise and for the practices carried out when they came to power. What defines, in essence, an anti-system movement is its aspiration to achieve a more democratic and egalitarian world, and in the same way to oppose both the hegemony of North American imperialism and the Soviet Union itself cohabiting with this imperialism (Wallerstein, 2003).

In this way, Wallerstein (1989, pp. 233-234) adds that the judgment made by the generation of 1968 that supported the anti-system utopia against the old movements was also due to the fact that they found them deficient, both in their effectiveness in confronting the capitalist world-system of that time, embodied by the United States, as well as for the quality of life created in the intermediate state structures that the old social movements presumed to control. The importance of the generational aspect carried enough weight at the time, and this not only applied in the terms of a certain aphorism from 1968 – “Never trust

someone over 30 years old” – but also implied a new reading of the left that did not align with the monolithic construction of Soviet Stalinism.

Against that same monolithic alignment, according to Wallerstein (1989, pp. 223-232), a generational rejection was presented for its acquiescence with the North American hegemony since it followed the Yalta Agreement and that led to the configuration of the Cold War; which drew a line dividing the world between East-West and cooled the realization of a direct conflict of the powers (above all in Europe), thus raising the leadership of each block in the USSR and the United States, respectively. The latter, precisely, was what that acquiescence that the 1968 movement rejected, since it seemed that the USSR consented to the presence of that North American hegemony as long as no changes occurred in that line that preserved its zone of political domination; so that the interventions carried out from the USSR were indirect and, therefore, possibly for this reason their action seemed deficient in the opinion of the generation of '68 that supported the anti-systemic utopia.

This not only places the Cold War in the key of an ideological conflict in which two powers were awarded the representation of what was supposed to be the only two possible models, and it not only implied the choice of a side and the consequent alignment, but also involved adopting the model of one or another representative. Choosing a side was not only understood as a political alignment and participation in the conflict, it also implied the reproduction of the model that each of the two powers represented. Taking into account what was mentioned by Immanuel Wallerstein, a stagnant world-system had been established in which there was an American hegemonic system and an alternative Soviet system that constrained the world to only two possible aspects and, in turn, were deficient in the face of expectations in around the quality of life and fulfillment of expectations that they could provide.

It is important to note that the generation of '68, which supported the anti-systemic utopia, does not only question the American model. The Prague Spring protests have as a prelude the acts of young people from the Technical University of Prague in resistance to this low quality of life, in particular the lack of electricity service at the end of 1967. Even when the Soviet invasion took place in the middle of 1968, it was the young people who carried out the resistance in the streets of Prague and other cities. In other words, rejection and protest against the vices or deficiencies of the socialist system were being forged in the school system and at its highest level: the university. In the case of the Global South, it is found that the challenge to the possibility of change is important. It not only implies a critical assimilation of knowledge from other latitudes, but also leads this criticized and assimilated knowledge to action.

Although the generation of '68, which supported the anti-systemic utopia, mainly protested against US hegemony, it cannot be ignored that they judged the passivity of the USSR's communist model to be defective, limited to coexisting and not directly confronting the capitalist system in order to preserve the line that reserved for it a small but important fraction of the world-system agreed upon between the Americans and the Soviets. In this sense, Marcuse (1973) considered giving the youth of 1968 the character of a revolutionary vanguard and a decisive force for a social conscience, especially the students of the so-called Third World, taking into account that young people from all over the world, by the thousands, were victims of terror. But Marcuse also raises his voice against the so-called left that, in the manner of an intellectual and elitist attitude, weakens the principles of the revolution by distorting and falsifying Marxist theory through the "ritualization" of concepts to analyze the moment of '68 through concepts of 19th century and early 20th century capitalism, ignoring, as Marx always warned, that concepts are historical, have historical references and analyze historical structures. Marcuse, in the same way, draws attention to Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in which the concept of humanist socialism can be justified, in opposition to the bureaucratic-authoritarian Soviet model, preamble to the fight against Stalinism and the post-Stalinism.

Validity of Karl Marx: Resignifications in the Historical Explanation to Understand the Global South

The influence of Marxism on historians and on the historical discipline has played an important role in modernizing historiography and the social sciences in general. Some historians influenced by Marxist approaches have been identified with ideas and precepts that have been associated with the thought proposed by Marx, however, this influence has represented a somewhat simplistic interpretation of the mature thought of Marx, to which Hobsbawm and other social science researchers have called it "vulgar Marxism" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 158). Lately, a conception that distorts the thought of Marx by attributing ideas that do not fully respond to his socioeconomic theory, such as claiming that the economic factor is the determinant on which the other variables of the historical and social process depend. This kind of work, moreover, focuses its attention on economic and social factors, but without any connection of intellectual weight with the thought of Marx.

It is enough to remember that, in the contribution made by Marx to the explanation of historical processes, society is conceived as composed of different

levels or social stratifications, whether economic, political, religious, or cultural, that interact with each other. These interactions, for the most part, lead to class tensions, since for Marx the ruling class, in this stratification, shows its power in the domination of the subordinate social classes; thus the superstructure is instrumentalized (by means of laws, customs, norms, values, economic system, etc.) to maintain the *Status quo* of a class. Within these social tensions or "class struggles" the researcher, from the whole Marxist sense, must pay attention, since the accumulation of these struggles expresses itself in society through expressions of non-conformism, anti-systemic movements, etc. Traverso (2018) distrusts "closed" theories such as Marxism. Without discounting his vision of the past as ineluctable and voluntarist, the author proposes to make fruitful use of some concepts of Marxist tradition: class, class struggle, hegemony, mode of production, capitalism, imperialism, among them. Of course, Traverso draws attention, apart from any teleological and deterministic vision of Marxism.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Marxist influence determines the political history declination and took rise to economic and sociological history. In general, and even by some Marxists, Marxism has been described as economic determinism, a concept denied by Marx himself at the time, as well as he denied that he was not the first to remark the importance of economic basis in social explanation or to introduce the concept of class struggle into history. Marxism is presented to us as a structural-functionalist theory. Although today it is not the only one, it was the first. Since Marxism can induce an explanatory hierarchy of social phenomena, the truth is that the idea of considering social tensions as an explanatory foundation of becoming is still as valid as before.

Marx, in his theory, argues that the basis of social life, from the production of material life, is given from the consolidation of relations between human beings through the creation of production links. These relationships of production can be understood as the cluster of forces that constitute the basis of different modes of production on which each society is based. For Hobsbawm, Marx's contributions remain the essential basis of any proper study of history, because only he has tried to state a methodological approach to history as a whole, as well as to consider and explain the whole process of social evolution of humanity from its economic postulates, since every explanatory process must begin with the analysis of its mode of production from:

- a) the technical-economic form of "metabolism between man and nature" (Marx), the way in which man adapts to nature and transforms it through work; and (b) the social measures by which work is mobilized, deployed, and assigned. (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 167)

It should be noted that Marx's influence on social researchers has to do, mainly, with the idea of explaining "social changes" and "social structure" from the development of the economy (Betancourt, 2007, pp. 176-180). In this sense, the recognition of each and every society or peoples has the capacity of having a past and therefore a history (Wolf, 1982). All societies have developed in a particular mode of production. It makes tracing the events of societies based on their model of production possible. From this capacity of peoples to transform nature, it is possible to weave a relationship of exchange in a world market that involves all human societies in the same history: the history of world capitalism. Although not all peoples are in the same phase of European evolution, that is, with the same level of technification of productive process, they all have a changing way that drives them forward through joint work. In this way, and despite the fact that these peoples have a different production model, it does not mean that they are peoples without history. This is the situation for many countries that have become consumers of the industrialized production of Europeans. It creates the image of being primitive communities that do not advance in search for productivity and that have stagnated in an archaic phase of humanity, as even so the Global South has been designated.

The Concept of Resistance, a Legacy of Marxism

It is undeniable that Marxism has left a not inconsiderable legacy for research and social understanding. It constitutes an inexhaustible source of inspiration for different socio-economic and political issues. For its critical sense and, especially, for the materialist conception of history: "history is committed to a coherent intellectual project and has made progress in understanding how the world has become what it is today" (Hobsbawm, 1998a, p. 10).

One of Marx's greatest contributions to social explanation has been to study the process of social production as a general analytical basis from particular situations, since Marx "knew that economic models, if they are to be valuable for historical analysis, cannot be apart from social and institutional realities" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 91). Those social realities that will have analysis from 1950, with social history, with special attention to revolutionary processes and struggles for emancipation; many which are still in force in the Global South and which refer to long-term problems in the future of their societies. For social researchers, the need to know and understand the social structure and its transformations implies studying the history of societies (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 87). In the history of society, structures, mechanisms of persistence and transformations are taken into account: "the history of society is a collaboration between

general models of structures and social changes and specific phenomena that really happened" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 92). Consequently, social history has boomed since the last decades of the twentieth century, from topics such as: the history of society, urban history, the history of classes and social groups, the history of mentalities and transformations of societies, social movements or phenomena of social protest. It cannot be ignored that the explanation of cultural processes and productions – whether they are called ways of consciousness, social imaginaries, expressions of human sensibility in general – must go through the material conditions in which such processes and productions take place (Hobsbawm, 1998b).

Marx's proposal revolves around the relationship of production and contradictions that came up between forces of production, which act as the engine of history and which in general determine social, political and intellectual process of life (Corcuera, 1997, p. 63) with their ways of domination and violence. According to Marx, the existing order had to be explained not by appealing to ideals, but to history, since historical processes had to be explained economically and not guided, necessarily and essentially, by ideals, this means for Marx that values cannot be studied isolated from facts with objective material conditions (Berlin, 2018).

This approach to social historical processes has been widely addressed by British authors, greatly influenced by Marx's thought: Thompson (2014), Maurice Dobb, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill and Eric J. Hobsbawm who represent a theoretical tradition, and they are also widely recognized by historiography by assuming in their works that the questions and hypotheses stated by Marx referred to the history and coming of modern world remain very convincing and even essential. Thus, British Marxist historians have made historical contributions to analyses of class struggle, to developments in the perspective of history from below and, in general, to social theory in its purpose of overcoming economic determinism and formulating explanatory theses on transition to capitalism and its subsequent developments (Kaye, 2019).

It is remarkable that these approaches, mainly that of history from below, have had subsequent developments for the explanations of resistance and rebellion of subaltern or subordinate groups, including those of a Global South, which create their own culture with its own version of domination (Scott, 2000). Thus, the greater the inequality of powers between dominant and dominated, with all the arbitrariness of the latter, the more emergencies of resistance and rebellion are uncovered by stereotypes and rituals of power (Jorquera, 2007).

The transition from resistance to rebellion can be recognized in any subaltern group of society that resists domination and appeals to a subversive discourse to reverse dominant relationships (Montilla and Scott, 2002). In

contrast, resistance is understood as the result of aggregation of countless individual acts of transgression of the norm issued by the powerful agent, which can subsequently have collective effects (Rajchenberg, 2015, p. 52). This means that these collective effects have had an impact or as Useche Aldana states, "resistance is power" and the affectation in others is in "the measure of creating a more powerful social body capable of transforming passive passions – sadness, anger, resentment – into joyful actions such as love or solidarity" (2014, p.107). Therefore, the ultimate goal of resistance is linked to the concept of transformation or change, from a state of sadness or passive affectation to a joyful option, of joy and with a clear life affirmation.

Resistance develops from "an event that is unleashed as a novelty, as an ethical and political breaking point that subsumes passive affections to the extent that the active forces of life are deployed" (Useche, 2014, p. 107). Social movements as expressions of resistance burst with the enthusiasm and the social group synergy that changes tiredness to joy, selfishness to solidarity and revolution to celebration. Some examples are the social movements in 1968, 2011 and 2021 (under the atypical pandemic conditions). Songs, carnivals and playful expressions are also new ways for youth mobilization. Resistance appeals to dignity and autonomy along with its establishment as an emergence of solidarity and legitimacy against discourses and practices of domination (Scott, 2000).

Even the post-68 effects, youth resistance are expressed in recreational activities, carnivals and meetings such as the Woodstock Festival in the United States or in the Ancon Festival, the Colombian version (Acevedo and Correa, 2021). Between 1968 and 1971, social protests changed, a noticeable situation in almost all Latin American countries.

A similar situation has already been experienced in the 21st century with Spain's Indignados movement that will be soon known throughout Latin America. Indignation, as a feeling, is expressed in a social movement that began in 2011 and will end up being replicated in much of the world thanks to the intervention of social networks, telecommunications, and a new type of resistance that is no longer physical but technological in nature.

Memes, kiss-a-thons and hug-a-thons evidence that yesterday's problems are different from today's problems, but they do find some explanatory traceability. As Aguirre (2014) points out, the forceful mobilizations in Latin America have managed to strengthen and consolidate powerful anti-capitalist and anti-systemic movements that have been considered a model at different latitudes of the world. From 1968 to the present, despite the ups and downs of the last two decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the Latin American continent has been imbued with creative social manifestations that

have challenged governments until overthrowing them or making them tremble at their foundations due to unfair measures. In Colombia, in 2011, for example, the Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil (MANE) became a large student movement with the purpose of improvements in higher education and the withdrawal of the reform of Law 30 of 1992 on Higher Education which favored a profit education (Acevedo *et al.*, 2022).

These type of movements and others that create novel mobilizations throughout Latin America have allowed for the resurgence of the moral economy of Latin American crowds. These are not something different from the conceptual reference by Thompson, the British Marxist historian, who roughly understands such concept as the set of regulation and self-regulation forces for a well-defined boundary between right and wrong and fair and unfair, to thus claim for inclusion strategies and mechanisms, participation and, in general, social balances that can range from demands for justice and dignity to better material living conditions (Aguirre, 2014).

These demands for equity, justice, and material conditions for a dignified life, although evident since 1968 and have undergone different cycles, had their greatest impact in 2021, a notably strange year marked by the emergence of COVID-19 and its effect on people's isolation. This year gave rise to civil disorders and new social movements throughout the Global South – even in first world countries – whose governments had had to deal with a series of strikes and protests that showed a stronger need for social, political and economic change than a fear of a virus spreading at an ever-increasing rate.

Conclusions

According to Karl Marx, now, it is recognized that the economic basis of historical development is linked to concepts such as class and class struggle. Nowadays, it is also recognized that economic and social factors, beyond the simple Marxism explanation, are paramount to explain the societies evolution and cultural manifestations in general (Aguirre, 2010, p. 83). Marx's ideas have had an impact on history and social sciences through his structural-functional theory with the base/superstructure model. This specific model allows for class conflict interpretations, succession of socioeconomic formations and transition mechanisms, issues that other structuralist theoretical models find difficult to articulate in historical perspectives and simplify the mechanisms of historical change, even denying the historicity of societies or limiting

themselves to social statics by omitting change and leaving it to history. Any theoretical and methodological reference may fall short in explaining the whirlwind of the new social movements, however, the British Marxists, especially Hobsbawm, have warned how the categories of ethnicity or identity, among others, may fall even shorter to finding general explanations to processes of today's globalized world that require categories without attacking the explanatory universality of historical processes and, of course, dialoguing with particularisms or specificities (Matari, 2013).

Similarly, to account for the changes in societies over time and based on Marxist functional and structural theory, it is possible to resort to the explanatory model of levels whose basis is the social relations of production and the internal contradictions of the systems, including class conflicts. A conflict that can also be explained as a warning of danger or safety valve, also as forms of resistance and rebellion that advocate for making themselves present in the public space. Likewise, conflicts that cannot be analyzed simply as conspiracies of subaltern or power groups, but as the cause of contradictions in society (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 160).

In this way, Marxism puts the magnifying glass on change. According to Casanova, Marx "locates antagonism in the very structure of society (between the productive forces and the relations of production) and in the conviction that from this structural conflict will result a class conflict that is the driving force for social change" (1991, p. 59).

These structural conflicts have been vehemently exposed since the 1960s, 1968 being an example. However, throughout the last third of the twentieth century and especially in third world countries, there was also a large number of rallies, strikes, marches, demonstrations, and protests aiming at solving problems such as hunger, unemployment and lack of opportunities for the underdeveloped region populations that are still sunk in slave-owning and xenophobic strategies (Hopenhayn and Bello, 2001). Despite the different expressions of resistance of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the greatest evidence of the need for social change has been in the year 2021.

After a long year of living under the anxiety of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the world showed its two faces: a "fresh" side corresponding to those who could easily resort to long quarantines without economic worries, and the tragic side of those who had to struggle on the streets for making a living for their families. However, this pandemic has evidenced that, at the end of the day, we are all the same by nature. The coronavirus causing the COVID-19 does not distinguish between rich and poor, healthy and sick, men and women, and young and old. This disease attacks everyone equally and has revealed the great gap between the so-called first world or developed countries

and those living in extreme poverty. This is not to mention that there will be more and more poor people, even in countries with a certain economic stability (World Bank, 2020).

Countries such as Canada, France, the United States, and Spain have shown their dark side through increasingly well-known xenophobia. Likewise, since 2013, resistance movements have become more and more obvious, among them the so-called Black Lives Matter, perhaps the successor of an earlier movement called Los Indignados, which also revealed the social differences between rich and poor countries.

In 2021, the second year of living with the shadow of COVID-19, added all the social movements, that is to say, the first six months of that year allowed us to see indignation, anti-slavery movements, protests for the improvement of educational services, rallies in search of better health services, blockades to avoid more taxes, protests to clarify the violations of Human Rights, labor-management confrontations and countless conflictive expressions which had not been experienced in countries like Colombia and Latin America. Similar situations were experienced in countries such as Chile, Peru and Ecuador. The pandemic also disclosed corruption, democratic limitations and economic and social difficulties of the Latin American continent.

At a global level, it was proven that, in the face of a pandemic, neoliberalism was mainly insufficient to manage a disease that, in addition to a long siege of deaths, showed the political incapacity of rulers to overcome the economic impacts.

Today, the theories expounded by Marx in the 19th century are more valid than ever to explain the evolution of 21st century societies. As Hobsbawm emphasizes, Karl Marx's ideas "allow us to explain the history of mankind in its entirety, and form the most fruitful starting point for modern analysis" (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 161). His theoretical and political productions refer to historical phenomena within a long-term framework in an attempt to understand the human totality (Hobsbawm, 1998b, p. 164) and to respond to the great polarizations and socioeconomic inequalities that still remain.

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